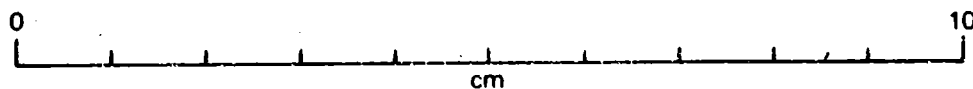
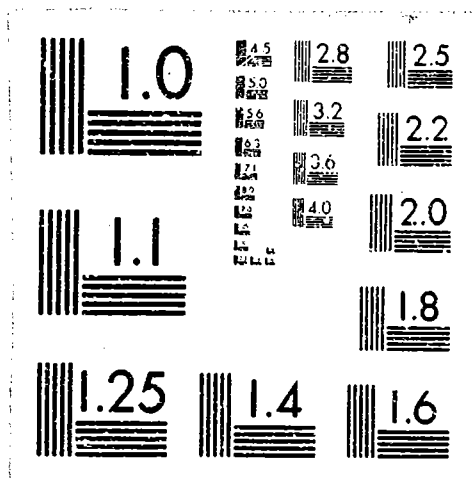


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 Contents

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CONTEMPORARY BLACK PROTEST LITERATURE IN SOUTH AFRICA:

A MATERIALIST ANALYSIS

by

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## DECLARATION

I declare that CONTEMPORARY BLACK PROTEST LITERATURE IN SOUTH AFRICA: A MATERIALIST ANALYSIS is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

...*T J Selepe*.....  
(T J SELEPE)

DATE: 1992-12-10.....

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late parents Martha and Joshua who, despite their countless sacrifices to educate me, are not here to share in the joy of my success. My best gratitude to them.

## SUMMARY

The genesis and development of modern African literature in indigenous languages in South Africa cannot be satisfactorily handled without linking them to the historical, social and political developments in South Africa. The first literary works to be published in South Africa in indigenous languages were the products of Western imperialist agents, the missionaries especially. This literature was later exposed to further ideologies when the government took control of education for Africans.

The intensification of the liberation struggle from mid 20th century saw literature becoming another area of resistance politics in South Africa. African writers began to write in English. The birth of the Black Consciousness Movement in the late sixties gave further impetus to this development with the emergence of black protest literature.

This study seeks to investigate these developments in both African literature and black protest literature by employing a materialist analysis, specifically focusing on ideology as a material condition.

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Aim of study

This study is an attempt to investigate a literature which has branched off from African protest literature, which in South Africa came to be known as black protest literature. Historically speaking, this new phenomenon in protest literature follows upon the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa and therefore one may argue that black protest literature has, to a great extent, been inspired by the ideology of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). This study does not wish to create the impression that 'protest' itself is a new phenomenon in African literature in indigenous languages and in English in South Africa. The argument, rather, is that there is a new trend in African protest literature, namely, black protest literature. One needs, however, to emphasize that the historical link between 'African literature' and 'black literature' should not be ignored and consequently, in the course of this study it will be considered wherever necessary.

African protest literature is considered to have emerged and evolved from within the imperialist culture. The external and internal features of literary works, including literary criticism, had, to a great extent, conformed to the Western imperialist standards. Black protest literature, on the contrary, strives to break away from everything that is perceived as imposing Western imperialist hegemony. Thus authors and literary critics of this conviction have

committed themselves to establishing literary standards that may essentially be considered to be typical to the African situation in South Africa. Their protest is not only against the general conditions of oppression and foreign literary standards; it is also aimed at what is termed African bourgeois criticism. The main objection to this kind of criticism is that it is considered to be inadequate to the full understanding and appreciation of African literature, and that it tends to suppress the truth about Africa.

The above paragraph therefore explains why the thrust of this study is two-pronged: it, on the one hand, protests against the general conditions of the oppression of Africans and, on the other, it protests against the tendency to impose Western literary standards on the study of African literature. This study argues that African literature, and hence black literature, cannot be studied in isolation from the material conditions that inform it, and that African and black literary aesthetics should essentially be socially oriented. It is for these reasons that materialism is considered to provide the most relevant critical approach with which to confront the whole question of black literature and black literary criticism in South Africa.

The emergence of the African national resistance movements and their intensification around the middle of the twentieth century, made significant impact on the development of African literature. Some of the African writers who had become disgruntled with the literary traditions which had been imposed on them chose to write in English instead of their indigenous languages, with the purpose of drawing the attention of the liberal white community, both locally and



abroad, to the plight of the blacks, and of facilitating communication across the ethnic divide. This development has generated much debate in literary and critical circles, where traditional scholars have expressed grave concern about the 'standard' of black protest literature. On the other hand, progressive scholars and critics of literature see the matter differently. For them the issue is not principally the 'standard' of black protest literature as such standard is narrowly defined in traditional conservative circles. Furthermore the critical issue is the material conditions which nurture black literature and account for its characteristic features. If black protest literature is indeed inferior such inferiority would merely attest to the inferior material conditions under which it has been produced.

Black writers in South Africa in the eighties tended to write what can be termed reflexive literature in they tried to confront the complex realities of the black person's life situation. Their works, which in most instances can be described as (auto)biographical, tended to dwell on themes reflecting the black person's struggles with life in South Africa. Consequently, the reflectionist nature of South African black literature allows any critic of note very little chance to opt for the art-for-art's sake approach to art which tends to divorce art from society. The situation, as it presently obtains, makes it essential to analyse black South African literature from a Marxist perspective, because the 'various theories of creation that are so far in existence, ignore the process of making and they omit any account of production' (Macherey 1986:68). Marxism, as a theory of social analysis, has the capacity not only to reveal the nature of the dynamics of social functions, but also to explain the

ideologies within which social formations operate.

Ngara (1985:vii) advances a further reason why Marxism should be of interest to the study African literature. He says:

... the influence of socialism globally and on the African continent in particular is becoming so significant that whether we subscribe to Marxism or not we would be ill-advised to ignore its impact on political, economic and cultural life. Politically and economically, a significant number of African countries have chosen the socialist path to development and the liberation movements of Southern Africa are, in one way or another, allied to socialist countries which are much more prepared than the West to give them material assistance in the struggle against apartheid and colonialism.

These observations were made prior to the recent changes in socialist countries. While the remarks made above no longer hold for the situation in the nineteen nineties, they remain relevant to the literature under discussion which was produced in the nineteen eighties. Furthermore, a materialist critical approach, as a theory of revolution, remains relevant to Africa because the struggle against colonialism, neo-colonialism and western imperialism is not yet finished. Therefore, because Africans are still involved in the struggle for complete liberation, economically, culturally, and otherwise, Marxism remains a valuable tool for providing answers to the problems with which Africans have to grapple. Consequently literary works produced during and after the height of the BCM era

provide a basis for the arguments advanced in this study.

## 1.2. Scope of study

This study, therefore, focuses principally on black protest literature produced at the height of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa. However, because historically there have been other kinds of literary production amongst Africans, such production will also be explored insofar as it explains the conception and emergence of black literature as a separate tradition.

This study has been divided into eight chapters. This first chapter is the general introduction and explains the framework of the study. Chapter two will survey materialism as an instrument for both social and literary analysis, starting from the most general definitions and procedures to the more specific ones, including the various variations on Marxist literary criticism. In chapter three an attempt will be made to define or re-define the concept 'protest literature', and also to argue why a distinction should be made between 'African protest literature' and 'black protest literature'. It will also try to show why materialism is a most desirable approach in the analysis of protest literature. Chapter four will be devoted to some of the material conditions which have influenced the emergence of modern African literature, namely, how such literature was produced, why it took a specific form, and why certain themes became popular with it while others did not. All these factors will be discussed with reference to colonialism, social formations such as the broad education policies, ideological tendencies in the production of African literature, and the liberal ideological hegemony. The fifth

chapter will investigate ideological conflict from the colonial era to institutionalised apartheid, as well as the emergence of new ideologies which set the stage for the black literary tradition which has largely been inspired by the BCM ideology. This chapter will, in addition, focus on those structural formations, educational, economic, political and religious, which inspired black protest literature, and subsequently attempt to account for the peculiar mode of production of this literature. The sixth chapter will explore the most appropriate method for analysing black protest literature. Chapter seven will be devoted to the analysis of three novels: *Amandla* by Miriam Tlali, *Third Generation* by Sipho Sepamla, and *On the Eve* by Boyd Makhoba. The study will conclude in chapter eight, with a consideration of the salient points pertaining to the contribution made by the materialist analysis of the literature under consideration to black literary studies.

### 1.3. Terminology

Some of the key concepts used in this study cover a wide range of meanings. They have been used in general, historical and specific semantic connotations. Consequently, although they will be explained, the sense in which each will be used during this discussion should nevertheless, unless otherwise specified, be understood in the context of the containing argument. The following are some of these key concepts together with some brief definitions:

\*'African' has been used specifically to refer to the indigenous people of Africa, not necessarily to refer to all the people who have made Africa their home. In this sense 'African' refers to the

aborigines of South Africa who were once termed the 'kaffirs', the 'natives' or the 'Bantu'.

\*'Black' has been used, firstly, to refer to the African people of South Africa and, secondly, to all the oppressed peoples of this country, including the so-called Coloureds and Indians. The use of the term 'black' instead of 'African' will be explained later on in this study.

\*'African literature' means, in the first place, literature written in indigenous languages by Africans, in the second place, literature written in European languages by Africans. Perceptions relating to these definitions will also be explained in detail in the relevant sections of this study.

\*'Black literature' refers to literature in the medium of English written either by the African people of South Africa, or by any of the oppressed people of South Africa, but especially the literature that has been inspired by the Black Consciousness ideology, and/or any other literature that seeks to promote and to re-assert the image and the culture of blacks as people. However, for reasons explained later in this study, texts by African writers have mostly been used.

## CHAPTER 2

## SOME REFLECTIONS ON MATERIALIST AESTHETICS

## 2.1. Introduction

This chapter will provide a detailed, though not exhaustive, view of materialism and materialist literary theory, by exploring current views on both materialism and materialist literary aesthetics. Firstly, in subsection 2.2. an attempt will be made to answer the question as to what materialism is. Secondly, subsection 2.3. will probe the notion 'materialism' based on the views of scholars such as Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, George Lukacs, Terry Eagleton, Raymond Williams, Louis Althusser and Pierre Macherey, of materialism and a materialist conception of literature. Finally, subsection 2.4. will be a proposal of what can be described as the African materialist aesthetics, based principally on the views of Chidi Amuta and Emmanuel Ngara.

## 2.2. What is materialism?

Materialism, in general terms, refers to a school of thought that views reality as material, and argues that the mind and emotions are dependent on material existence (cf. Collins English Dictionary 1979:909). In fact, materialism views reality as a structure consisting of parts which are governed by natural laws. In this sense the concept 'materialism' contributes to an understanding of Newton's notion that reality may be perceived through the extension of

natural laws. However, both Newton's notion and Hegel's theory of idealism were rejected by Marx and Engels as being inadequate for understanding human society (cf. Lever 1987:12).

Another common meaning of materialism signifies some kind of obsession with the acquisition of material objects, which may involve acquiring such objects by unfair means. This view is also irrelevant as far as Marx's notion of historical materialism is concerned. However, the philosophical view of materialism, which is opposed to idealism and conceives of matter as the ultimate reality of the universe, is closer to Marx's own view. Materialist philosophers argue that 'our five senses do not deceive us and that matter is the real substance of the world' (cf. Lever 1987:18). This means that our response to reality should necessarily accord with the manner in which we sense, experience and interpret the world around us. It is on a similar basis that Marx argued strongly against Newton's notion of the extension of natural laws to explain human behaviour.

According to Marx humans are creative beings and not just material beings whose behaviour is pre-determined. Marx's position on the mode of economic production as a basis for explaining human behaviour is very clear: 'there is no all-embracing factor standing outside of humanity which determines exactly how men and women shall behave' (cf. Lever 1987:19). Human behaviour is, however, not necessarily determined by material conditions. Human behaviour is, instead, ultimately dependent on the manner in which the material life of human beings is conducted. This means that the economic mode of production is central to all forms of social relations and is their ultimate determinant.

Therefore, by considering the mode of production in any given society, it is possible to explain the social relations and social processes inherent in that society, because:

The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part (McLellan 1980:140).

These comments support Marx's argument that in order to live men must produce, and that in this very process of production they make history. However, he argues that in making history, which inevitably entails social relations, people do not perform under circumstances which they have chosen. They make history under circumstances which have been passed on to them from previous generations. This argument suggests why (material) human history is an integral component for materialist analysis.

Consequently, historical materialism can be viewed as a general theory which relates aspects of social structure to aspects of social processes. To make this relationship more evident, Marx explains that the collectivity of the relations of production forms the base structure of a society and that the resultant social processes constitute the superstructure. The former has to do with the possession of ,and control over, the means of production while the



latter has to do with relations of the means of production, or relationships issuing from them (cf. Lever 1987:25). In other words, in any given society at least two classes of people can be distinguished: those who own those means and have control over them, and those who neither own nor have control over these means.

The manner in which people relate to each other and behave in society will therefore tend to conform to the manner in which they relate to the means of production. Marx has argued on this score that if some kind of compatibility could be achieved between the base structure and the superstructure, then it could be hoped that stability in society would be maintained. However, if such compatibility is not attained or maintained then society will be on the verge of social transformation. In this regard Marx's asserts as follows:

At a certain stage of their development the material forces of production in a society come into conflict with the existing relations of production, or - what is but a legal expression for the same thing - with the property relations within which they had been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters. Then comes the period of social revolution (cf McLellan 1980:223).

This happens when the developments within the superstructure have reached such a point that they can no longer be sufficiently catered for within the existing base structure. This explains why Marx feels that conflict, as a permanent feature in any society, is a catalyst

for social change:

The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guildmaster and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended in a revolutionary reconstruction of society at large, or the common ruin of the contending classes (cf. McLellan 1980:188).

Lever's (1978:90) thesis on the application of the principles of dialectical materialism, which he refers to as 'historical materialism', explains the laws of the process of change in society in the following manner:

(1) There is a contradiction or conflict in societies.

(2) Society commenced with 'primitive communism.' This state of nature was negated by slavery, which, in turn was negated by feudalism. Feudalism was negated by capitalism and capitalism will be negated by communism at a 'higher level of development'; that is, 'scientific communism.'

(3) Capitalism will be developed to a point of high refinement and thereafter society will undergo a qualitative change and be transformed into communism.

Webster's Family Encyclopedia (1991:758), unlike Lever (1978), con-

siders dialectical materialism and historical materialism to be two related, albeit different aspects of materialism. It considers dialectical materialism to be the official philosophy of Marxism, which analyses social transformation operating from a thesis-antithesis position to a synthesis position. This means that there must firstly be opposing class positions and the resultant interaction, emanating from conflicting views, will lead towards a resolution of conflict either through one class or its views dominating the other or both classes and their views being mutually destroyed. This is a dialectical process which develops through a kind of argument and counter-argument or action and reaction relationship. On the other hand, historical materialism is explained as 'a coherent account of history on an economic basis: for every system of production there is an appropriate organization of class and property' (ibid.). This explains, in part, Marx's notion of the determinate effect of the base structure on the superstructure and the resultant conflict. Concerning the causes of social conflict in terms of historical materialism this encyclopedia states that:

While economic forces continually develop production systems, the class and property structure remains unchanged, causing tension between economic forces and social relations, which continues until the ultimate rational socialist society evolves (ibid.).

While Lever (1978), in his thesis on societal change, attempts to explain the process of social transformation in Marxist terms, he neglects the most important component, namely, the nature of the interaction between the base and the superstructure, as a causal fac-

tor of social conflict. According to him, it would seem, the distinct relationship between the two social strata is not necessarily a factor in social transformation. Such a view suggests that society will inevitably undergo change, with or without any conflict between the social strata, whether they be caste or class strata. However, his identification of Marx's neglect of 'race' as another causal factor of social conflict provides useful insights, especially in relation to South African society.

Recent research, especially by Althusser (1984), indicates, however, that what Marx called the superstructure is in fact a complexity of semi-autonomous social formations, which may nevertheless be influenced, in one way or another, by the dominant social formation or Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). Relations within these formations may also engender conflict, and hence, change in society.

Marx argues, however, that the stage of social transformation cannot be reached simply as a result of economic disparity between the haves (bourgeois) and the have-nots (proletariat). It can be reached only after a certain level of class consciousness has been attained. The classes must first be completely polarised and must then develop into antagonistic groups manifesting what Marx terms 'class struggle'. He argues, further, that violent transformation of society can be avoided by the equitable distribution of surplus products.

Marx asserts that the capitalist mode of production is a recipe for violent social transformations because of the effects of its adverse disparities between classes. He contends that developments in industry lead to a stage where producers no longer produce for their own

needs but rather for the needs of a broader society, i.e. for the market or exchange. Consequently a monopoly of production is established and this leads to the creation of a wage labour system in which the labour (of the worker) can be sold in the market place just like any other commodity. The proletarian (working) class has to sell its labour in order to earn a living (cf. Goodman 1978:419). According to Lever (1987:46) labourers come mainly from the abundant, former agrarian class, which has been dispossessed of its land.

Therefore the pattern in a capitalist society is such that there are comparatively very few people at the top of the social strata, who control the means of production, while there are many at the bottom who, apart from their labour, have no control over forces of production. Marx had no hesitation, therefore, in declaring the capitalist system exploitative. It is within this context that Marx developed his theoretical framework for the relationship between the two contending classes in a capitalist society: the capitalist class (bourgeois), on the one hand, and the working class (proletariat), on the other.

Marx's theoretical framework has been widely employed by researchers in various fields, such as economics, sociology, literature, and it has provided very useful insights into the composition of diverse societies the world over.

Before turning to the use of Marxism, of which literature is the primary concern of this study, a few observations need to be made concerning Marx's theory. Firstly, it could be argued that Marx in

developing his theory, used mainly the emerging European industrial society as a model and that therefore his theory cannot be absolutised. Secondly, while Marx correctly predicted the polarisation of a (capitalist) society into two antagonistic groups, a polarization which would lead to a violent overthrow of capitalism, he did not predict the precise course of events. For instance, he did not foresee the emergence of a middle class - constituted mostly of incumbents of managerial positions - in modern industry. He also did not foresee racialism as an intrinsic economic factor in societies such as that of South Africa.

### 2.3. A materialist conception of literature

Marxism sees literature as a form of production - mental production - informed by the manner in which one sees, experiences and interprets the world around oneself. This assumption suggests that literature is not creation but the result of a process of production. In producing a work of art the author uses certain tools and/or ideas which are nurtured by the circumstances of which s/he is a product. In this sense both the writer and literature are socially. Therefore literature, as an artefact, is considered as a product of social consciousness - a world vision (cf. Eagleton 1976:59).

If literature is a social production, and society is, in a particular historical epoch, characterized by a definite set of relations, contradictions, conflicts and struggles, then:

...literature should be analysed in characteristically historical materialist terms, that is, as an integral part of society

which in turn rests on an economic foundation (Posel 1982).

However, because Marx never actually formulated a complete theory of literature, his followers tend to agree and disagree on certain aspects of his statements. According to Posel (1982) Marx's followers seem to agree on the nature of the problem, i.e. whether or not literature has any social relevance. They tend to disagree on the way to solve their problem, i.e. the manner in which 'the necessary relationship between literature and its socio-economic determinants operates', to use Posel's words.

This failure by Marxist literary theorists to agree on a solution to their problem indicates the existence of a variety of views and emphases among various theorists which accounts for the open-endedness of the theory. Hence Gugelberger's (1985:4) remark that 'Marxism is and always has been an open theory that continually transforms itself'.

Posel (1982) raises two important questions which presumably form the basis for the open-endedness of a Marxist literary theory. These questions are:

(i) whether literature is in its entirety the (literary) reproduction of the economic contradictions of the society which informs it, and

(ii) whether the tendency by some theorists to continually defend the relative independence of the author and the irreducible nature of the literary text to a mere tool, such as

ideology, for instance, holds water.

Despite these diverse perceptions amongst Marxist literary scholars several main viewpoints within broader Marxist theory can be distinguished. First, there is a classical view that is closest to Marx and Engels' own views and which is based on the nature of a capitalist society. It argues that in a capitalist society the proletarian class is dominated by the bourgeoisie and that the power of the latter does not end with 'material' production only. Their power to dominate is also manifest in political, legal, cultural and ideological spheres. This means that:

The social superstructure is, in the final analysis, geared towards the reproduction of its capitalist base. In particular ideology, our lived experience of capitalism, functions to legitimise capitalist class domination by concealing it (Posel 1982).

From this it may then be argued that one of the functions of literary criticism should be to unmask the ideology of capitalism and to expose its exploitative and oppressive tendencies. This assertion should not, however, tempt one to think that Marx had advocated a simple reductionist relationship between the base and the superstructure and hence a characteristic relationship between literature and society which assumes a one-to-one correspondence equation.

Instead, the claim that he made was instead, that the superstructure (those social relations within which literature is produced) is



ultimately dependent on the base (the economic base of the society). This view has been one of the most debated questions in Marxist literary theory. The question often asked has been whether literature can emerge from within a society and still avoid being influenced by it. The answer to this question is in the negative if one understands the question to imply the need to analyze literature in relation to broader social processes within which it has been produced.

Georg Lukacs' analytic approach also attempts to trace the manner in which literature yields either to capitalist ideology or fights against it, because 'literary ideology is a constellation of ideas about 'life' and 'the world' 'a weltanschauung' ... underlying a writer's work (cf. Posel 1982). From this assertion it becomes evident that ideology, which according to Lukacs manifests itself in literary form, becomes a crucial consideration in literary criticism.

A second main viewpoint within broader Marxist theory is the vulgar approach which insists on realism. While the proponents of this view consider literature to consist of two levels - a cultural production and a cultural superstructure - they insist that literature must be committed to reflecting the socio-economic conditions of a world that is striving to free itself from the shackles of capitalism. This means that the merits of literature are determined by the extent to which the work of art is successful in reflecting of social processes. Hence:

...a writer is great to the extent that he can provide society

in general (or the reading public of the time) with a true mirror of itself, of its conflicts and problems (Craig 1975:445).

This view is crudely reductionist. It means, firstly, that literature should merely reflect the economic mode of production and says 'nothing' about literature itself (cf. Posel 1982). Secondly, it implies that literature should in addition also act as an agent of social change. The direct result of this approach, especially its first part, is that it potentially turns literature into mere propaganda for the fulfilment of certain perceived social goals, thus reducing literature to mere ideology.

The impression created by this approach is that literature cannot exist in its own right as literature, the true product and image of the society, but only as a mere tool for attaining certain sectarian objectives. This view persists only in the crudest form of Socialist Realism, which 'treats the class nature of art as a simple matter of the writer's explicit class allegiance...' (Selden 1985:27). This reductionist approach is countered by Bennett's (1979:41) statement which argues that literature should not be viewed 'as a secondary reflection of something else, but as a real social force existing in its own right, with its own determinations and effects'.

What is significant in Bennett's view is that he supports the dual nature of literature as a cultural production which is nevertheless ultimately determined by the dominant mode of production. He does not, in this sense, endorse the reductionist tendency of the vulgar Marxist approach. He argues, instead, that while the work of art should retain its literariness it should not be completely divorced

from its context because:

Marxist criticism concerns the understanding of the formal processes through which literary texts act upon and transform dominant ideological forms (ibid p.8).

There is, however, a more acceptable version of socialist realism which seems to be currently popular in Africa and perhaps other third world countries where class struggle is still intense. According to Selden (1985:27) this view is a continuation and a development of bourgeois realism at a higher level. He says:

Bourgeois writers are judged not according to their class origins or explicit political commitment, but by the extent to which their writings reveal insights into the social developments of their time (ibid. p.27).

This approach, which focuses on the link between works of literature and history, can be easily understood if one views literature as 'production', and not simply as 'creation'. It is in fact history which provides creative writers with the raw material which they process and convert into artistic commodities. This comment is also enshrined in Selden's (1985:29) view in support of George Lukacs:

The writer does not impose an abstract order upon the world, but rather presents the reader with an image of the richness and complexity of life from which emerges a sense of the order within the complexity and subtlety of lived experience.

Pierre Macherey also holds a similar view and argues that history or society provide the literary means of production. In other words, history or society provides an 'infrastructure' for such a process to take place. Therefore the creation of a work of art is not a release of something which is there within an artist but a process of producing what history or society offers. Hence the need to suppress the notion of creation because 'All speculation over man the creator is intended to eliminate a real knowledge' (cf. Macherey 1978:68).

A third main viewpoint within broader Marxist theory also conceives of literature as social criticism. However, unlike the classical view which is concerned with class conflict, this school of thought is more concerned with the cultural effect on market values because the cultural effect also constitutes another form of domination. As a result this approach draws its material from a broader theoretical framework which explains the new form of domination arising from fetishism and the commercialization of art. It attempts to blend materialist concepts with other theories of textuality by analysing the ideological aspects of the literary texts. Analogously 'Art and literature ... remain the only sphere in which the domination of totalitarian society can be resisted' (Seiden 1985:34).

Another important contribution in social criticism comes from Althusser (1984) who adopts a structuralist Marxist approach. Through this approach he tries to explain social processes in terms of structuralist principles. The premise of his argument, as mentioned earlier, is that what was traditionally termed the super-structure is in fact a collectivity of semi-autonomous social forma-

tions or Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). There can one or more dominant social formations which can influence others. Therefore literature, as a category of the cultural formation, can be influenced in the same way as will be explained later in this study. There is also a tendency by dominant class to use, through the Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs), other social formations to impose its hegemony over the subordinate class(es). These considerations therefore need to be taken into account in literary criticism.

Eagleton (1978) also uses<sup>6</sup> a structuralist approach although his emphasis is on the ideological link between the literary text and history. This he achieves, as will be explained later, by investigating signification function of the structures of the text, such as figures, plot, time and narrative perspective, in relation to various categories of ideology, such as the General Mode of Production, the Literary Mode of Production, General Ideology, Aesthetic Ideology and Authorial Ideology.

To conclude this subsection one observation needs to be made. There is, as noted in this section, an ever changing conceptualization and shift of emphasis in Marxist literary approaches. This has been the situation since the inception of the materialist approach and is likely to persist for a foreseeable future. As Abichet (1984) puts it:

From its very inception, Marxist or materialist literary criticism has been beset by a number of contradictions, which various authors and generations of critics have tried to solve...

For this reason there will be a selective use of the various Marxist approaches. Althusser's and Eagleton's approaches will be chiefly used in this study including some of the views of African Marxists such as Amuta and Ngara which will be briefly discussed in following subsection.

#### 2.4. African materialist aesthetics

African materialist aesthetics is a very recent and evolving theory of literary criticism which is largely concerned with the unravelling of problems related to African literary studies. Looking broadly at African Marxism one can give certain descriptive features of this approach as will be attested by the discussion that follow: Firstly, it is "realist" in that social reality is important. Secondly, it is "identificatory", identifying writing and a specific social group of readers. Thirdly, it is "didactic", i.e. it raises consciousness which is a constitutive element of a process of restoring lost dignity.

These features are not accidental but emanate from the complexities of problems Africans have been faced with, especially in literary studies. The common concern among African Marxists is the relationship between literature and society, on the one hand, and the relationship between literature and history, on the other, because:

Literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society. The relationship between creative writing and these other forces can-

not be ignored, especially in Africa, where modern literature has grown against the background of European imperialism and its changing manifestations: slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism (Ngugi quoted by Riemenschneider 1984).

These concerns are, as already pointed out, at the centre of the African Marxist approach. African Marxists neither conceive of African literature nor engage in African literary studies without taking these issues into account. In order to grasp the complexities which encompass the study of African literature, one needs also to cite Amuta (1989:51) who says:

To seek to transcend the limitations of various formations of bourgeois criticism of African literature is to quest for a politically engaged, ideologically progressive and dialectical theory of that literature. In this quest, Marxism has been palpably and critically implicated not only because it represents the final crystallization of dialectical thought into a social and political proposition but also because it encapsulates an ideological proposition in the context of which progressive forces in society are engaged in the struggle for negating the legacy of neo-colonialism and frustrating the designs of imperialism.

These complexities and concerns are particularly manifest in the ongoing debate concerning the definition of African literature and African approaches to literary criticism vis-a-vis Western literature and literary criticism. For instance, any mention of African literary aesthetics could mean at least three things. (a) It could

mean a Western literary approach that has been imposed on Africa, (b) an 'African' literary approach that has been fashioned along the lines of Western traditions or (c) that form of literary criticism which has essentially developed and evolved in Africa.

Apparently there is, from perceived facts, not much debate about the first two of the above. Their authenticity, effectiveness and legitimacy as relevant tools in the study of African literature have until fairly recently been accepted without question. On the contrary, the claim for what is called African literary criticism, not simply because it is applied in the study of African literature, but because it insists on looking at things from within Africa, has resulted into enormous debate. The reasons for this concern are obvious. Acknowledgement of such an approach would upset the status quo.

The fact that what is called modern African literature has developed under the dominant foreign cultures means that African literary aesthetics has to contest seats with the long-established Western literary traditions in the African constituency, and the scales are tipped in favour of the former. The challenge of the new African literary aesthetics necessarily constitutes a real threat to the imperial and colonial forces whose ideologies have thrived comfortably under Western literary traditions because they are aesthetically 'apolitical'.

Gugelberger (1985:ix), for instance, argues that modern African literature and its reception by African critics is sociologically conditioned by the colonial milieu. Egudu holds a similar view but he



goes further by contrasting modern and traditional literatures. He writes as follows in this regard:

Modern African literature, as opposed to traditional, is an artistic study of the African predicament from the colonial milieu... Modern African literature not only manifests glaring human relevance, but also reflects the writer's awareness of social reality coupled with an imaginative response to that reality (Egudu 1978:4).

The reality which the African writer has known is cultural imperialism, colonialism, racial and political domination. If all these factors are expressed in literature and exposed in critical study they would have far-reaching effects on the existing social order. This realist view of African literature is essential because it addresses 'certain major questions about the evolution of literature, its reflection of class relations, and its function in society' (Selden 1985:25).

Ogunbesan clearly spells out the options at the African writer's disposal for engaging his people in the struggle for liberation from imperialist ideological tendencies. He says:

... the African writer should be both a cultural nationalist, explaining the tradition of his people to the largely hostile world, and a teacher, instilling dignity into his own people (Innest & Lindfords 1978:38).

This statement, which is akin to Eagleton's (1978) thesis concerning

the committed writer, advocates an approach which situates the study of African literature in both its historical and social setting and which means that it must be analysed within that context. Furthermore, such insistence means that the study of African literature should free itself from literary criticism's confines to formal and stylistic features because:

... apologists for literature, including conventional stylisticians, are preoccupied with the formal structures of the texts to the neglect of semantic interpretation and historical context and social function (Fowler 1981:20).

For the same reasons Gugelberger (1985) disapproves of what he calls 'bourgeois African criticism' which seems to be content with impressionistic and interpretative discussions of texts instead of analysing texts within a specific political, historical and economic context for purposes of facilitating change. He argues that African literature and literary criticism must:

- (i) have a specific political orientation,
- (ii) be radical in the Marxist sense of going to the root of the problem, which is man, and
- (iii) look at things through the eyes of oppressed groups.

The sentiments expressed above, especially with regard to the concern with identification and communication with the masses, are shared by other scholars such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who originated

the concept of 'decolonising the mind' of the African. From this notion then developed such as "the quest for relevance" which 'is the search for liberating perspective within which to see ourselves clearly in relationship to ourselves to other selves in the universe' (ibid. p.87). Ngugi noted that the use of foreign language in literature and the context that did not relate to the experiences of the people, systematically excluded the majority whether illiterate, semi-literate or literate. He remarks:

Prior to independence, education .... was an instrument of colonial policy designed to educate the people ... into acceptance of their role as colonized. The education system at independence was therefore an inheritance of colonialism so that literature syllabuses were centred on the study of an English literary tradition taught by English teachers. Such a situation meant that ... children were alienated from their own experiences [and] identity in an independent African country ... The present language and literature syllabuses are inadequate and irrelevant to the needs of the country. They are so organised that a ... child knows himself through London and New York (ibid. p.96-97).

It is the realization of the need to relate to the people that led Ngugi to change from writing in English to write in Gikuyu and to establish a cultural centre, developments which earned him a jail term and life in exile. Ngugi's is but one account of the circumstances that induce African writers to develop particular aesthetics, and African critics to a radical Marxist approaches. Ngugi's writings, as can be observed, are characterized by the

aesthetics of realism and identification which relate his works to the experiences of the people.

For Ngugi, having once decided for whom he would write - the Kenyan peasants and workers - using their common language is logical and necessary. He also advocates placing "African literature ..." at the centre of education through literature, and expects African critics to apply "a most rigorous criticism from the point of view of the the struggling masses," so that "the aesthetic of oppression and exploitation and of acquiescence with imperialism [will be replaced by] that of human struggle for total liberation" (Riemenschneider 1984).

Hence Riemenschneider's observation that Ngugu's tone 'has become more militant and his arguments less humanistic, more Marxist in diction and content, than they were in his earlier writings' (ibid.).

Emmanuel Ngara (1985) attempts to address a similar problem from an ideological perspective. He argues that the failure of the African elite to associate with the masses can be traced to the type of education they received through the medium of foreign languages, English particularly, which were loaded with vocabularies which scorned and scoffed at everything African. Such a vocabulary is essentially a mechanism for the cultural oppression of Africans through its degrading inferences which is characteristic of both the colonial and neo-colonial aesthetics. In his observation Ngara points out the case of the language used to degrade Africans and their culture:

Examples of such loaded words in English are 'native', 'savage', 'primitive', 'pagan', 'witchdoctor', which were commonly on the lips of British people during the colonial era and constituted an important element of the vocabulary passed on to those African 'natives' who had to the good fortune of learning the 'civilized language' of the British. These words referred to the conquered races, not to the conquerors. African rulers and ethnic groups were referred to as 'chiefs', 'tribes', and 'war-like natives', whereas European rulers and soldiers were described in such terms as 'Their Imperial Majesties', 'the Emperor', 'potentates', 'princess' and 'warriors' (ibid. 42).

Such terms of reference, and related views, reflect the dominant ideology, that of the ruling class, which the African elite has internalized, and which is reflected in both its writings and criticism. Ngara (1985) argues therefore that African literature needs to be approached in a manner that will identify the dominant ideologies inherent in a work of art. He points out that 'Modern African literature should not be seen in isolation from the prevailing economic and socio-political conditions and from dominant ideologies (ibid. p.37). He argues further that to strip African literature of historicity is to sink into empty and sterile academicism. However, if the approach he advocates is adopted, it will engender considerations of a dialectical relationship between literature and reality, and eventually lay bare social contradictions, ideologies and ideological conflict.

These assumptions are supported in Amuta's (1989:76) proposition of a (materialist) dialectical approach to the study of African litera-

ture:

In the African instance, the attraction of a dialectical alternative becomes even stronger because of the incontrovertible socio-historical determination of African literature in general. From the oral chants and narratives of ancient Africa to the most contemporary literary expressions of our modern writers, the challenges and artistic limits of African literature have always been set by experiences and problems of a fundamentally socio-historical nature. Accordingly, the precise nature of these challenges and problems has equally been historical and dynamic.

Therefore, by implication, African Marxist literary criticism is grounded in the concepts of both dialectical and of historical materialism, albeit with African connotations of these views, which accords African Marxism a specific category in the broader Marxist literary approach. The desire for the recognition of such a category can be located in the unwillingness of African Marxist scholars to simply adopt the views that have been coined outside Africa and apply them willy nilly in African literary criticism. Analogously, the gist of this argument is that a kind of Marxist approach in the study of African literature will, in the final analysis, be determined by the conditions that are prevalent in Africa.

## CHAPTER 3

## DEFINING AND REDEFINING PROTEST LITERATURE

## 3.1. Introduction

This chapter will explore and suggest definitions and re-definitions of protest literature by considering current views on this subject and by proposing other views. Subsection 3.2. will survey protest literature and also explore possible causes of this trend in literature. Subsection 3.3. will look at African protest literature which takes into account developments in the broader African literary tradition. Subsection 3.4. will consider black protest literature and its developments as a branch, rather than a special category, of African protest literature. Subsection 3.5. will consider why materialism is important as an analytical tool in the study of black protest literature.

Up to this point in time protest literature has generally been stemming from a broad culture of protest. It is political because it has to do with the validation of a culture which has been politically suppressed, as Earl Lovelace (quoted in *New Nation* 13-19 Dec 1991:8), a Trinidadian novelist, pointed out during the *New Nation* Writer's Conference which was held in Johannesburg in December 1991. He said:

The validation of one's culture is a political act because the

suppression was a political act. You cannot let someone bury something and then say it will come out on its own. You have to dig it up.

Abrahams (1986:34), citing Gordimer, states that the element of protest in literature is attributable to a situation 'where the law effectively prevents any real identification of the writer with his society as a whole'. This situation makes the production of a (national) literature impossible. One encounters, instead, wrong-headed perceptions of selfhood and otherness whose ultimate product is a literature portraying a one-sided view of society. People conceptualize and experience life in exclusively delineated compartments of communities, and this is a recipe for conflict rather than for harmony.

Abrahams, for this reason and given the prevailing socio-political situation in the country, acknowledges that it is still impossible in South Africa to conceptualise the question of literature in a wide perspective. He traces the history of protest literature from earlier days but points out that socio-political factors impose constraints on a researcher who wishes to engage in an inclusive literary study. In making this observation he admits that:

My own investigation is more limited and begins with the Dutch invasion which even in oral literature transformed themes of harmonious concerns to ones of conflict, and the tribal tale tellers established a tradition of protest against the brutal occupation by the Dutch. This is why Cosmo Pieterse contends that in Africa, South Africa 'is the cradle of the literary



protest tradition' (ibid. p.35).

This claim alludes to the fact that the subsequent protracted domination of black South Africans ultimately made politics a way of life. Political policies have had unlimited power to decide where blacks may or may not live, what education they may or may not receive, where they may or may not work and what wages they may or may not earn.

There are, however, many factors - such as those arising from the definition of literature itself - other than politics per se that have entrenched the element of protest in African literature. Another such factor is the onslaught of Western imperialism which has not only dominated Africa politically but also looked at everything African as less than, or inferior to, the Western. A Nigerian scholar, Adebayo Williams, attempts to explain why African literary criticism is also political. He says:

In a world driven by exploitation and inequality, a world where literature and culture are often deployed to further the alienation of mankind, the task of critical disclosure is by its very nature political (New Nation 24-30 Jan 92:8).

Cosmo Pieterse (1969) sees protest and conflict as mutually inclusive because protest against certain conditions may necessarily lead to conflict in other spheres of material existence. It is in the context of Cosmo's assertion that one should explore protest in literature by surveying protest in literature, considering why African protest literature is different from black protest literature, and

why it is important to use a materialist analysis in dealing with this literature.

### 3.2. An overview of protest literature

This subsection attempts to give a concise overview of perceptions regarding the definition of protest literature, as well as considering what causes the element of protest in literature. Various forms of protest and the social dynamics relating to protest literature in South Africa will also be considered.

So many scholars, locally and abroad, have already explored the subject of protest literature that it could seem this topic has been exhausted. It would be unrealistic to attempt to deny this obvious truth. If such is the position, then why this study? There is more than one answer to this question.

Firstly, there is the argument that there are various forms of protest, each of which requires indepth research. There is what could be called 'mild protest', in which an awareness of an undesirable situation is merely registered to restrain the offender(s). There is 'evolutionary protest' which presents the existing conditions as undesirable and suggests alternatives. There is 'militant protest' which insists on replacing the existing conditions with alternative social structures.

As inferred in Abraham's quotation, protest in literature became (more) articulate after the invasion of Africa by the Western powers when communities and social relations were forcibly made distinct by

rule of law, the results of which were the rise of consciousness of selfhood and otherness. In traditional African community protest was subtle and existed within the context of selfhood nlike that of the colonial and neo-colonial era which existed in a situation of selfhood and otherness. This implies the development of separate traditions and cultural practices among the colonizer and the colonized. The tragedy of colonial occupation, against this back-drop, is that the culture of the indigenous people was forcibly suppressed while that of the colonizers was strenuously promoted.

Abrahams' (1986:105-106) research on the works of George Lamming and Chinua Achebe comes to the following enlightening conclusion about literature in traditional African society:

The ethos of traditional society was enshrined in an oral, religious, and literary tradition through which the community transmitted from one generation to [another] generation its customs, values and norms. The poet and the storyteller stood at the centre of this tradition, as the community's chroniclers, entertainers, and collective conscience. Their contribution to society was considered of the greatest significance. The oral creative act was a communal act rather than the product of a particular genius.

This does not suggest a monolithic community, but implies that society was closely knit and had shared values. It was a communal duty to correct any form of deviant behaviour and the poet or the storyteller as the spokesperson of the community would register the common concern to restrain the deviant person and other prospective

transgressors. Even in certain festive songs this would be done in a very subtle way without (deliberately) arousing ill-feelings because mutual respect among people was one of the values to be nurtured. This is what could be termed mild protest, which is only possible in a society with shared norms and values.

With the advent of colonialism which imposed structural social differentiation, this kind of protest was no longer possible. An articulate method of protesting which would send a clear message then became desirable. Moreover it was no longer a matter of a community protesting against a member of the same community, but one community protesting against another. With diverse cultural values and norms, coupled with the problem of language, the mode of protest had to change.

Having, through schooling, gained the advantage of the settler's language and literacy, African writers were poised to direct the protest of their communities against the Europeans in the languages they would understand, i.e. European languages. The message and its aim had to be clearer and more direct. This development, which in South Africa began with the Drum and journalism schools of thought about the middle of the twentieth century, ushered in - with the likes of Plaatje's *Mhudi* and Mphahlele's *Marabastad* as its forerunners - a period of African literature in English (cf. Abrahams 1986:38-39). This is the period termed evolutionary protest which saw the birth of writings which articulately condemned injustices in South Africa.

When, in the early sixties, the situation of indigenous South Afri-

cans worsened through the bannings, imprisonment and exiling of black political leaders, as well as through the suppression of political organisations, the trend in African protest writing in English was set to change. It not only re-emerged in the late seventies with more militant writers such as Serote, Gwala and Mlotse, but it also expanded through the re-definition of African literature in English as black literature. In a re-defined version African literature did not mean something different from European literature but meant a literature that was unique: a literature that had a definition of its own which was not based on something else. This development, which was inspired by Black Consciousness ideology, through this re-definition assembled all the writings of the erstwhile non-white communities under one tradition, namely, the black literary tradition characteristic of the militancy of the BCM generation.

The works of the likes of Alex la Guma, Dennis Brutus and Richard Rive then fell under the category of militant protest. However, owing to historical developments and the fact that various (racial and ethnic) groups have been compartmentalised through South Africa's racial laws, each writer (mostly) wrote from within the experience of his own social group. Although all the writings of blacks form a broad category of what is called 'black experience', these divisions have placed certain constraints on the critic's freedom to consider each and every corner of this tradition.

For instance, an African who has been prevented by law from participating in the culture of either the Indian or the Coloured communities, and vice versa, does not have first-hand cultural informa-

tion about those communities. He is thus compelled to rely mainly on second-hand information. This situation is nevertheless not a determining factor in research. It can rather be viewed as a limiting factor which further helps to highlight social problems in South Africa. However, the condition of the blanket oppression of the erstwhile non-white communities has helped to forge the literatures from these communities into one collective black protest literature.

### 3.3. African protest literature

This subsection attempts to show that African literature, as defined, has acquired its protest component as a result of the domineering effects of colonial conquest. From such a consideration then a definition or re-definition of African literature will be made according to the argument made in this study. The consideration of such a definition is crucial because it is at the centre of the controversy surrounding African literature and hence African literary criticism.

The question whether there is anything which can be termed African literature, in the exact sense of the word, has been raised at numerous conferences and publications since this literature became a subject of research. According to Ngara (1975:40) this question was first raised by Obianjunwa Wali in 1960. According to Bishop (1971:27) the serious debate regarding the definition of African literature was actually initiated in 1962 'when Christopher Okigbo put the question before the Conference of African Writers of English Expression, held on June 8-9, at Makerere University' in Uganda. The controversy revolved around the exact definition of African litera-

ture.

Apart from the question of the use of European languages, the questions were also raised whether a literature is African because it has been produced in Africa by both Africans and non-African writers; whether it is a literature produced all over the world, written on Africa and about Africans; whether it is literature produced by Africans of African descent (cf. Bloke Modisane's quote in Bishop 1971:27); and whether it is African because it has an African context. The last two questions are of nationalistic nature in the sense that they consider 'Africans' as referring strictly to the indigenous people of the continent.

The issue pertaining to the definition of African literature is therefore extremely complex. It is not simply about who is writing it. It is also about the what and the how of what is written. In fact Achebe (1975:56) has already sounded a stern warning that any:

... attempt to define African literature in terms which overlook the complexities of the African scene at the material time is doomed to failure.

Similarly, Amuta (1989:106) argues that:

... the trouble with African literature is not that of a definition. It has to do with the larger task of freeing knowledge about African literature from the constrictive embrace of bourgeois intellectual mystification.

The problem at hand may be attributed to the fact that modern African literatures did not entirely evolve internally from oral to written form as did literatures in other parts of the world. The latter phase of modern African literatures evolved within foreign cultures and, for that matter, the first critics of African literature also came from foreign cultures. The possibility here, which has been hotly debated, is that modern African literatures were conceived through foreign influences and not in their own rights. However, this question of definition concerns not only modern literatures, but also traditional literatures as well, as one can gather from the following assertion:

We have reached a stage, in our study of African literature, when it is no longer polite, in academic circles, to raise an eyebrow when mention is made of the existence of literature - and other arts - in the non-literate Africa of pre-missionary, pre-colonial days (Kunene 1971:ix).

In fact, African oral literature started receiving serious attention only fairly recently in South Africa, a development which gave in 1990 gave rise to the birth The Folklore Society of South Africa. Sentiments expressed in Kunene's statement are indicative of the fact that, as in other literatures, there is an oral/traditional component in African literature, which can be used as a basis for asserting that there must also be a modern literature which is typically African.

The quotation from Kunene, above, also accentuates two crucial points enshrined in African literature. In fact, two tendencies are



suggested. One is that African literature has not been properly conceived - especially not by colonialists, including the missionaries, the original students-cum-scholars of African literature. Second is the fact that African scholars now want to seize the initiative in respect of putting their literature into its right perspective. What is common to both tendencies is the extreme dissatisfaction about the manner in which the entire study of African literature has hitherto been conducted. Bob Leshoai advances two reasons which seem to account for the perceived misconception of African literature. He writes as follows in his article, *Uses of traditional literature*:

When the white people first settled in Africa, the majority of them regarded the life of black people with indifference, inconsequence and disdain; and the few who showed any interest in the way of (life of) black people, generally misunderstood and misinterpreted them... (from Mutloatse 1981:242).

Kunene (1971) cites the case of poetry performances - especially of praise poetry - which are coupled with ululations, dancing and related activities. This activity, in itself, let alone the rendition of the poetry, was considered amusing by these scholars. On the other hand, as Guma (1977) points out, initiation was also seen as a sign of heathenism. The latter misconception arises from the fact that in biblical Israel initiation had a religious significance, while in traditional Africa it never had that significance. It was simply a stage in life where African children were being finally prepared for adulthood.

Some of the first literate Africans, however, also turned their

backs on the culture that had nurtured them by embracing the 'civilized culture'. Kunene observes as follows in connection with the poetry performances cited above:

But soon, alas, came the 'cleansed' black man who also begins to laugh at his 'uncleansed' brothers and sisters for whom the spectacle is worthy of heroes - he fails to see the tragic irony that he is, in fact, laughing at himself. For him there is no literature worthy of the name except that of the missionaries and the colonizer's culture (Kunene 1971: xii).

What has been said so far suggests the predicament and contradictions with which the African writers had to contend. The situation seems, in the first place, unavoidable, because their (the Africans) training had to be reflected, in one way or another, in their writings and perhaps even in their newly acquired perception of the world. Members of the earlier generation of African writers were therefore compelled to put their own languages into a foreign mould, where a story had to be a novel, and a poem had to have rhyming lines, as Kunene observes. Such development can be seen as a process of alienation and self-denial. It may consequently be contested that learning is one thing, but self-denial another.

It may also be argued that from the colonial era there have developed literatures and critical attitudes which were to be questioned, disputed and even rejected later by subsequent generations of African scholars of literature. Amuta (1989:18) accounts as follows for the difference of world views between the 'colonised' and the 'Africanist' critics:

... the distinction between bourgeois critics of African literature and their radical, anti-imperialist counterparts is one of world view and ideological orientation; it is not that of means of livelihood, for all African literary critics, as members of the neo-colonial intelligentsia, subsist mainly on public patronage through grants, subventions and salaries channelled through universities, research institutes and other cultural affairs outfits.

It can be understood from this situation why the condition of Western domination could not worsen when African writers resorted to writing in European languages. Contrary to the dreaded expectation of complete assimilation, the situation developed differently. Writing in European languages did not mean final capitulation to imperialist ideological forces. It meant, instead, the beginning of a new era - the African literary Renaissance - whose ideological leaning, albeit with different slants such as Negritude or Africanism, stretches up to the present day. African writers began agitating for a literature that was truly theirs, a literature that would reflect their view of the world and account for the African experience. The stage was therefore set for the beginning of the era of protest and re-education. Consequently, Achebe, one of the popular African writers, perceives his role as a writer as follows:

I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach readers that their past - with all its imperfections - was not one long night of savagery from which the first European acting on God's behalf

delivered them. Perhaps what I write is applied art as distinct from pure. But who cares? Art is important but so is education of the kind I have in mind. And I don't see that the two are mutually exclusive (cf. Gugelberger 1985: 23).

While Achebe wants, through his works, to re-live the African past in modern writings, Irele (1971) insists on the continuity between traditional and modern African literature. He follows a two-staged approach trying to maintain this link while at the same time he recognises the changing conditions under which modern African literature has developed. Firstly, he tries to prove the inseparability of modern and traditional African literature by ascribing their linkage to historical and social significance. Secondly, he highlights conditions under which modern African literature developed, the ones that gave it a peculiar language, form, and content relationship: the language being European and content and context being African. And in appreciating this apparently irreconcilable language-form-content relationship he remarks as follows:

Yet what is significant about this literature is not only that it provides in its own historical development and in its preoccupation ... a record of the tensions and the contradictions in present day Africa, but also that in its directions it is providing our writers, that is the sensitive minds among us, with a means of exploring intensely and intimately the well-spring of our modern experience in all its range and complexity (from Heywood 1971:9-10).

The situation is such because the African writer had to grope in the

darkness of domination, using his imagination, to create (the dawn of) a new literary era in Africa. This, necessarily, means a situation in which the African writer would no longer just accept as finished products the European language and form and merely give an African content. He had, instead, to adapt the acquired European languages and forms to his tradition, i.e. to give them an African idiom. In that manner language was made to produce an effect it would otherwise not have achieved. But this new development posed a few problems to some erstwhile Western critics of African literature. They, as a result, tended to fail to capture the most salient points in African literature.

Abrahams (1980) cites the case of a certain Killian who misinterpreted a passage from Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. He attributes this shortcoming to attitude rather than to naivety or ignorance. Armah (in Abrahams 1980:2) explains this attitude in the following manner:

Western interests have long been and continue to be anti-African. Western scholars, critics of African literature included, are nothing if not Westerners working in the interest of the West. Their ideas and theories are meant to reinforce these interests, not to undercut them.

This statement brings to the surface problems which many African scholars experienced and continue to experience with Western criticism. At the same time this statement should not be understood as rejecting out of hand whatever is Western, nor should it be construed as anti-Western. In fact, African scholars have learned and can still learn a lot from the West. What this statement is calling

for is a measure of sensitivity from Western scholars for African concerns. All cultures are legitimate in their respective communities and have the right to exist and to develop. African literary scholars would like to see their literature developing unhampered - from within, as it were. Accordingly one would say that the problem is not impossible to address because the cause is well understood.

Irele (in Abrahams 1980:14) makes the following enlightening statement in this regard:

At the root of the problem of evaluation..., is the fact that modern African literature, being written in the European languages, has had its early audience and its critics abroad. The temptation for the European to see it (African literature) either charitably as an offshoot, or uncharitably as an imitation, of his own literature, creates for us at this end complications of a quite serious nature, not least of which is the difficulty of the situation of modern African literature concretely...

The attitudes analysed in this paragraph tend to distort social and historical realities by attempting to undermine the existence of African culture, whose literary tradition, like other literatures, has its roots in its oral component from which modern forms (should) have evolved. Nonetheless, this perception reveals what one could view as the contest of cultures: one culture trying to maintain its dominance over the other, while the other tries to rid itself of such domination and to re-establish itself.

It would seem, against this background, that if other forms of African artistic production, such as arts, music and other forms of material cultural artefacts, have already claimed their place among cultures of the world, then it is also possible for African literature and criticism to attain such stature. However, the persistent existence of colonial ideology, in the minds of Western bourgeois critics and their African disciples, imposes serious constraints on this development and is attributable to the fact that:

... colonialist criticism is the elaboration of the cardinal axiom of colonialist ideology into a criticism with specific application to the emergent literature of the erstwhile colonized - in this case, Africans. A supremacist arrogance predicated on racial prejudice is the informing impulse of this brand of criticism ... (Amuta 1989:18-9).

Abrahams, in the same vein, makes another important observation which implies that the problem of African literary criticism is (possibly) still far from being solved. He identifies two types of Western critics of African literature: those who 'know their Africans' - critics whom Jomo Kenyatta once described as 'professional friends and interpreters of the African' (ibid p.19) - and, more seriously, the second type that Achebe identifies as a group that:

... consists of those 'know it all' critics, who, because of their mastery at 'arranging things,' ironically enough occupy the choice position in African studies at the universities in Africa, Europe and North America, and who virtually hog all the

rights and openings to the publishing outlets of the Western world. These critics see the African as a somewhat unfinished European who with patient guidance will grow up one day (ibid. p.20).

It would seem, however, that, in spite of the tussle between Africa and the West, African scholars are gradually closing ranks and are moving towards a point where most of them insist that African literature should be perceived as a fully-fledged literature, with its own peculiar features. Thus condescending comments such as: 'African literature lacks this or that...', 'Characters are described instead of being portrayed' and so forth, should no longer be taken seriously because they imply that African literature can only be understood and appreciated in terms of some other literature which is superior and supposedly has all the ingredients of literariness. Such views ignore the peculiar linguistic, political, social, cultural and religious considerations which give African literature a unique, yet complete, character. Consequently, 'an African writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant' to use Achebe's (quoted by Shava 1989:3) words.

The question of African literary criticism has, however, not yet received such wide consideration. Some bourgeois African critics and fundamental formalists and structuralists still overlook and tend to resist the sociological critical approach while, in fact, literature must serve as 'an indicator for an essential aspect of our evolution; more, the principal channel through which the collective adventure of the new Africa is being given expression', (Irele in



Heywood 1971: 21). According to Irele this can be achieved if African literature would break away from being a tributary of Western literature and would strive to become a literature in its own right, claiming its rightful place among the cultures of modern Africa and the world. Against this background he points out the essence of social criticism:

The impact of our writers' efforts will only come across if we, as critics, can relate their works to the whole state and condition of our people's existence, draw out their meaning for them by demonstrating not only their excellence, at least where the best ones are concerned, but also their relevance and significance (Irele in Heywood 1971:22).

However, much as it seems that there is a general craving for the recognition of African literary aesthetics, the ultimate aim is not to usurp the whole exercise of African literary criticism and make it the private property of Africans. It is, instead, to democratize literary criticism - to make it open to other views rather than to absolutise it. The views expressed thus far, concerning African literature and literary criticism, have received another boost and acquired a new dimension in South Africa under what in the present study has been termed 'black protest literature'.

### 3.4. Black protest literature

Contemporary black protest literature issues from a broad culture of African (and other non-white communities), national protest which re-emerged in South Africa, in a different form, in the late sixties

and early seventies and changed the complexion of the liberation struggle in this country. The most significant feature of this era is that it followed the effective banning and suppression of all liberation movements, the silencing and the incarceration of the leaders of resistance movements and, as such, the outlawing of all forms of legal protest.

The Black Consciousness Movement, which inspired the literature under consideration, emerged under these circumstances. It had to pioneer and nurture the liberation struggle but at the same time avoid the ever alert hand of the law. Therefore it is no wonder that the first literature magazine of the period acquired the name *Staffrider*. The motive and nature of the magazine are clearly expressed in Meshack Mabogoane's poem, entitled, '*Staffrider*':

Ah, *Staffrider*, you are 'a skelm of sorts',  
 That's how one muse set you in print,  
 here to be a harbinger of feelings and thoughts,  
 A vehicle to convey riches from the scribes' mint

But who are you to be so named  
 And issue from this world so rough!  
 That turns off oldies, makes you ill-famed  
 As they see you danger ride? You are tough

I must admit, your feet nimble and crafty  
 Dangling on vehicles moving with speeds like light,  
 You dart on and off in a manner so jaunty  
 It sends a chill - and yet, oh what a sight!

That muse has given you honour  
 In a deed that has artistry as intent  
 Translating your dextrous touch and valour  
 To works that give vision essential content.

In this your new-found platform,  
 That has gained goodly notice  
 From those whose minds you must form  
 And whose hearts fill with creative justice,

Continue: if you change an iota of human granite  
 Into the soil that sprouts liberty's food  
 You'll have more value than all the dynamite  
 That blasts rocks for the financier's good.

(Staffrider Vol. 7 No. 3&4 1988:xiii)

The meaning attached to the word 'Staffrider' is, as can be understood from the above poem, not confined to that of a popular township hero cum train entertainer, the staffrider, who often boards a train without a ticket, and which is just the original meaning deriving from the staffrider figure who survives by breaking the law. This figure also has a symbolic meaning. The figure 'staffrider', here, is the embodiment of the struggle for the survival of blacks in South Africa. In order to survive in this country blacks, in one way or another, had to break the law which had systematically denied them the right to live. This observation is reminiscent of what Mandela said in the dock during the famous Rivonia Trial:

... there comes a time, as it came in my life, when a man is denied the right to live a normal life, when he can only live the life of an outlaw because the government has so decreed to use the law to impose a state of outlawry upon him (Motlhabi 1984:68).

The train thus symbolises the system of all those oppressive laws which blacks are forced, consciously or unconsciously, to disobey. Their survival has become a miracle - something at which to marvel.

The third meaning of 'staffrider' pertains to black literature itself. The tradition of cultural reification and fetishism, i.e. of the market-oriented literary production and the elitist bourgeois criticism symbolized by the train, tend to be defied by the new literature (populist black literature) which seems inclined to overlook some of the principles of the so-called established literary traditions, just as the figure 'staffrider' does.

Ntuli's short story, *Magawulana* (*Staffrider* vol.1 no.1 1978), which has a character similar to 'staffrider', further illustrates this fact. However, the implication of 'staffrider' goes beyond the meanings discussed above. It also means a messenger like the messenger of the gods in classical myths. He may be liked or disliked, but he is there and must be taken notice of - and this is what 'Staffrider' literature is all about.

This literature has made significant strides since its inception. Firstly it succeeded in overcoming the elitist euphoria. It served

and continues to serve as a forum, a mediator, between the writer and the reader, and in the process it has succeeded in drawing contributors from a wide section of the community, not only those espousing the Black Consciousness ideology. Another significant feature of this literary tradition is that it has avoided imposing standards, while at the same time encouraging excellence by subjecting itself to (constructive) criticism, and consequently contributions come not only from the seasoned author but also from the novice as well. This is what the democratisation of literary practice is all about.

Central to the philosophy of black literature is the idea that it is a developing community-based art. It is the kind of literature that will finally portray the black man and his circumstances as well as to promote his self-image. In fact the 'Manifesto of Black Literature' is contained in the title of Steve Biko's book, 'I Write What I Like' (1970) and it has been put into effect by Mutloatse, Mphahlele and other black scholars. Black literature is, in essence, a pro-active literature because it emerges from a people who were 'culturally colonized but at the same time rejected by the colonizers as unfit to participate fully in their culture' (Cornwell 1979:8). Therefore

What is of vital importance is that the black artist, in particular the writer, should understand that he has a purpose. And that his writings have a role to play in the black man's life. It is history in the making. This time it is a cultural history penned down by the black man himself (Mutloatse 1980:1).

Obviously Mutloatse is advocating the rewriting of history and a reconstruction of culture by black artists using their world experience. In the process the writer will be able to forge closer links with his reading community by relating his works to the reality around them, something absent from the elitist culture which separates writer from the reader and art from society.

The insistence that the black writer should express his communal experience is essential in the present climate in South Africa because 'this is the time when black writers should not feel ashamed of portraying the black experience, even though outsiders may hammer them for talking too much about apartheid instead of about 'nice things' (Mutloatse 1980:2). This trend cannot be avoided because the experience of the black person in South Africa has been that of the agonising impact of apartheid which affected every aspect of his or her existence.

Thus for the black South African, the act of creative writing is inescapably a form of political action, and unless he turns his back on the reality which confronts him and retreats into a private, imaginary world, it is also a form of social action (Cornwell 1979:4).

In this manner literature is seen as a rallying point for social action to challenge the status quo according to the principle that 'the orientation of protest fiction has the identity of both the speech act and social action', to use Cornwell's words (ibid.).

The peculiar features which characterise black protest literature in South Africa do not warrant a simplistic dismissal of black literature as mere propaganda or ideological literature. If it is acknowledged that literature is affected by the conditions of apartheid propaganda and ideology then, certainly, it will in one way or another reflect resistance to these very conditions.

For this reason black South African literature is tendentious because 'in epochs of class struggle there is not and cannot be a literature which is not class literature, not tendentious, allegedly non-political' (Selden 1985:28). Black literature has, thus, been intended to serve the black community by relating fiction to class struggle and the propaganda of the oppressive apartheid ideology. Black protest literature has, thus, been intended to serve the black community by relating fiction to political struggle. Therefore:

The belief that art cannot do the work of a petrol bomb or even a pamphlet in a political struggle is credal to orthodox Western aesthetics (Cornwell 1979:16).

It would, however, sound naive to pretend that the current trend in black literature is not disturbing. It is disturbing in the sense that it demands to be given attention whether one likes it or not, as Nadine Gordimer (1973:33) aptly observes:

'Politics in a work of literature is like a pistol shot in the middle of the concert, something loud and vulgar, and yet something to which it is not possible to refuse one's attention'.

Indeed, this is how it would be in a normal social order. However, in a situation such as that of South Africa in the eighties, political literature is bound to become a way of life. It is the conspicuous absence of freedom for black South Africans that makes politics a fate, a way of life and a goal to be reached. It should therefore be conceded that in South Africa, as in the rest of Africa during the colonial era, political literature

... does not occur as a vulgar interruption of the more exalted pursuits of life, but as fate. Novels of political action - the struggle for liberation from white domination, ... this theme lies right at the centre of this motivation, comes right from the heart of this fate (ibid. p.35).

Such is the situation that determines the form, content and tone of black literature in our country. Contemporary black writers have been faced with an even more demanding situation than could have been imagined. They have had to act as custodians of their communities: fight white domination, inculcate the spirit of national pride among the oppressed, substitute for the voices of the exiled and silenced leaders, rekindle the spirit of resistance and at the same time evade the state machinery of oppression.

That is why there is a need further to distinguish two forms of militant protest, namely, the direct protest often found in narratives, (auto)biographies, and drama (in those scripts that have been documented), and indirect protest which has thrived in undocumented or 'smuggled' plays and in satirical and subtle poetry which have main-



ly not been documented but have been performed.

It is therefore a reality that cannot be wished away that black protest literature in South Africa, like its sister literatures in other parts of the continent, is essentially political, articulately revolutionary and overtly radical. Other themes do not, as yet, command much appeal and induce inspiration in both writer and reader, as Mzwakhe Mbuli rightly points out in his poem, *The Crocodile*:

How hard and tormenting it is  
 To write about slavery and not freedom  
 How hard and tormenting it is  
 To write about pain and not joy  
 When shall I write about the daffodils?  
 How can I write about the beauty of nature?  
 When the ground is daily soaked  
 With the blood of the innocent.

(*New Nation* Feb.15-21 1991:17)

Mbuli's poem clearly signifies that, because literature derives its material from given circumstances, there is an inevitable compulsion on the black author to respond to his conditions and to articulate his situation. At the same time it expresses the desire (which the author shares with other fellow blacks) to find himself one day in a kind of environment in which he can write appreciative poetry instead of lamentations. There is also an unmistakable desire for freedom in Mbuli's poem. Richard Rive (in *English Academy Review* 1982:33) summarises these perceptions clearly:

(i) The effect of South African society on any individual, especially the black man, is a very real one...

(ii) The black writer cannot therefore create and at the same time ignore the realities of the situation surrounding him...

(iii) And these effects not only determine what he writes but how he writes...

(iv) He (therefore) uses his writing to create and maintain the climate within which he hopes meaningful change will become effective.

Such observations call for a specific way of looking at South African black literature. To try and look at it in terms of how it fails to meet the imposed standards of Western literary traditions, as used to be the case, and to specifically emphasise that failure, will be to miss the point. South African black literature should, instead, be looked at from the point of view of what it is, how and why it differs or should differ from other literatures. The most essential aspect to be taken into account here is that it is a developing literature within a social order which is being forced to change.

### 3.5. Why a materialist analysis?

In societies such as that of South Africa there is, as pointed out earlier, no national literary tradition but merely fragments of ethnically or racially divided literatures. A literary critic is com-

pelled to isolate, and to focus upon, a particular literary tradition because any attempt to embrace all traditions not only risks an assumed superficial generalisation, but also is cumbersome, although not impossible. The critic is, as a result, faced with the additional task of justifying such a selective undertaking.

Amuta (1989:79) seems to provide a useful tool for confronting this problem in what he calls a dialectical theory of African literature because, by its definition:

...a dialectical theory of literature primarily underlines the inexorable socio-historical predication of literature. In being a product of social experience, literature is in turn an active producer of meanings, values and aesthetic effects which have great implications for the development of society.

Having established this framework, Amuta's argues that social considerations are also an important component of literary criticism because:

The values, criteria and standards by which literature is measured are in themselves matrixed in the system of values of a given society. But society manifests itself in terms of definite classes, groups and formations in the process of the production and reproduction of the means and ends of sustenance of life. Therefore, literary values are not after all very literary but derive from the configuration of social values in general (ibid.).

One needs, however, to be cautious in defining and unravelling the ideological relationship between the literary text and social history, as Eagleton (1978:72) explains in the following assertion:

History, then, certainly 'enters' the text, not least the historical text; but it enters it precisely as ideology, as a presence determined and distorted by its measurable absence. This is not to say that the task of the critic is then to wrench the mask from its face. It is rather that history is 'present' in the text in the form of a double-absence. The text takes as its object, not the real, but certain significations by which the real life presents itself - significations which are themselves the product of its partial abolition. Within the text itself, then, ideology becomes a dominant structure, determining the character and disposition of certain 'pseudo-real' constituents... History, one might say, is the ultimate signifier of literature, as it is the ultimate signified.

Black literature has been described as the 'literature that penetrates the relations of capitalism, and that demonstrates the connection between these relations and the quality of lived experience' (Vaughan 1982). Defining it in these terms makes it a literature whose embedded aim is to portray those relations and to describe the ideological link between the text and reality.

The task of the critic of black protest literature should therefore be to analyse social formations, to explore and to explain the relationships between the Repressive State Apparatuses and Ideological

State Apparatuses that are responsible for the maintenance and the production as well as the reproduction of unequal social relations. Thus considerations of the relations within the superstructure as well as the relations between the base and the superstructure are important in the analysis of black literature.

As a matter of fact, black literature establishes, by its very nature, the immediate relationship between literature - which is the product of the lived experience - and the perceived reality or ideology. Therefore, in order to effectively analyse this literature (which is socially determined) one has to understand its social dynamics and this can best be achieved by employing both dialectical and historical materialist approaches. The following argument attests to the necessity of this proposition:

In the plainest sense, of course, literature is itself one part of the structure, the institutions, the actions of society - like bread or banking. In action, literature is both a reflection and a force. It may simply record the kind of society that the writer knows - its values, problems, structure, events. Or, with bludgeon or rapier, it may attack this very society and its present evils. More often, literature embodies the writer's evaluation of his world, or illuminates its possibilities (Slote 1964:v).

Conditions of oppression in South Africa have created, within the same society, the first world and third world situations which are characterised by dichotomies of the ruling and oppressed classes, the privileged and the underprivileged, the powerful and the power-

less, etc. But these contradictions are not accidental. They have come about as a result of an historical process which has had far reaching implications for all the strata of society.

The fundamental issue that affects all South Africans is oppression. Therefore there is a need to liberate all South Africans, not only blacks. But blacks, being an oppressed class, are the ones to initiate such a development. According to Freire (1963:20) oppression dehumanises. It dehumanises not only the oppressed but the oppressor as well. But once the oppressed becomes aware of his oppression he develops a consciousness which makes him reflect and act upon his society in order to transform it. From this situation develops the struggle to liberate people - to restore their lost humanity. Freire considers this to be the people's vocation.

Therefore blacks, being an oppressed community, see the struggle for humanity as their vocation and their writings as part of cultural production are aimed at facilitating the process of liberation. In the process of the struggle they strive to break away from the colonial myth which created a perception that whatever pertains to blacks is by nature inferior, that whatever they are is less than 'white', that humanity, civilisation, knowledge, wealth, and so on, are exclusive attributes of whites. Black Consciousness strives to correct this misconception by freeing the black person from his or her distorted self-image and this cannot be done by emulating the other lest this perpetuates a distortion of reality.

In the analysis of black South African literature one should, as a basis, consider the far-reaching implications of a society ravaged

by racism and capitalism. However, as already pointed out, South Africa is neither a purely class nor racial-caste society. The two elements co-exist in our society. One needs, however, first to explain why capitalism in South Africa does not fit exactly into the usual definition of the term. This issue is important in the study of black protest literature because of the effect the economic base has on other forms of social production. In other words, the General Mode of Production, which is capitalist, is an important consideration because of the impact it has on the Literary Mode of Production. Therefore it is important to understand how capitalism, as another area of the domination of Africa by the West, was introduced in South Africa.

Unlike in Western Europe, where capitalism evolved internally from the feudal society to the industrial society, in South Africa (and in the rest of Africa as well) capitalism was imposed as part of Western imperialism and colonial conquest. Therefore capitalism must be viewed, in this part of the world, as a colonial-imperialist tool to impose foreign ideologies. It is within this context that capitalism has acquired its racial character which has been portrayed as both oppressive and exploitative.

Therefore the approach that should be adopted in the analysis of black literature must lay bare structural issues that account for socio-cultural contradictions that emanate from capitalism in South Africa. These considerations are central to black protest writing in the eighties, in South Africa. Therefore the analysis of black protest literature should be based on a radical Marxist approach which will ultimately engender a salvational and redeeming literary

criticism, to use Gugelberger's (1985:18) words.

Staffrider literature, the forerunner in contemporary black protest literature, derived its inspiration from the Black Consciousness philosophy which tends to defy ethnic barriers. While the BCM's use of the term 'black' can be seen to have derived from racism, the meaning of the term within the movement goes beyond racial considerations. Black, in the first place, signifies all oppressed groups, which naturally include Africans, Coloureds and Indians. Secondly, it is a question of attitudes: it wants to instill a sense of self-pride which defies all forms of self-pity and self-denial. Therefore black literature should be seen, against this background, as a literature of the oppressed people, by the oppressed people, for the oppressed people. In this way it can be considered populist and community based.

Arguments have been raised in some quarters that contemporary black literature, initially published by Ravan Press, Ad Donker and subsequently by Skotaville Publishers, does not exactly represent the views of the majority of the oppressed people, but that it serves to impose and project those of the township petty bourgeoisie. The opposite, as a matter of fact is true, because of the complex nature of the situation in South Africa which does not warrant a simple class definition. There is no overall bourgeoisie -proletariate class distinction because of the intrinsic racial element which has been used as a potent factor of oppression.

Therefore, any attempt to define black literature as an exclusive preserve of the petty bourgeoisie should be viewed as a deliberate



ploy to divide the oppressed. The dividing line between the oppressor and the oppressed is essentially racial - one racial group claiming superiority over the others. The perception that black protest literature is the preserve of the petty bourgeoisie would, therefore, only be valid after the first aim of the liberation struggle, which tackles the problem of national oppression, has been achieved and attention diverted to the class struggle. However, this does not mean that the class struggle against capitalism has not yet started. It has started although it is still being waged within the popular national liberation struggle. It should also be noted that in South Africa capitalism is still hiding behind racism. While this perception of the process of liberation is associated with the African National Congress - South African Communist Party -- Congress of South African Trade Unions (ANC-SACP-COSATU) alliance, the only alliance in the liberation movement with the largest constituency, similar perceptions have been expressed in the BCM-aligned Azanian People's Organisation and its affiliates. Therefore this perception can be considered as representative of the majority of oppressed communities.

It should also be noted that the criticism that juxtaposes the work of art with vast facts of social reality is not foreign to African literature. Mzamane (1981:6), for instance, holds that in traditional society praise poetry performed a special mediating function between the ruler and the ruled. He says:

In traditional society, while the poet is praising, he also points out certain absurdities and pitfalls. The king listens carefully because he knows that what is being said by the im-

bongi (court poet) is what is gene-rally said by the rank and file, who are less sacrosanct than the court poet (translation mine).

The same tendency is also evident in some folklore narratives in which, by means of didacticism and satire, texts condemned or encouraged certain social practices. The functional aspect of African literature, and hence black literature, has in this respect been characterised by well-defined themes informed by conditions that obtained in particular historical periods. Nadine Gordimer (1973:8), for instance, distinguishes several themes that characterise African literature:

- (i) the countryman-comes-to-town,
- (ii) the ancestors versus missionaries,
- (iii) the way it was back home, and
- (iv) let my people go.

The last theme, which deals with the struggle for liberation and is a current theme in South Africa, is the primary concern of this study. According to Gordimer (1973:5) the approach that has to be adopted is that of looking at Africa from Africa, and not looking at Africa from the world. This means looking at things from the African perspective, i.e. from the black perspective. This is how it should be because African society is characterized by a dichotomy of contradictions, some of which are not present elsewhere, for example, the coloniser versus the colonised, the oppressor versus the oppressed, the rich versus the poor - all of which, in the eyes of the ruling class appears to be normal but in the eyes of the oppressed

class appear abnormal. From this situation arises the problem of ideological conflict.

The approach which looks at things in terms of contradictions is analogously African and unarguably Marxist in orientation. Amuta is, however, quick to qualify African Marxist aesthetics. He argues that we cannot afford to follow a sterile orthodox Marxism which proposed a purely mechanical explanation of literary works or concerned itself with the promulgation of slogans rather than a criterion of values. Amuta argues, instead, that:

On the contrary, the responsibility of genuine and profound Marxist criticism is to provide analytical insight into and 'explain' the social resonance and aesthetic integrity of literary works as art objects which contain (or do not contain) certain experiences, assume specific forms and articulate specific view points of man and woman in society by virtue of their objective socio-historical determination (ibid. p.60-61).

One finds in this definition a conception which is widely held, and is becoming popular amongst most progressive African and black critics. It is an approach that bases the whole process of Marxist criticism on both the dialectical and historical aspects of materialism and then proceeds to redefine, qualify and apply it according to and depending on existing circumstances.

Black literary criticism is, on the one hand, dialectical in the sense that it sees a link between literary production and other forms of material production. In other words, developments within

other social formations are perceived as having influence on literature and vice versa. On the other hand, it is historical in the sense that it conceives of the economic base as the ultimate determinant of all forms of material production.

It is a point of view which considers the prevailing conditions not in isolation but within the continuum of their history, looking at their past, present and future, taking into account the interaction between the various layers of society. These considerations are important in both criticism and writing and should not be overlooked. Rive (in *English Academy Review* 1982:33) argues in favour of these three phases - the past, present and future - which Ndebele (in *Pretexts* Vol.1 No.1 1989:40-51) claims to miss in contemporary black literature.

The rest of Africa has already seen and articulated its colonial past, its struggle and emancipation from colonial rule, and is in the process of articulating its post-independence experience. In South Africa only the first stage has been articulated: the oppressed are still grappling with the second. According to Rive (in *English Academy Review* 1982:30-35) the role of the black writer, including the critic, must be to 'explore his environment and if it is a discriminatory environment he must explore the origins, effect and consequences of that discrimination'. This assertion coincides with and explains the content of the three historical periods mentioned in the foregoing paragraph, taking into account that:

- (i) the past can be understood in the context of the origins of discrimination attributed to the advent of colonia-

lism,

(ii) the present can be understood within the context of the effects of discrimination which characterise the present state of instability and conflict in the country, and

(iii) the future lies in the understanding of the methods of the present oppression which shapes and directs the course of the liberation struggle.

Ndebele's perception is that such views featured only between 1948 and 1961, the period during which organised resistance was brutally crushed. He argues in *Rediscovery of the Ordinary* 1991:61) that:

The results of this situation was that, increasingly, the material dimensions of oppression soon assumed a rhetorical form in which the three chief modes were: one, the identification and highlighting of instances of general oppression, two, the drawing of appropriate moral conclusions from the revealed evidence and, three, the implicit belief in the inherent persuasiveness of the moral positions (also appearing in *Pretexts* Vol. 1 No. 1, 1989:94-103).

While one would not agree with Morphet's (in *Pretexts* Vol.2 No.1 1990:94-103) sharp criticism of Ndebele's argument in which these observations were made, one would wish to argue that these distinctive periods, much as they may seem absent in that chronological order and context, are not entirely absent from contemporary literature, especially if one looks at the impact they have had on the

mode of contemporary literature. What can be said is that they have perhaps been articulated in different registers and that the definitions used by the two scholars pertaining to the three historical periods do not (semantically) correspond.

The argument about the distinctive periods in black literature, in keeping with Ndebele's (in *Pretexts* Vol.1 No.1 1989:40-51) and Morphet's (in *Pretexts* Vol.2 No.1 1990:94-103) observations, also discerns three historical aesthetic tendencies. The critical approach that obtains from this three-phase paradigm is central to the analytic strategy in this study since it highlights the distinctive features in the historical development of black literature. Consequently the critical approach adopted should ultimately be able to account for these distinctive features, as Eagleton (1983: 194-195) rightly observes:

Literary theory is less an object of intellectual enquiry in its own right than a particular perspective in which to view the history of our times. Nor should this be in the least cause for surprise. For any theory concerned with human meaning, value, language, feeling and experience will inevitably engage broader, deeper beliefs about the nature of human individuals and societies, problems of power and sexuality, interpretations of past history, versions of the present and hopes for the future.

One should therefore adopt an analytic approach which explores the past, in order to locate the circumstances that led to the formation of 'staffrider' literature, and as the period that informed the

emergence of African literature which one should consider as that literature which has developed under conditions which were not determined by Africans; the present, in which one observes 'staffrider' literature in existence, and as the period that informed the emergence of black protest literature, which is considered as that literature which developed - to a great extent - under conditions determined by blacks, and the future as containing the objective of black literature, which is the transformation of society.

Such an approach will ultimately be able to account (1) for the form of a literary text, i.e. whether or not it has been fashioned on the basis of a certain literary tradition, principle or inspiration; (2) for its context, i.e. to explain why a literary text has been situated in a particular setting - why and how it has been produced; and (3) for the ideology underlying the text, i.e. to explain the function of the text and why it projects a certain view or makes a certain statement.

Watts (1989:48) makes the following related observation with regard to black literature:

Given the positivist base of black writing in South Africa, the most useful methods currently available are to be found in the approaches of the Marxist critics who always, whatever slant they give to Marxist critical theory, take into account social and historical factors in their assessment of a work of art, and consider conditions of production and consumption - that is, they examine its function within the social structure

as a social practice, and do not look at it as a thing apart from the everyday world of social reality.

Moreover

Marxist critics are also the ones to recognise the extent to which literature is a privilege accorded to the few at the expense of the many - a recognition especially relevant to South Africa (Watts 1989:48).

It is on this basis that a materialist critical approach becomes a logical option: To view a literary text not only as a finished product, but through an approach that will take into account all processes of production and consumption. And this cannot be achieved through any method other than a materialist critical analysis.

As shown in the above discussion social and historical factors form important aspects of both African and black literatures. The importance of these factors lies in the fact that they help to explain the changing phases of African writing and African literary criticism in Africa and in South Africa. However, around the second half of the twentieth it was found, in South Africa, blacks had become completely disillusioned with all existing structures. Such a development led to the emergence of black protest writing and black literary criticism in South Africa. The essence of the consideration of both literary traditions and critical approaches lies in the fact that black protest literature cannot be sufficiently studied without making reference to African literature.



The fact that almost the entire African continent was colonized means that there are lessons to be learned, especially in literary studies, from those countries which have since attained independence. Such lessons are crucial in the study of the literature of a sister-country still engaged in the liberation struggle, especially during the era of the literature under consideration, and beyond.

## CHAPTER 4

## IDEOLOGY AS A MATERIAL CONDITION OF LITERARY PRODUCTION

## 4.1. Introduction

This chapter will initiate the materialist analysis by explaining the major theoretical notions this analysis will employ, and by applying them. It will achieve this by investigating some of the ideologies that have influenced the origins of modern African literature and subsequently the emergence of black literature. Subsection 4.2. will give an overview of some definitions of ideology. In subsection 4.3. an attempt will be made to define ideology as a material condition. Then subsection 4.4. will explain colonialism as a material condition. Ideology in education as a social formation will then be investigated in 4.5., while subsection 4.6. will look at the role of ideology in the production of African literature. Subsection 4.7. will explore ideology in relation to literary criticism. Finally, subsection 4.8. will investigate liberal ideological tendencies in literature to illustrate how they implicitly prepared the ground for the emergence of black literature.

## 4.2. Some views on the definition of ideology

Ideology can basically be defined as a system of ideas or beliefs which characterizes the existence of a particular society (within a particular historical epoch). Collins English Dictionary (1979:728) gives a more comprehensive definition of the concept in terms of

four categories, namely:

\*a body of ideas that reflects the beliefs and interests of a nation, political system, etc.

\*(Philosophy) an idea or set of ideas that is false, misleading or held for the wrong reasons but is believed with such conviction as to be irrefutable.

\*speculation that is imaginary or visionary.

\*the study of the nature and origin of ideas.

These terms relate specifically to the concept 'ideology' as a notion. However, from several definitions of materialism, especially from Althusser's (1984) thesis, one should also consider ideology as a material condition which constitutes the lived experience and beliefs, or a cluster of them, which act upon and transform society in such a way that there finally emerges a situation where society reveals a certain institutionalized pattern of existence. This is also explained in Marx's notion of ideology, which according to him 'refers to the conditioning of ideas (in morality, religion, philosophy, art, literature) by the material base or the economic substructure' (cf. Leatt et al 1986: 274). It is within these broad terms of reference that ideology will be discussed in this study.

According to Marx, also, for any society to be able to sustain itself existing material conditions need to be produced and be reproduced. This is what Althusser (1984:1) terms the reproduction

of the conditions of production. It is also within this mode of production, which functions within a definite set of relations, that social formations arise. Seeing that the whole exercise of the reproduction of conditions of production, and subsequently social relations, is largely responsible for shaping people's awareness or consciousness, it is often not easy to realize that social interaction is finally determined by a certain dominant mode of production. The reproduction process is carried out on the basis of certain generally held beliefs which generally tend to conceal reality. Althusser (1984:36) terms ideology a 'new reality', which is nonetheless a mere apparition of the 'real' situation, a supposed reality.

From Ngara's (1990:11) definition of ideology it can be understood how perceptions of reality can be ideological. He says:

Ideology refers to that aspect of the human condition under which people operate as conscious actors. Ideology is the medium through which human consciousness works. Our conception of religion, politics, morality, art and science is deeply influenced by our ideology. In other words, what we see and believe largely depend on our ideology, being the medium through which we comprehend and interpret reality. Reality itself exists objectively outside our consciousness and independently of any particular individual, but how one sees and interprets it depends in part on one's level of ideological development.

It follows therefore that a situation can exist in society where the given material conditions can be reproduced in such a way that the final product promotes the dominant mode of production.

For instance, if the dominant mode of production is capitalism 'it is ensured by giving labour power the material means with which to reproduce itself: by wages' (Althusser 1984:4) so that capital can be engineered. This would also require that certain skills be reproduced which will be catered for by various social formations. Having said this, it will be proper to look more closely at how Eagleton, Althusser, Ngara, as well as Mannheim, conceive of the whole concept of ideology in relation to cultural production, to explain why social formations are ideological, and how these have influenced the development of African literature, as well as how the structure of social relations has been reproduced in literature, and how they have finally led to the birth of the black literary tradition.

#### 4.3. The definition of ideology as a material condition

Looking at Althusser's (1984:32) definition of ideology as 'a system of ideas which dominates the mind of a man or social group', and taking into account that these ideas characterise social institutions, one may assume that social formations function by ideology. This is to say that social formations function or are made to function according to certain generally-held beliefs. If this be the case then ideology depends on the history of social formations.

Althusser, following Marx, also argues that ideology as an illusion does not have a history of its own. It depends for its existence on something external to itself, 'the concrete history of concrete material individuals materially producing their existences' (ibid.

p. 34). It emerges from this assertion therefore that one could still talk about the history of ideology, which is nevertheless finally determined by the history of social relations; however, that history, at the same time, does not remain subject to those 'actual' social relations, i.e. it is capable of maintaining its own identity eternally. This is possible because:

... all ideology represents in its necessarily imaginary distortion not the existing relations of production (and the other relations that derive from them), but above all the (imaginary) relationship of individuals to the relations of production and the relations that derive from them (ibid. p.39).

If this be the case, then it is analogous to argue from this thesis that ideology constitutes material existence largely because these imaginary relationships are *de facto* endowed with a very material existence. To illustrate this point Althusser argues that, where one subject is involved, the existence of the ideas of man's beliefs is material because:

... his ideas are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of that subject (ibid. p.43).

For instance, the ritual of a prayer will be conducted precisely according to the modalities of the material (religious) ISA. It is from this basis that ideology derives its material dimension.

These assumptions can be adequately understood in terms of Althusser's structuralist approach.

#### 4.4. Colonialism as a material condition

Colonialism is a practice whereby a powerful foreign nation subjugates a less powerful one in a given area without necessarily becoming part of that area or nation. This subjugation takes various forms at various levels. A conquering nation, which inadvertently becomes a ruling class, maintains itself in power through the Repressive State Apparatuses, such as the government, army, administration, etc. This practice is governed by certain perceptions which are by definition ideological. It further ensures that its ideological hegemony, colonialism in this case, is promoted through social formations such as political domination, economic domination, cultural domination, etc. (cf. Althusser 1984:23). These social formations will therefore function (ideologically) in such a manner that they conceal, protect and promote the interests of the ruling class. This view is endorsed by Okpaku (1968:4) when he says that:

Following the disruption, by forces popularly described as 'colonial-imperialist interests,' of the political fabric which in its functional stability and its established mode and order was comparable to the present situation in much of the so-called 'Western world', there followed an imposed superstructure. This superstructure owed its stability not so much to its intrinsic validity, which is questionable, but to the essential fact of its being externally imposed and kept effective by the strength of political and military as well as economic power

and authority.

It is this process of the subjugation of Africa by the Western powers, not only by force but through ideology as well, in order to promote and uphold certain sectarian interests, that gives colonialism an attribute of ideology. For instance, Ngugi (1986:16) explains the aim of colonialism and the way in which it was enforced and operated in Africa in the following manner:

The real aim of colonialism was to control the people's wealth: what they produced, how they produced it, and how it was distributed; to control, in other words, the entire realm of the language of real life. Colonialism imposed its control of the social production of wealth through military conquest and subsequent political dictatorship. But its most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonised, the control, through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world. Economic and political control can never be effective without mental control. To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-determination in relationship to others.

Likewise colonialism has used the minds of Africans in South Africa - through literature, among other things, and via social formations such as the school and the church in collaboration with publishing houses and publication boards - to promote colonial interests.

In South Africa apartheid also has a colonial effect because it constitutes the subjugation of one national group (blacks) by another



(whites), whose allegiance still remains with the lands of their origins in the West. It is in this light that apartheid can be considered as a form of internal colonisation. Furthermore, apartheid also has an imperialist dimension because it was designed to impose and perpetuate Western interest by ideologically blindfolding Africans and giving them a false perception of themselves, namely, to measure their level of development in terms of 'western civilisation'.

The advent of colonialism in South Africa, which later operated at the level of apartheid, had far-reaching implications for the emergence and development of black literature. The situation is what it is because most African writers have been heavily influenced by the various colonial ISAs (cf. Ngara 1990:11). The first obvious physical effect of colonialism was the division of society into two classes, the coloniser and the colonised. This implicitly meant the imposition of European cultural traits on the social class structure of the African people.

This imposition was not, however, achieved through logical evolutionary processes. Much violence and coercion were used because, as Freire (1963) argues, colonisation could not be achieved without resorting to some form of force. However, as already mentioned, another potent instrument for subjugating a people is ideology. In order to shake off the yoke of colonialism and to reassert and maintain itself the colonised class will inevitably have to use similar tactics but for a different purpose, i.e. that of liberating and reasserting itself as a people with an identity. This subsection therefore focuses, mainly, on the processes and mechanisms employed

in the erosion and repression of the culture of the Africans.

The irony, however, was that while colonial ideological imperatives deliberately created unfavourable conditions for Africans, African cultural practices were simultaneously expected to conform to Western models in such fields as literature. This development would facilitate the (ideological) reproduction of the relations of production, as perceived by colonizers, in African literature which would be disseminated to the Africans through ISAs such as the churches and the schools. Mazisi Kunene (in Okpaku 1973:49-50) has the following to say about the effect of the imposition of colonial cultural values on the African culture:

Colonial ideology has atrophied our cultural limbs and in their place seeks to place artificial ones. This way it hopes to separate the herd from the elite, the barbaric and illiterate mass from the 'elegant' Intellectuals. Yet the pre-colonial history of Africa, whatever defects it had, preached emphatically an integrated ideology of culture, economics and politics. This is illustrated by a highly socialised artistic and literary tradition.

This imposition of (cultural) standards did not, however, take into account the fact that the conditions under which Africans lived still allowed them to pursue their communal culture, albeit with various adjustments, which manifested itself in aspects such as community theatre and other forms of traditional or folklore arts. This oversight neglected an important factor which continued to give Africans a sense of being and of belonging, i.e. communality; and,

whether or not deliberately, brought to the surface relational contradictions. Community art production and consumption remained largely a community affair while commercial art sought to distinguish the producer, the product and the consumer, and intrinsically carried the element of alienation within itself. The traditional African art stream could thus not be (totally) suppressed, and it continued to exist alongside the commercial art stream. However, the former could not totally separate itself from the latter because of ideological imperatives.

There arguably are other ISAs which have been used by colonialism to give legitimacy to commercial arts. These have consequently been promoted by various means to further assert the imperialist colonial culture. For instance, while community theatre continues to exist as one of the legitimate cultural practices, the market-oriented theatre tends to find ways of 'legitimising' itself through, for example, the introduction of modern technological facilities, monetary issues relating to the paying of salaries to performers (although this remains exploitative), and 'aid' to the needy in the form of donations which are made from the proceeds of performances. Mazisi Kunene (in Okpaku 1973:50), admonishes as follows regarding one such tendency:

... I must warn those who consider technology as the only criterion of achievement. I would like to warn them because of the persuasiveness and the ruthlessness with which this argument is bandied about, so much so that some find difficulty in conceiving of an alternative system of values other than that defined by the monolithic civilization of technologists.

Owing to the fact that not only does a person grow within a culture, but a culture also grows within a person, such tendencies resulted in a group of African 'intellectuals' who attempted to embrace both the foreign and the indigenous cultures, thus finding themselves in a state of perceptual conflict. They could not (successfully) reconcile their material existence with the academic practices of the culture they were expected, or tried, to acquire.

Seeing that almost all social formations have been monopolised by the adherents of colonial cultures, Africans were forced, in one way or another and especially for bread and butter issues, to conform or appear to conform to the Western way of life. They had to commercialise their labour and products while they remained a subjugated and underprivileged class whose means of livelihood generally put the notion of 'high art' beyond their reach. They were, because of these existential contradictions, not capable of transforming themselves completely into pseudo-Europeans.

This may be attributed to the fact that there has been a levelling apartheid effect which drew even those who could afford the luxury of 'high art' back into the subjugated community. Watts (1989:218) puts it as follows:

Thus even those Africans ... who, by virtue of their age, were exposed to more of a western education, had sufficient community support to remain essentially African in outlook. They lacked the aesthetic convictions of established western traditions that inhibited approaches to the creation of a new form

...

One's conviction is largely determined by one's 'collective' experience and that is why, when Africans realised that their striving for the characteristically affluent Western way of life did not improve their lot, it was easy for them to turn 'inwardly' and decide to strive to project their true image.

Therefore, although there were material benefits to commercialising their art, there were also moral and perceptual aspects which were inescapable. Apart from this the terms for commercialising art were not theirs. The terms were determined by Western colonial monopolies in exclusively white-dominated publishing houses and advanced theatres such as the Market Theatre in Johannesburg and the State Theatre in Pretoria. These facilities were generally beyond the reach of the majority of the African people not only in terms of distance but in terms of financial considerations as well.

Against this background one may argue that artistic practices in South Africa revealed not only class differentiation but class conflict as well. This fact compelled concerned African artists and writers to determine, as a matter of priority, to relate their artistic production to the perceptual experiences of their immediate environment where they could freely express themselves in spite of 'inferior' and 'inadequate' facilities and limited financial resources. Hence the birth of institutions such as Funda Centre in Soweto and other similar community structures which considered themselves accountable to the (underprivileged) communities they served.

Such a development helped to curb the process of the 'westernisation' of African literature which did not augur well for its growth because, if African literature is cut off from the broad African cultural existence and put into the Western mould, its meaning cannot be resolved in that foreign context. It is analogous that African literature can best be appreciated and understood only within the African context. Mazisi Kunene (in Okpaku 1973:50) says the following about the socialised African artistic and literary traditions:

From this tradition springs the source and stimulus of our creativity. We are therefore, in launching our revolution, setting out to recover these values and to reshape them according to the needs of our current experience. This is not in order to internationalise our achievements, but to reinforce ourselves for the struggle of liberation and reconstruction.

One would, in the light of this statement, specifically discuss some of the issues that gave rise to the emergence of African literature and later on to the birth of black protest literature in South Africa.

In the process of coming to grips with their new way of life Africans were subjected to various socialization programmes so they could acquire the new culture. This came about formally, as a result of the actual process of learning, and informally, as a natural instinct for survival which compelled Africans to adapt to their new circumstances. These, and related developments, gave colonists opportunities to find other ways of imposing their ideologies on the

African people. Such developments have had a notable impact on both the production and distribution of literature.

Like Eagleton, Watts (1989:9-10) discusses several material conditions that affect the production and consumption of literature. Such conditions include living conditions and freedom from physical harassment, factors which directly affect black writers. One could also mention that as a result of colonial conquest there was a clear distinction made between producer and consumer, a situation resulting from the monopoly of all the means of production by the victorious racial group. Social formations, such as education, religion, politics, etc., which emanated from that situation then, as will be shown below, reflected the ideology of the imperialist culture in the new mode of social existence. Consequently in pursuing any study of African or black literature it will be necessary to take cognisance of conflicting ideological forces and the unwavering attempt of colonial structures to preserve the dominance of Western culture. Watts (1989:7) observes:

It would be futile to embark on any consideration of recent black writing in South Africa without recognizing at the outset the need to abandon traditional literary critical assumptions and to forge a new kind of critical framework which will take account of the radically different forces at work within the literary production of that country (Watts 1989:7).

#### 4.5. Ideology in educational processes.

Central to education policies of both the missionaries and sub-

sequent colonial governments has been the socializing of the indigenous people to fit well into the so-called civilized culture. The aim, however, was not to enable them to participate in that culture but to prepare them to fit into the planned objectives of the colonial mode of production. Cook (in Molteno 1988) aptly observes that education was 'for the most part, a purposeful process of aiming at the incorporation of dependent peoples into the structures of Western civilization'.

This attitude to education was nurtured by the disregard of the needs of the African people and the fact that they had had their own system of education which had, over the years, transmitted their own traditions. Therefore, it can be argued that what was new was not education as such, but the form of education. Originally Africans had an informal education that nonetheless had had a cultural base and enjoyed legitimacy among the people it served. The new form of education to which Africans were introduced was formal, and suited to the technological era. Despite all its promising package, Western education, because it lacked an African cultural base, never enjoyed legitimacy among the rank and file of the people it was intended to serve.

It was not the needs and interests of Africans that influenced syllabuses and educational policies, but the interests of the ruling class which were based on the principles of a racist political and economic power. Hence things that were African could not be considered as part of the education system, even if they were important, as long as they were viewed as not making meaningful contribution to the promotion of racial domination. Leshoai (1981) has attributed



that lack of acceptance to the attitude of the missionaries and colonists towards African cultural institutions, which attitude was one of disdain and indifference.

Most important in this regard is the fact that formal education was introduced into South Africa 'as part of the new social relations introduced with colonialism' (Molteno 1988). According to Molteno schooling also served the colonial conquest itself by 'contributing to the social consolidation of conquest and the control of the conquered' (ibid.).

Missionaries and their functionaries were among the first to introduce literacy among Africans and it was also under their 'guidance' that the first literary works in African languages emerged. To assert themselves they used not only the religious ISAs but the educational ISAs as well. Swanepoel (in *SAJAL* Vol.7 No.3 1987:95), with reference to the Southern Sotho language, describes the contribution made by missionaries in this part of the world:

The contribution of the missionaries was fivefold: the spreading of the Christian Gospel; the inauguration of literacy among the Basotho who, until that moment, had an oral culture; development of the written language; the setting up of printing presses; the development of both a religious and secular literature.

These practices, apart from their manifest functions, also served as potent mechanisms for imposing imperialist ideologies, and one should attempt to investigate how they were reproduced in African

literature and affected its development. One's immediate concern here would be the functionality of these factors as they became operative within the colonial ideology in a sort of producer-consumer relationship.

Missionary and colonial establishments functioned so closely in their joint efforts to instill the new culture into the African people that the end product emerged as Christian-education, the concept which up to this day describes the basis of formal education in South Africa. This process clearly illustrates the twin operative function of these formations in the process of education. Peroldt & Butler (1985:63) describe the functionality of various colonial ideological formations in the education system as follows:

There are close connections between the magistrate, missionary, school master and in furthering the aims of the colonial government: to establish and maintain peace, to diffuse civilization and christianity, and to establish society on the basis of individual property and personal industry.

It emerges from the above quote that the ultimate aim of education was, *inter alia*, the establishment of a capitalist society whose ideal was to be achieved through the processes discussed above. According to Perold & Butler, education and religious ISAs had from those early days mutually served the interests of each other as well as those of imperialism. For instance, the following statement, entered by Van Riebeeck in his diary on 17 April 1658, clearly illustrates this fact, although Van Riebeck wrote in the pre-capitalist era and prior to institutionalised apartheid. It says:

Began holding school for the young slaves. To stimulate slaves to attention while attending school, and to induce them to learn the Christian prayers, they were promised each a glass of brandy and two inches of tobacco, when they finished their task (quoted by Perold & Butler 1985:32).

This statement overtly subverts the ostensible, noble Christian principles and general moral values of the Christian religion. One concludes that the internalising of Christian principles by slaves was not an end in itself but merely a means to an end. In this respect Molteno (in Kallaway ed. 1988:52) observes with precision that:

It was not as equal individuals that blacks were brought into the colonial order but as a subordinate category which was integrated economically while kept outside politically and at a distance socially.

Therefore the aim in teaching Africans, who necessarily constituted a working class, was to make them loyal and ready to serve their (capitalist) masters obediently so that they could later on promote, and collaborate in, the colonial situation from the time when economic structures changed from subsistence economy to capitalist economy, another component of the imperialist economic ISAs. This aim became even clearer later when more comprehensive educational policies were designed, especially those formulated by Dr HF Verwoerd. As he said in one of his policy speeches:

A beginning [at the end of Standard II] should be made with the teaching of at least one official language on a purely utilitarian basis, i.e. as a medium of oral expression of thought to be used in contact with the European sector of the population. Manipulative skills should be developed and where possible an interest in the soil and in the preservation of natural phenomena stimulated (quoted by Lodge 1983:116).

However, schooling alone could not effectively and rapidly create a working class. Other means which were intrinsically linked to the education process had to be adopted. One such means was defined in **The Christian Express**, the mouthpiece of the missionaries at Lovedale. It states that needs should be created so that Africans would be forced to work in order to satisfy those needs:

... the speediest way of creating needs among these people is to Christianize them. As they become Christianized, they will want more clothing, better houses, furniture, books, education for their children, and a hundred other things which they do not have now and never have had. And all these things they can get by working, and only by working (quoted by Molteno in Kallaway ed. 1988:60).

Here one also notes that the processes of Christianizing and civilizing Africans were used basically as mechanisms to legitimise domination. In other words, these 'aims' concealed the fundamental aim of domination by colouring it with philanthropism. The incipient danger in this ideal, however, was that the urge to have such needs satisfied could, in turn, motivate blacks to work hard to a point

where their living standard would compare favourably with that of whites. Because of this possibility there arose a need to introduce into the broader educational policies a controlling mechanism which would serve to maintain and to enforce racial-class differentiation. Therefore:

The education of the white child had to prepare him for a life in a dominant society and the education of the black child had to prepare him for a subordinate society (quoted by Molteno in Kallaway 1988:63-64).

In addition to these measures care also had to be taken to ensure that these relationships of inequality were reproduced and maintained.

One of the ways adopted by education authorities to create a proletarian class was to establish private schools, which offered a better education, alongside state and mission schools, which were for some time not officially segregated. The former were attended by children from well-to-do families who were necessarily of European descent, while the African children from poor families remained in state and mission schools.

At this point, considering these distortions of reality, one needs to recall Althusser's definition of ideology, which exposes its danger of 'distorting reality':

... all ideology represents in its necessarily imaginary distortion not the existing relations of production (and the other

relations that derive from them), but above all the (imaginary) relationship of individuals to the relations of production and the relations that derive from them. What is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relations of those individuals to the real relations in which they live (ibid. 225).

This distortion of reality is often revealed and experienced in the actual relationship between the relations of the infrastructure and the superstructure as well as those within the superstructure. It would, however, be simplistic to regard all ideology as merely a distortion of reality: ideology can perform either a negative or positive function. Therefore, depending on the function ideology serves, society can be steered towards a state of conflict or towards the resolution of conflict. The African nationalist ideology may thus be considered to be working towards resolving conflict in South Africa, a conflict which has its roots in the practices of both colonialism and apartheid.

Now, considering the distortion of reality by ideology, one needs to go further to see how apartheid ideology attempted, through education, to reproduce the labour which is essential for the survival of capitalism. It is therefore necessary to look closely at the relationship between the state policy on education and economic realities. Christie and Collins (in Kallaway ed. 1988:163-164) observe as follows in this regard:

The reproduction of the capitalist class relationship, and

hence of labour power, is essential to the capitalist accumulation process. The reproduction of agents, as capitalists and as workers, needs to be secured for the continuing functioning of capitalism. Not only do workers need to be adequately trained and skilled, they need also to have appropriate work ethic, attitudes, and be willing to participate in capitalist exchange relations.

As pointed out earlier, schooling was used as an institution in which these capitalist relations could be reproduced. Consequently, segregationist and unequal education opportunities, together with supporting ideologies, had to be firmly entrenched in the formulation of education policies.

Inadequate funding of black education, repressive measures at school to ensure subordination of colour-castes, the manipulation of the curricula to cultivate interest in manual labour, and the establishment of school boards to serve as watchdogs of the state and 'representatives' of black communities were but some of the measures taken to ensure the effective functioning of Bantu Education policies. Christie and Collins (in Kallaway ed. 1988:173) explain this position as follows:

Ideologically, Bantu Education clearly envisaged the separation of whites and blacks in political and economic structures, and promoted this ideology through schooling.

There were, however, serious miscalculations in the policy because few African children progressed far enough with their educations to

become entirely assimilated into the new culture. The majority remained either illiterate or semi-literate. A few who progressed far enough found themselves ideologically removed from their own people, and yet at the same time were not allowed to participate in the new culture. That is, they could no longer be Africans, but nor could they be something else, i.e. become whites. Their indigenous culture had become irrelevant to them, they had to lead a Christian-Western life, but at the same time they had to remain among their people as they could not move beyond certain limits in the new culture. They could not even influence it by giving it their own meaning and interpretation. The new culture was the exclusive preserve of the ruling class. The Africans were therefore turned into some kind of parasite, consuming what the host culture offered them without being able to contribute anything of their own.

The education policies, whose manifest function were to create conditions of inferior education for blacks, were also performing a very useful, albeit latent function, which in later years favoured blacks in their struggle for liberation. Two of the most decisive policy statements ever advocated and implemented by Verwoerd should be quoted at length.

1. There is no place for (the Bantu) in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour... it is of no avail for him to receive a training which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of the Europeans but still did not allow him to graze there... (This led to) the much discussed frustration of educated natives who could [sic] not find employment which is acceptable



to them... it must be replaced by planned Bantu education ... (with) its roots entirely in the Native environment and community (in Lipton 1986:24).

2. It (the government commission) wants to find out how it can give the African the training necessary to make him an efficient worker, without giving him any real education, for the simple reason that it would be dangerous if the oppressed sector of the population were sufficiently advanced to fight for their freedom (in Lodge 1983:120).

It is evident from these statements that such policies were intended to create a semi-skilled, semi-literate working class below a certain racial line. The obvious miscalculations in these statements are, however, indicated by the fact that, despite the racial barriers, there eventually developed in the black community what under normal circumstances would have been termed an elitist or an aspiring bourgeoisie class. This group could not, however, claim a place in the dominant class nor could it completely break away from the subordinate class. Nolutshungu aptly describes this situation:

- the chances of co-optation are minimized by the fact that this very exclusion from the centres of economic and political power severely restricts their capacity to hegemonize themselves over the masses of the oppressed and therefore their capacity to reproduce themselves as a middle class (quoted by Cohen et al. 1990:169-170).

Lately even

- reforms that have taken place so far do not lead to the embourgeoisement of this class but rather to encadrement, and therefore such reforms do not alter the basic structure of exploitation and national oppression (ibid.).

In this manner the educated (and the rich) Africans remained an integral part of their community because of their, on the average, fairly low education. They were nonetheless able to perceive injustices in the South African social system and helped to make others aware of them. In this way the danger of their being sufficiently advanced to fight for their freedom was not completely eliminated.

This situation means therefore that the African community remained essentially closely knit, and was further consolidated by the political ISAs in the form of the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936 which resulted in the creation of (labour) reserves - currently called homelands/national states; the Group Areas Act of 1950 which confined urban Africans to townships; and the Native Workers Act of 1951 which legalised the colour bar in the labour market. The last-mentioned act also made it illegal for skilled Africans to practise their skills anywhere except in the reserves and townships.

These conditions therefore account for the racial element being an economic factor in South African society and for the populist nature of black literature. According to Brink (1983:129) the pass laws also contributed to this state of affairs because whether someone 'is a university lecturer makes no difference. He is black; he has

to carry at all times the 'reference book' which is his sole claim to identity'. Alvarez-Pereyre (1984:4) makes a similar observation:

Thus, because racial policy before 1948 and subsequently apartheid did not distinguish people on the basis of their education - or the fatness of their wallets - but according to the colour of their skin, the African intellectuals could not dissociate themselves from the masses, even if they wanted to. In any case, the majority of them, primarily the teachers and social workers, were too much in contact with the injustices and inequalities perpetrated in the name of the 'system' to remain neutral or indifferent. Neither a true bourgeoisie nor a proletariat, but somewhere between the white bourgeoisie and the black proletariat, the category of educated Africans from which the first writers came was to express the deeper feelings of the vast majority of black people.

Therefore, given also the circumstances of inferior education and inferior living conditions among the majority of blacks, it is logical to assume that whatever emerges from such a community will not compare favourably with what emerges from a more affluent community if the same standards are applied. Literary traditions emerging from two such incompatible communities will naturally reflect equally incompatible contradictory ideological tendencies. There is on the one hand the tradition that reflects the colonial ideology of the ruling class, and on the other the tradition that reflects the (rebellious) nationalist ideology of the oppressed class.

However, regardless of the social contradictions, African literature

was nonetheless expected, and made, to conform to Western literary models and to ignore the realities. Thus African literature and its tradition became Euro-American based (cf. Ngugi (1986:4)). True enough, works of literary merit have been produced under these circumstances but this is a misrepresentation of the true ideological situation. While it is incoceivable, under normal circumstances, for one to succesfully write from outside one's social experience, such a situation was imposed on African writers. At its worst this condition under which Africans wrote was assimilation, in which one is forced to project an image, that of the dominant ideology, which is alien to one's situation. The true situation can, however, be exposed because 'Marxist criticism is capable of revealing the ideology of the text whether it is overtly or implicitly expressed' (Ngara 1990:8).

#### 4.6. Ideology in the production of African literature.

Material conditions relating to the actual production of African literature and to be precise, educational, religious and political ISAs also contributed significantly in determining the ideological course this literature would follow. The actual interaction processes emanating from such ideological structural relations manifested themselves in numerous ways, as well as through mental production, as Alvarez-Pereyre (1984:2) points out:

...the policy of apartheid has meant that the communities are separated and the living and working conditions of the individuals that make them [sic] are both different and unequal. This division recurs in the literary sphere as well, and writers

have no option but to take it into account, even though they deplore it.

There are several distinctive literary themes which illustrate the effect of this division between communities. First there is the theme of the clash of cultures in which three elements - Western culture, African culture and the 'cleansed' African as the intersection set - are given prominence. In most cases where it is the African culture which is being focussed upon one finds that the literary strategy is that of 'removing' certain people from within the African community by way of African deculturation and Western enculturation and in turn using them to draw their own people away from their cultural base. Molteno (in Kallaway ed. 1988:49) observes:

Steeped in the conqueror's ways of seeing, converted to their religion, and generally accepting the new order, the schooled corps could help disseminate a system of ideas, values, loyalties and authorities which were consistent with the colonists' interests and which contradicted, and helped to undermine, the framework that had given the people an independent ideological base in their struggle to retain their land and livelihood.

One of the other means used to achieve the same purpose was to encourage individual existence as opposed to the African way of communal existence, as will now be illustrated in the analysis of some of the literature produced under the missionary mentors.

Some of the first literary texts produced under the guidance of mis-

sionaries illustrate the extent to which the dominant colonial ideology manifested itself in African literature, especially through the educational and the religious ISAs. The texts also tend to conceal conflict between authorial ideology and dominant ideology on the one hand, and the effect of aesthetic ideology on the work of art, on the other.

Mofolo's first novel to be published, *Moeti wa Botjhabela* (1907), illustrates the obliteration of traditional African institutions by Christianization, which led some African Christians to be alienated both from themselves and from their own people. According to Macherey (1986:66) 'an 'alienated man is man without man'. After acquiring a new religion, Fekisi, the main character in the novel, begins to see his community as sinful and decides to leave it and ventures into the unknown in pursuit of peace and a holy way of life. This behaviour signifies two things: firstly, that a person removed from his cultural roots becomes not only alienated but also seldom benefits his community. Secondly, from the missionaries' point of view, it encourages selflessness and a kind of 'martyrdom' so that the 'cleansed' were prepared to endure suffering, isolation and even persecution. Also it impressed the notion that the way of salvation concerns the individual only, not necessarily the individual and his people.

The same author in his second novel, *Pitseng* (1910), continues his illustration of processes that were responsible for the erosion of aspects of Basotho cultural institutions, such as the initiation institution, and their replacement with the formal Western Christian education. Mr Katse, the main character, works tirelessly among the

Basotho to teach them civilization through education and to convert them to Christianity amidst opposition and resistance.

One should emphasize here that education in itself was useful and necessary, but it had only a negative effect when it was viewed as an indication of the superiority of the Western institutions over African institutions. Guma (1977:185) makes the following illustrative assertion in this regard:

... it must be remembered that what is basic in life, in literature (and in language) is truth. And the painful truth in African society today, is that things Africans are, [sic] are generally despised and frowned upon as being backward and primitive. While deeply conscious of the numerous benefits bestowed by missionaries in general on Africans, I cannot help feeling that this unfortunate attitude stems from their hasty frowning on traditional institutions like lebollo (initiation) which they regarded as relics of heathenism (my translation).

However the same author, Mofolo, later made a significant reversal in his third published novel, *Chaka* (1925), in which he used the material from his own culture, which choice could be regarded as proof of the African idiom: 'One is never comfortable in borrowed robes' (quoted from memory). Perhaps he also eventually considered himself to be 'a vertebrate and Christianity an invertebrate and as such would not bend to it', to use Pieterse's (1969:41) words. The publication of the manuscript was consequently delayed for reasons that will be given below.

This text is an historical novel based on the life of the most famous Zulu king. The novel is written from a purely African perspective. Unlike in the first two novels where Mofolo portrayed characters who were neither influenced by their environment nor responded to it but only acted mechanically. By using the main character, Chaka, the writer depicts a 'living' character who has been moulded by his environment. Mofolo demonstrates how both the physical and social environments contributed to shaping Chaka's world-view. He not only learnt the skills of survival but also found a role to play in those environments. In other words, he did not accidentally find himself having to play a certain role but did so according to the dictates of his environment.

What is most significant about this novel is the African perception of the relationship between humanity and the universe: the whole universe exists according to a divine plan which can be revealed to humanity through various means, such as visions, ancestors in dreams, other human beings and living beings. Mbiti (1988:12) explains this clearly as follows:

... African peoples see everything else in its relation to this central position of man. God is the explanation of man's origin and sustenance: it is as if God exists for the sake of man. The spirits are ontologically in the mode between God and man: they describe or explain the destiny of man after physical life. Man cannot remain forever in the Sasa period, he moves 'backwards' into the Zamani period, and yet however far he travels in the stream of time, he remains a creature in the stage between God and physical man. Animals, plants, land, rain and other natural



objects and phenomena, describe man's environment, and African peoples incorporate this environment into their deeply religious perception of the universe.

The whole life process takes place within the context of this perception. Therefore, even when a person dies he is not automatically excluded from the 'master plan' and is thus regarded as still being in a position to influence the course of events. This perception is central to communal existence in African societies. This view did not, however, coincide with the missionaries' perception of the 'divine plan' and the *Chaka* manuscript was rejected as unchristian and 'poisonous', hence the subsequent delay in the publication of the novel. As Onoge (in Gugelberger 1985:51) points out:

In Southern Africa, Thomas Mofolo's first novel was refused publication by the Morija press until he turned to themes reflecting the mechanism of colonial society. That is, only works in which Mofolo created characters whose moments of insight and maturity coincided with their recognition of the 'superiority' of Christian ethics, were published.

The second theme which illustrates the effects of the division between communities in South Africa is that of the Jim-goes-to-Jo'burg motif, which deals with the period of industrialisation/urbanisation in South Africa and which also continues to portray immature (African) characters who cannot acclimatise to the urban situation. The most significant aspect of such characters is that almost all who cannot make it in the industrial areas go back to their respective reserves to be converted to Christianity. The laws that made it im-

possible for such people to survive in the industrial world thus made them susceptible to accepting Christianity as a life investment as if material things were not for them, theirs was but the 'hereafter'. In other words, they did not have to concern themselves with the material wealth in this world because a 'utopian' life awaited them when they departed from this world. This notion is expressed by Fanon (quoted by Onoge in Gugelberger 1985:51) '... the christian missionary and his religion functioned as a special ideological DDT to destroy the "native parasites".' The parasitic nature of Africans is implied by the fact that they were denied means to make a living on their own; hence their economic and cultural dependence on the Western (capitalist) "hosts".

Unlike the previously discussed theme, the clash of cultures, this theme thrived extremely well through misreading, as it escaped censorship. The misreading depends on two factors which enabled the publishers to remain comfortable with the literature using this theme. Firstly, the misreading established the impression that the African would never mature but would remain forever child-like and dependent. Obviously, therefore, someone, possibly the capitalist and his functionaries, would have to think for him, take decisions on his behalf and also do things for him. Secondly, it encouraged Africans not to concern themselves with material things, an attitude which served the capitalist ideology well because economic exploitation would go unchallenged.

This misreading of African literature at that stage, which misreading can be attributed to the lack of an effective social literary theory, enabled perceptive and prolific authors like S.M. Mofokeng,

especially, with his collection of short stories under the title, **Leetong** (1954), to 'sneak' their revealing works through the censorship. However, in spite of the tendency of this literary tradition to hoodwink Africans into not perceiving reality, perceptive scholars have become aware of the dilemma of some assimilated African critics. Amuta (1989:19) remarks:

The sources of the brain damage are easy to locate: colonialist education, lavish consumption of European literature, a quiescent acquiescence to the fiction of European supremacy and an attendant self-hate which compels the critic to gaze perpetually westwards for signals of approval that his critical statements conform to the canons of a discourse consecrated by Western bourgeois academicians.

To illustrate a point in this regard Mofokeng's short story, '**Mona pela tsela**', (translated, 'Here by the side of the road'), will be used. The story signifies the capitalist-apartheid ideology in South Africa which is responsible for the subordination of blacks socially, politically and economically. This subordination has been given legal force by much repressive legislation which has in turn been defended and justified by the law.

While Mofokeng's works received wide acclaim for its outstanding literary merits from Western (trained) critics of African literature, the significance of its message remained unperceived because of the lack of an effective theoretical aesthetics. It should, however, be noted that:

Where colonialist criticism unconditionally acknowledges the artistic profundity of an African literary work, it is quick to confer on such a work a certain stamp of universalism. But in the discourse of devotees of this tradition, the word **universal** is innocuously synonymous with the bourgeois West (Amuta 1989:19-20).

This ineffectiveness of a critical theory could also be ascribed to a Western humanist ideology which regards the writer as a mere creator, who in a way is oblivious of the conditions that gave rise to a work of art and is also not affected by conditions in which he finds himself. This ideology ignores the fact that man's perception of the world is, in part, socially conditioned.

In this ideology man is released from his function in an order external to himself, restored to his so-called powers. Circumscribed only by the resources of his own nature, he becomes the maker of his own laws... (Macherey 1986:66).

According to this school of thought everything by man and everything for man 'is circular, tautological, dedicated entirely to the repetition of a single image' (ibid p.66). Mofokeng's work unmistakably refutes this sterile perception. It is articulate on social relations which provide raw materials to be creatively used by the author in producing a work of art.

Remarkably, African literature written in indigenous languages in South Africa is, generally speaking, conspicuously silent about the socio-political developments in the country in spite of the fierce

political struggles of the 1950s and early 1960s. On the contrary, black literature written in English (cutting across the ethnic and racial divide of the oppressed) is very articulate on this subject. Reasons for similar works not being published in African languages inside the country are well-known. It could be that the work was considered to be inflammatory by traditional reviewers, language boards, the state censorship board, or the author was (is) a member of one of the resistance movements, or was (is) a listed person.

Another feature in the scenario of censorship is that numerous works, by black authors, which were not allowed inside South Africa met with approval from some Western literary critics for their outstanding literary merits. One can think of the work of scholars such as E'skia Mphahlele, Richard Rive and the exiled Lewis Nkosi, to mention but a few. These are among the early generation of authors who saw the need to write in English primarily because they wanted to draw the attention of the liberal whites to their plight. Watts (1989:29) observes:

Protest writing was directed mainly at a white readership: of course it found enthusiastic supporters among the entire literate black population, whose indignation and resentment it voiced; but while it spoke for blacks, it spoke to whites in an attempt to force them into a recognition of injustices and humiliations suffered by the majority of the population.

Secondly, these writers wanted to communicate their message to the rest of Africa and the whole world. It follows therefore that the publication of African literature under such stringent ideological

principles did not encourage growth and originality among authors and prospective authors. Thus, for the oppressed class to be able to express itself artistically, it was forced to look elsewhere for the publication of its authentic literary works. It should also be pointed out that the problem of the misrepresentation of African reality was also carried over to the literature by white liberal South Africans.

#### 4.7. Ideology and literary criticism

Eagleton (1976:17) argues that 'All art springs from an ideological conception of the world; there is no such thing ... as a work of art entirely devoid of ideological content'. Based upon this observation, Eagleton (1978:17) therefore claims that: 'Criticism is not an innocent discipline, and never has been. It is a branch of Marxist criticism to enquire into the history of criticism itself: to pose questions of under what conditions, and for what ends, a literary criticism comes about'. From this assertion one could argue that, in the final analysis, literary criticism is meant to re-enforce or to undercut certain ideologies. Marx argues further that literary criticism '...emerges into existence, and passes out of it again, on the basis of certain determinate conditions' (ibid.). Ngara (1990:11-12) distinguishes three categories of ideology, - presumably derived from Eagleton's (1978) chapter on **Categories of a Materialist Criticism** - which Ngara claims are crucial to the study of African literature, viz:

- (i) the dominant ideology which constitutes 'the beliefs, assumptions and set of values that inform the thoughts and ac-

tions of people in a particular era'.

For the purpose of this study colonialism and, subsequently, apartheid capitalism are considered as dominant ideologies.

(ii) authorial ideology through which the author will project a certain ideological position emanating from the current social situation which informs themes which the author handles.

In reality this ideology is also imposed on the author although it creates in him an impression of being autonomous, and

(iii) aesthetic ideology which refers 'to the literary convention and stylistic stances adopted by the writer'.

The last category has largely to do with the genre type, the language the author uses, as well as the dialectic relationship between content and form. From this assertion one can also elicit sub-categories of the aesthetic ideology, such as the aesthetics of worker, resistance, struggle, and elitist literature (Lewis Nkosi quoted in *New Nation* 24-30 January 1992:8).

Mannheim also distinguishes three levels of ideology. Firstly, there is a particular ideology which, according to Mannheim, 'constitutes only a part of an opponent's thought', secondly, there is 'a total ideology that determines the whole of the opponent's thought', and thirdly, a general ideology which is 'characteristic of anyone's thought' (cf. Leatt et al. 1986:279). Mannheim's concept of ideology is, however, loosely defined and can pose more problems in its ap-

plication than do Ngara's and Althusser's, especially when one looks at the manner in which he collapses Ngara's first two categories into one. According to Mannheim's definition, it would seem that both particular ideology and general ideology can fit into Ngara's authorial ideology, which implies that they are also, in a sense, imposed.

Althusser, on the other hand, views human consciousness as ideological, and then distinguishes several Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), which are necessarily semi-autonomous social formations, but which will essentially be influenced by the ideology of the dominant ISA. The dominant ideology, according to Althusser, generally bears the ideology of the ruling class. It should be noted, however, that a subordinate class can also develop a dominant oppositional ideology which characterises its way of thinking, as will be explained later. The social formations which reveal particular ideological leanings could be religious ISAs, educational ISAs, the political ISAs and the cultural ISAs, to mention but a few. It follows that, in the context of this study, these ISAs will be greatly influenced by colonialist and apartheid capitalist ideologies.

These ideologies are enacted as material conditions that finally determine the nature of social interaction as well as cultural production (including art and literature), i.e. they finally have an impact on the whole process of literary production. For instance, Eagleton (1978:49) makes the following observation regarding material conditions which relate to the production and consumption of literature:



Literary production and consumption presuppose certain levels of literacy, physical and mental well-being, leisure and material affluence: the material conditions for writing and reading include economic resources, shelter, lighting and privacy.

Daran (in Gugelberger 1985:89) mentions the colonial scenario and the land question (pertaining to the economic ISA), which he claims contributed to the backwardness of his people because of its imposition and sectarian economic interests. Analogously these are the conditions that have finally determined the kind of literature produced in Africa and they reflect both dominant ideologies and ideological conflicts.

Thus, from the consideration that material conditions pertain to those ideological factors that finally determine the way of life of a particular society, it emerges that these will result in the pursuance of certain institutionalised beliefs with regard to education, politics, economy, culture, religion and legal systems. However, seeing that these constitute the mechanisms of material existence which have to be reproduced, then it is logical to conclude that ISAs or social formations constitute material conditions. The ideology of the dominant class will then be conveyed by the dominant ISA, whether it be colonialism, capitalism and apartheid, and consequently influence all other formations.

These formations, which are in fact not natural but social constructs, also serve as a basis for the definition of a particular social existence. Owing to the fact that South African society has

largely been fashioned by colonialism, these formations, while they remain semi-autonomous, have largely been employed to protect and to promote the interests of colonialism and, subsequently, apartheid.

As a result of colonialism, structural formations pertaining to the South African society have developed certain institutionalised beliefs which are realised, *inter alia*, in a system of inferior education for Africans and other segregationist social policies, the factors one would consider to be most relevant to the survey of the development of African literature. It is important therefore to try to establish the extent to which educational and economic policies affected the production and readership of African literature, including the ideologies underlying factors such as those that determined its form and content.

Colonialism lead to the development of different perceptions, as manifest in Western imperialism and liberal ideological hegemony, regarding the problem of the African people. These concepts are important because, in the final analysis, they account for the emergence of the black literary tradition which characterises the ideological racial-class struggle in our country. On this score Eagleton clearly demonstrates how literature can perform a dual function in social struggles, i.e. to establish the imperialist hegemony and to preserve the identity of the oppressed class. He says:

Literature is ... a crucial mechanism by which the language and ideology of an imperialist class establishes its hegemony, or by which a subordinated state, class or region preserves and

perpetuates at the ideological level an historical identity shattered or eroded at the political. It is also a zone in which such struggles achieve stabilization (Eagleton 1978:55).

It should, however, also be noted that, in a situation where class conflict ensues, the ideology of the ruling class, which ideology usually constitutes the dominant ideology, is often threatened by the ideology of the oppressed class, which could be the ideology of nationalism in some instances. This assumption should be pursued to try adequately to address the question of ideological conflict in South Africa in relation to the whole process of literary production, of which liberalism is one such example.

#### 4.8. Liberal ideology in literature

Liberalism constitutes a school of thought that espouses the idea of the 'individual ethic' as opposed to the 'corporate ethic'. It seeks 'to uphold individual liberty against alternatives of socialism and ethnic or racial nationalism' (Leatt et al. 1986:51). In this manner it tends to resolve or minimize (not actually to eliminate) conflict that occurs as a result of group consciousness, for example, the we/they syndrome. In other words, it is as a kind of synthesis which presupposes that liberalism depends for its functioning on the existence of conflicting views and that it thrives best in a situation of conflict. That is to say the history of liberal ideology is not only external to itself but is also dependent on the history of the very ideological formations it tends to refute. For instance, in its classical sense liberalism is based on an undeviating insistence on limiting the power of the government (Leatt et al. 1986:52).

In these terms liberalism has nothing to do with race, class, caste or ethnic group. Therefore the category 'liberals' should necessarily include blacks, but in South Africa, because of the effect of racism, this is not the case. Would-be black liberals are regarded by their fellow blacks as collaborators because their pragmatic approach forces them to enter into a dialogue with the oppressor.

This, therefore, is yet another way in which oppression of blacks has influenced the pattern of South African society. When, in the course of time, a new group of rational thinkers emerged amongst the white communities, they became known as the liberals. This group came to understand and to accept that there was something wrong with the South African socio-political situation and that conditions in South Africa needed to be changed. However, their approach to effecting that change was via mediation, i.e. by inducing the oppressor to accept the oppressed as a fellow human being, on the one hand, and by inducing the oppressed to forget and to forgive the oppressor for the wrongs perpetrated against him, on the other. Such mediation would obviously minimise friction. They, however, very much to their undoing, perceived themselves or were perceived as the sole custodians of that process.

Although the liberals were well intended blacks, for various reasons, they eventually became disgruntled with their efforts. What liberalism promised would not effectively improve the conditions under which blacks lived. Firstly, blacks felt that as long as liberals benefitted by the status quo they would not sufficiently vigorously address the blacks' problems. Secondly, there was a gen-

eral perception that, although liberals were sympathetic to the plight of the oppressed, they lacked empathy because in order really to know oppression it is necessary to live under it. As Freire (1963:21-22) says - only people who have suffered under oppression see the need for freedom and, consequently, they are the ones who effectively wage the liberation struggle. Lastly, blacks felt that completely to entrust the liberation struggle to the liberals might either delay the dawn of the day of freedom, or might permit the liberals to hijack the struggle in their own favour.

Similar sentiments are expressed by Watts (1989:28):

The black writer in South Africa is the only hope of the alienated black people of the land: they lack all social and political hopes of self-restitution, of finding their own beings reflected back to them authentically. Only writers, working within the very circumscribed limits laid down both for them and their readers by the state, have any power to reverse the process of self-alienation.

Here again the question of authorial and aesthetic ideologies, which are not necessarily in conflict with liberal ideology but only at variance with it, arises. Liberals, in spite of understanding the plight of the oppressed, do not fully comprehend their aspirations. Therefore a successful liberation struggle can only be waged with the oppressed in the front line and not merely as followers. Hence the popular BCM dictum: 'Black man, you are on your own!'

These assertions may be illustrated with reference to Alan Paton's

popular novel, *Cry the Beloved Country* (1948). His authorial ideology reflects his level of understanding of the South African social situation: why things are as they are and why they need to be changed. However, he falters in his handling of the situation, for example in his portrayal of the novel's main character, John Kumalo. Paton depicts an immature personality who seems unaffected by his environment: he does not even react to it. It is as if everything happening around him is by divine order and he is passively awaiting some miracle or intervention of the divine hand. In other words, Paton's liberalism views a black man as a helpless victim of apartheid the attainment of whose salvation is beyond his own reach.

Alan Paton's portrayal of John Kumalo reveals at least three things which support the criticism of liberalism made above. Firstly, Paton wishes to see a peaceful solution to South Africa's problems. The depiction of Kumalo, with his passive nature, encourages the oppressed people not to react to their conditions. Secondly, the depiction of Kumalo reveals the author's upbringing in the elitist culture of individual existence. Kumalo does not behave like a member of a broader community but as an individual, whose behaviour is not characteristic of the African way of life. Lastly, Kumalo is portrayed in a manner typical of the colonial mentality to which presumably Paton does not consciously subscribe, namely, that Africans are naturally handicapped and helpless. Kumalo is incapable of solving his problem and therefore he hands everything over to the divinity. Moyana (in Heywood 1976:97) has the following enlightening observation to make:

The worst observation of the white South African novelist's vi-

sion shows itself in his characterisation of blacks, which arises from his sense of guilt. Silent black faces or servants often appear at convenient places to be recipients of white charity, real or verbal. The African characters are themselves distorted to suit the white man's quest for forgiveness - as in Alan Paton's *Cry the Beloved Country*. Often the whites present a strange psychopathic condition which is exacerbated by the presence of black men.

Paton cannot, however, be held entirely responsible for his oversights and misrepresentations because the conditions in which he lived deprived him of the opportunity fully to comprehend the life of the black people, even although he worked among them. At best it can be said that he mainly worked for them rather than with them, and he was mainly concerned with race relations rather than class relations. Nevertheless his work, in the final analysis, attests to the fact that literature and politics originate within a certain set of social relations which in turn supply the actual raw material for literary production.

Vaughan (1981) finds a similar problem concerning characterisation in J.M. Coetzee's writings, which he claims also lack the radicalism of earlier writers such as William Plomer and Roy Campbell. He claims that Coetzee writes more about races than about classes, and consequently presents only a one-sided view of South Africa's problems. One would in this regard agree with Eagleton's (1983:208-9) observation that:

Liberal humanist criticism is not wrong to use literature, but

wrong to deceive itself that it does not. It uses it to further certain moral values, which ... are in fact indissociable from certain ideological ones, and in the end imply a particular form of politics.

Now, operating from the premise that ideology essentially permeates an author's work, and that liberalism is not capable of effecting fundamental changes in society, one can recall also that Paton was one of the people who agitated for federalism in South Africa as opposed to the unitary state demanded by the majority of the oppressed. While he openly opposed apartheid, as seen from his writings and as a member of the Liberal Party, he was ideologically incapable of developing mechanisms that could effectively eliminate the malady of racism. This drawback could be ascribed to the situation of being a member of the privileged race in South Africa, which constrained him from fully knowing the people he wanted to help.

Alan Paton's views and his writings cannot be described as radical enough to bring about fundamental change in South Africa. If he were indeed radical, he would have been comfortable with the principles of his Liberal Party, which could be described as occupying a central left position in South African politics. In comparison he was found lagging behind authors such as Breyten Breytenbach and Albie Sachs whose views were more to the extreme left. Unlike Paton who lived relatively comfortably in South Africa, these two writers are among those who had suffered extremely at the hands of the South African authorities. Sachs' *The Jail Diary of Albie Sachs* is a vivid account of the price he had to pay for unqualifiedly pursuing the struggle for the total liberation of all in South Africa. Such suf-



fering was, for blacks, considered as an important signal of the bonafides of their white comrades.

While such white writers, who were also activists, do not belong to the racially oppressed class, their perception of the South African reality has been largely shaped by the plight of that class. They have not only suffered for the oppressed classes, but they have also suffered with them. However, the number of such committed whites has been largely insufficient to win the confidence of the oppressed masses. Therefore, this somewhat ambivalent position of 'the liberals' - trying to change the status quo but at the same time benefiting from it - gave rise to suspicions concerning the quality of their commitment and drew angry rhetoric such as the following from the oppressed:

With their characteristic arrogance of assuming a 'monopoly of intelligence and moral judgement' these self-appointed trustees of black interests have gone on to set the pattern and pace for the realisation of the black man's aspirations (Biko as quoted by Stubbs in Arnold 1987:74).

This attitude of the oppressed towards the liberals stems, as will be explained in the next chapter, from the general perception that liberals do not seem to acknowledge the oppressed as mature individuals with definite hopes and aspirations. The liberals' paternalistic attitude has made them view their task as being primarily that of directing the course, mode and pace of events on behalf of the 'helpless' black man, rather than that of working together with him towards the attainment of his liberation. Generally,

in such a situation, the black man is expected simply to validate what is offered to him, but not to make his own contribution. Liberalism can therefore be seen as stifling the black man's initiative by wanting to do everything for him.

This willingness, by liberals to help blacks, seems to constitute another area of domination because it is finally the liberal views that prevail. Naturally the projects they might launch, and structures they might provide, to aid blacks, would not conflict with the liberal principles. Such a situation also qualifies liberals as oppressors.

Mphahlele locates a similar problem in the area of literary studies, and consequently makes the following conclusive assertions in urging blacks writers and black critics to reject what he calls white aesthetics:

To accept the white aesthetics is to accept and validate a society that will not allow him to live. The Black artist must create new forms and new values, sing new songs (or purify old ones); and along with other Black authorities, he must create a new history, new symbols, myths and legends (and purify old ones by fire). And the Black Artist, in creating his own aesthetic, must be accountable for it only to Black people (Mphahlele 1973:65).

Mphahlele's remarks make two points. The first is the acknowledgment that African aesthetics has not been, and might not be, accepted by the Western literary tradition, whether it be in conserva-

tive or liberal circles. The second is the advocacy of the rejection of the Western aesthetics by blacks and its replacement with an African aesthetics which is intended for blacks only because it is only within their community that it can enjoy legitimacy and recognition. Watts (1989:30) endorses these points:

Gradually, however, black writers became aware of the futility of battering at the closed door of apartheid, despite the friendly liberal glances through the spy-hole, and began to be aware of the need to foster black self-confidence and deal with daily humiliations and injustices by self-healing.

With disillusionment expressed, as in the foregoing remarks about the state of affairs and existing norms in literary tradition, the stage was then set for a major cultural and literary upheaval. These aimed at asserting and re-asserting African cultural practices as well as establishing black protest literature as a literary tradition in its own right. The Black Consciousness Movement took keen interest in facilitating such a development through a consciousness-raising process as expressed in the following statement:

There is an urgent need for serious reflection on how best we can redirect our age-old attitudes in respect of our black beautiful bodies; our community responsibilities; our attitudes towards the material culture; and our relationshi with time ... Black Consciousness and solidarity must mean something more than mere nostalgia. In their present and future thrusts, they must mean the birth of a new creativity (Manganyi quoted by Sole 1983).

Such a perception led to the development of a literature which ignored the constraints placed on African literature, which literature had been fashioned after Western models, and which, apart from satisfying Western literary standards, also had to be free of political, religious and racial references, as if such issues did not exist, be suitable for prescription in schools, as if there were no adult reading community. African literature as it stands today in South Africa, remains the symbol of an episode of colonial conquest and Western imperialism because it still subsists on, and derives its recognition from, the agents of institutions which are upholding and are subscribing to tendencies of domination. Liberal ideology has served largely to promote such tendencies of domination rather than undermine them.

The examination, in this chapter, of ideology in literary production has revealed few important issues. The definition of ideology as the manner in which people conceive of their world, irrespective of whether such conceptions are 'real', led to the conclusion that ideology too, is a material condition. This development also led to the conclusion that colonialism is also a material condition. The insights yielded by such a definition then led to an extensive discussion of colonial ideology as far as it affected educational processes, literary production and literary criticism in South Africa. Last to be discussed was liberalism which, although opposed to oppression, was found to pose another problem in the black man's struggle for liberation. Therefore both colonial and liberal ideologies were conceived as either oppressive or irrelevant. Such a conception then led blacks to see the need to take control of all

matters that affect them. Hence the programmes of consciousness-raising and self-assertion. It is the consideration of the effects such developments had in black literary production in the eighties that make a materialist approach important in this study.

## CHAPTER 5

TOWARDS A BLACK LITERARY TRADITION IN SOUTH AFRICA: A MATERIALIST  
SURVEY OF IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT AND NEW IDEOLOGIES

## 5.1. Introduction

This chapter will attempt to show that a materialist analysis can be employed successfully to account for the distinct character of black protest literature by investigating ideological conflict and the emergence of new ideologies in South Africa. Seeing that the material conditions under which African literature in indigenous languages and African literature in English in South Africa, had developed and evolved had not changed significantly prior to the eighties, it is argued in this study that the emergence of black literature can best be accounted for in terms of ideological differences rather than through considerations of structural changes.

Ideological conflict and new ideologies, as they obtained prior to and during the eighties, will therefore be central to the argument of this chapter. Some of the issues considered in this chapter were raised in the previous chapter while discussing social as material conditions, in this chapter they are raised in terms of their functions as manifestations of class struggles. Therefore Althusser's approach will still be mainly employed, because similar structural formations were, whether explicitly or implicitly, still in existence during the period under consideration in this study. In this chapter, the following schematic framework will be followed:

Subsection 5.2. will explore ISAs as a site of class struggle, and attempt to explain the causes, effects and levels of ideological differences and the extent to which they have galvanized conflict in South Africa. Subsection 5.3. will look at both literary production and literary criticism as examples of ISAs as a site of class struggle. The ideological imperatives in both literary production and criticism and the extent to which such imperatives have contributed towards the conception of black literature will be examined. Subsection 5.4. will look at both liberal and BCM ideological tendencies as another example of ISAs as a site of class struggle. Liberalism will be specifically examined, not only as an ideological formation, but in its function as an important precipitating factor that led to the founding of the ideology of the Black Consciousness Movement as well as its manifestation as site for class struggle in South Africa. In subsection 5.5. the new ideological perceptions that characterized the mode of operation and perspectives of ACM formations will be examined. This should explain why the functions of the existing Isis had to be redefined and re-interpreted and thus giving black literature its characteristic features, and will also take into account the social function of literature and new literary forms as perceived by the proponents of the Black Consciousness Movement. Subsection 5.6. will examine some of the ISAs that have contributed towards the development of black literature, viz. the political, the economic, the educational and the religious. The mode of operation of these formations, with respect to their inherent contradictions, actually provided black artists and authors with the store of raw material which they refashioned to produce works of art. Raw material here refers to established and intended social practices, real or apparent, relating to these formations. It will be realized that these new perceptions regarding the functions of

the ISAs constituted most of the themes of black literature. Lastly, subsection 5.7. will provide a summary of the crucial arguments relating to the essence of a materialist analysis of black literature.

## 5.2. An exploration of ISAs as a site of class struggle

According to a Marxist view, all world societies have, from time immemorial, been locked in one or other form of class struggle which has been reflected in the interaction between two distinct layers of society. This is explained in terms of the relations between the infrastructure, meaning the base structure in this case, and the superstructure (cf. Althusser 1984:8). The underlying significance of this interaction is the production and the reproduction of the relations of production. This nature of interaction between the two layers of society is clearly explained by Althusser, following Marx, in the following two theses:

- (1) there is 'relative autonomy' of the superstructure with respect to the base;
- (2) there is a 'reciprocal action' of the superstructure on the base (ibid. p.9).

Althusser describes the manner of interaction between these two layers of society in terms of a 'reciprocal' interaction between the Repressive State Apparatuses and the Ideological State Apparatuses or ISAs. This means that developments in the one stratum will necessarily influence developments in the other:

As historical materialism stipulates that the superstructure



evolves as a result of specific historical changes in the economic basis, the development of the superstructure cannot be disconnected from its material basis (Fokkema & Ibsch 1978:90).

This assertion presupposes that developmental changes in the superstructure should not precede changes in the base structure. By implication, should developments in the former stratum precede those in the latter, then a situation of conflict would ensue. Therefore, as Althusser explains, the Repressive State Apparatuses are used to control this situation. Here the state does not necessarily mean the government; it means a 'machine of repression, which enables the ruling classes ...to ensure the domination of the ruling classes over the working class, thus enabling the former to subject the latter to the process of surplus-value extortion' (ibid. 11). It is because of this definition by Althusser that one can understand the question of class power struggle which becomes manifest in the functioning of ISAs.

The Repressive State Apparatuses, on the one hand, function predominantly by violence (i.e. by using institutionalized forms of oppression which violate basic human rights) and secondarily by ideology. These Repressive State Apparatuses include the government, administrators and other government-aligned institutions, such as publishing houses and censorship boards. Although the state apparatuses are generally conceived of as belonging to the public sphere they have also found their way into the private domain, for instance, through the church, the school, the media, etc.

On the other hand, there are the Ideological State Apparatuses, which Althusser considers to belong to the private domain, such as

the family, the religious, the educational, the trade-union and the cultural ISAs (cf. Althusser 1984:17). These formations function primarily by ideology and secondarily by violence. The functioning of ISAs in this manner can largely be attributed to state interference in the private domain. What normally happens is that the Repressive State Apparatus will use one or more of the ISAs to enforce and to promote the (repressive) system of the ruling class. In the previous chapter it has been pointed out that the church, and later on the school, were some of the ISAs that were mainly exploited by the ruling class to enforce its hegemony on the oppressed class constituting the black people of South Africa. The results of this process of interaction are clearly explained by Althusser (1984: 21):

...understand that the Ideological State Apparatuses may not only be the stake, but also the site of class struggle, and often of bitter forms of class struggle. The class (or alliance) in power cannot lay down the law in the ISAs as easily as it can in the (repressive) State Apparatus, not only because the former ruling classes are able to retain strong positions there for a long time, but also because the resistance of the exploited classes is able to find means and occasions to express itself there, either by the utilization of their contradictions, or by conquering combat positions in them in the struggle (Althusser's emphasis).

In the process of the ruling class attempting to maintain its dominance, the supposedly public Repressive State Apparatuses have infiltrated, through ideology and other government tools, the largely private ISAs, such as the church, the school, the economic sector

and other government- controlled institutions. This infiltration, coupled with state repression, has created a new form of ideological class struggle which neither the base nor the superstructure had been prepared for, and consequently could not contain.

This means that while there have been social practices within ISAs between the distinct classes, the white ruling class, on the one hand, and the differentiated oppressed non-white class, on the other, a new dimension in the form of the assertive BCM ideological ISA has been added to the latter class. This development assembled all the segments of the oppressed class under one class definition, viz. blacks. This development has, in turn, steered the culture of the oppressed into a new direction, both as its extension and its vanguard. The power of the ruling class was threatened by this development because, as Althusser (1984:20) explains:

Given the fact that 'the ruling class' in principle holds State power (openly or more often by means of alliances between classes or class fractions), and therefore has at its disposal the (Repressive) State Apparatuses, we can accept that the same ruling class is active in the Ideological State Apparatuses insofar as it is ultimately the ruling ideology which is realized in the Ideological State Apparatuses, precisely in its contradictions... To my knowledge, no class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the State Ideological Apparatuses (Althusser's emphasis).

The capacity of the ruling class to rule, which has been based on a divide and rule apartheid ideology, thus had to be speedily revised

to retain control of the ISAs which were beginning to be made uncontrollable by the BCM ideology. Thus the contradictory interaction between the Repressive State Apparatuses and the Ideological State Apparatuses became more evident. The functioning of Isis as a site of class struggle was also made more explicit. ISAs had, consequently, to be made to function either in the favour of the ruling class or the oppressed class. This development was enhanced by the fact that the different levels of consciousness which the two classes had developed over the years, in exclusive existences, had also produced divergent perceptions of reality. Therefore the process of the attempts by the two classes to gain control of the ISAs resulted into another form of conflict, ideological conflict. The ultimate results of the conflict would thus depend on the effect of the ideologies that made the most impact on society, either to maintain oppression or to promote liberation.

ISAs, such as the educational, the economic, the political, the cultural and the religious, became a real stake between the contending classes during the seventies, a conflict which was further intensified in the eighties. On the educational front the BCM-oriented student movements, such as SASO (South African Students Organisation) and the SSRC (Soweto Students Representative Council), made significant impact and changed the course of events in this ISA. The trade union movements, such as NUM (National Union of Mineworkers) and FOSATU (Federation of South African Trade Unions), also agitated for changes in the economic structure.

Political movements, such as the BPC (Black People's Convention) and later AZAPO (Azanian People's Organization), as well as the UDF (United Democratic Front), shook the foundation of the political

structure in South Africa. On the cultural front numerous black cultural movements, such as the Medupe Writer's Group and the Mpumalanga Arts Ensemble, emerged to promote black cultural practices which had been suppressed. Likewise, the emergence of the Black Theology movement, alongside other movements such as the SACC (South African Council of Churches), vigorously questioned religious practices in South Africa and re-defined the role of the church. All this was done in spite of severe state repression in collaboration with state-aligned institutions such as the security services, publishing houses, language boards and censorship boards. However, the tug of war for the control of ISAs between the ruling and the oppressed classes continued unabated.

### 5.3. Literary production and literary criticism as examples of ISAs as a site of class struggle.

This subsection intends to describe the processes of literary production and literary criticism as examples of ISAs as a site of class struggle. It is essential to do this because the development of modern literature and literary criticism for blacks in South Africa was for a considerable time the sole preserve of the ruling class. With the change in ideological perceptions, this cultural aspect also became affected.

In a situation of social class struggle there is also an inherent cultural conflict. This condition can be attributed to the fact that the ruling class, on the one hand, tends to impose its cultural values on the subordinate class. The latter class, on the other hand, because of being dominated, develops a resistant culture which generally becomes resistant to, or defiant of, the dominant culture.

This condition eventually leads to a situation where the cultural differences develop into an open conflict. Thus literature, being an aspect of the cultural ISA, also manifests conflict and authors and critics from the opposing sides present virtually segmented views of reality.

This implies that the originality of literary works derives from such conflicting views and, in each instance, considers its position regarding literature as correct. However, the great problem in the South African literary context is that of the imposition of Western aesthetics on black cultural art, as shown earlier in this study. Hence the purpose of this subsection is to show that literature and literary criticism manifest not only a stake, but also a site of class cultural conflict.

In the context of this study this means that the literature of the ruling class will ultimately reflect the ideology of the ruling class. Similarly, the literature of the oppressed class will ultimately reflect the ideology of the oppressed class. However, because the ruling class will always enforce its hegemony over the oppressed class, generally an ideological conflict based on cultural differences will develop between the two. Thus black literature, being the literature of the subordinate class, is also an oppressed literature. In order to be free it needs to challenge the legitimacy of the ruling class's imposition of its literary values.

This means that the Western values of literary production and literary criticism, which are progenies of the oppressive colonial structures, are targeted by the black anti-colonial ideology either for transformation or for destruction. This situation has resulted

into another dimension to ideological opposition, viz. the issue of the mode of communication in and through literature, which has become characteristic of social existence in South Africa. The kind of discourse that characterizes each community has, in one way or another, been reworked in both art and literature. Selden (1985:43) argues that the 'meanings and perceptions produced in the text are a reworking of ideology's own working of reality'.

It should, however, at the same time be realized that 'the literary result is not merely a reflection of other ideological discourses but a special production of ideologies' (ibid.). For this reason criticism is not concerned merely with the laws of literary form or the theory of ideology but rather with 'the laws of the production of ideological discourses as literature' (ibid.). However, seeing that a communicative model that characterizes black literature unfolds within a situation where colonial structures have not significantly changed since the colonial era, the argument in this chapter will focus chiefly on the new attitudes towards those colonial structures.

Because ideologies are also an integral part of discourse, black literary criticism needs to explore themes and ideas, illuminate the layers of meaning beneath the surface of a given work, evaluate the work and situate it in the black literary tradition (if. Ngara 1990:2). This implies that if African literature in indigenous languages which emanated from those colonial structures seems to have been perceived as promoting oppression in a racist capitalist society, then black literature emanating from the anti-colonial BCM structures should be perceived as working for liberation from that situation.

A materialist analysis of literature is essential in this respect because, according to Ngara (1990:3), 'for a Marxist critic to engage in the act of criticism is to participate in the process of liberating humanity' because 'good literature helps us to see more vividly the struggle between the forces of oppression and those of liberation and progress'. In other words, both the author and the critic are engaged in the task of making an explicit depiction of the world and in this manner raising the social consciousness of that world. Hence the two contradictory levels of consciousness embedded in literature can be discovered and explained in the processes of both literary production and criticism.

A literary text, from a Marxist literary perspective, should consequently not be understood in a literal sense but should be seen as a sign, signifying something beyond the letter of the text. This something will largely be the socio-cultural relations and ideological contradictions which are not said but are implied in the text. The duty of the critic is therefore to discover what is not said by the text, i.e. to disclose its implied or symbolic meaning. For this reason Ngara's three-level approach for identifying the ideologies which underpin the work of art is very useful here:

An exploration of authorial ideology leads us to a deeper understanding of the content of the poet's work. An examination of aesthetic ideology enables us to appreciate the dialectical relationship between content and form (ibid. p.5).

Ngara also refers to the dominant ideology which tends to permeate both the authorial and the aesthetic ideologies, in such a way that



the two seem to work towards either its promotion or its reinforcement. As Althusser would argue, the dominant ISA will tend to be promoted or be re-inforced by other ISAs. In the case of black literature, it would seem, the dominant ideology (although it is not of the ruling class) which is being reinforced is characteristically of resistance as opposed to that of dominance which is characteristic of the ruling-class literature. It is for this reason that a Marxist ideological analysis of black literature needs to examine both the historical and social contradictions which have contributed to the conception of black literary tradition. According to Ngara

Marxism is able to do this because it requires that we interpret and evaluate literature in relation to history, that we relate the ideology of the author to historical conditions, that we cannot study the style of a work of art in isolation from the circumstances in which it is produced, that form is social experience artistically recreated, and that we regard the author not just as a product of history but also as a maker of history (ibid. p.8)

As advocated by the adherents of the BCM the black author in a situation of oppression should contribute to the making of the history of his country. Therefore whatever contribution he makes needs to be accorded a place in world history. However, because black literature, like black people, has always been marginalised, the contribution the black author has made or has wished to make, has suffered the same fate. Whenever black literature has been accommodated, it has been 'grudgingly accommodated only to be marginalised in all institutions..., it is conspicuous by its absence... and it is generally dismissed as inferior to British

English literature' (Oliphant quoted in *New Nation* 10-16 July 1992:14). Thus the question of recognition has also become an issue of conflict.

It follows therefore that, unless it is understood that the primary issue with which the black author is pre-occupied, at least for the present situation, is nurtured by the realization that

Art is not a revelation, even a release, a compensation to a people who do not know whether they will survive the night without attacks while in their beds (Gordimer quoted in *New Nation* 10-16 July 1992:14).

it seems futile, for the present time, to address the issue of the characteristic tendentiousness of black literature without referring to socio-political problems in South Africa. Gordimer goes on to say in the same article

We have to admit that before we can democratize the arts in our country, people have to find space in their consciousness beyond the necessity for total concentration on daily survival. The arts are not in some lofty position above political conflict; we are inextricably part of it. Before people can read books, ... they need shelter, bread and peace. These are priorities (ibid.).

This situation raises a question whether different social conditions, such as referred to in the above quotation, do not give rise to diverse literary traditions. Also if there is only one mode of literature which is considered to be 'correct', is that 'correct'

not analogously sectarianism?

This means therefore that if the experiential realities are essentially the primary preoccupations and primary determinants of the mode of black South African writing, where anything else that ignores these central issues is of secondary importance, the question of recognition becomes even more complex. The situation is as it is because those who control the means of literary production, who have the sole right to provide such recognition, do not necessarily share the same consciousness with the oppressed class. Adams (1971:632) seems to recognize this dilemma in his comments relating to ideological differences:

Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life process. If in all ideology, men and their circumstances appear upside down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life process.

It follows therefore that while the debate about the recognition of black literature has already been going on for some time, perhaps the culture that reserves the right to recognize or not to recognize black literature is indifferent, if not oblivious, to this issue. There is, however, a literature which is emerging under these circumstances, and which does not subject itself to imperialist standards. While this literature remains largely marginalised, there is a perception that when a situation is reached which is

open to democratic participation, reformulations and changes,

will focus critically on literature, its forms, institutions and social functions. This will ensure that the barbarism inherent to cultural chauvinism and domination is rendered ineffective as emergent values are given the space to be shaped and developed in all members of society (Oliphant quoted in *New Nation* 10-16 July 1992:14).

An important consideration here, as pointed out above, is the realization that black literature has been conceived in the dark alleys of disillusion, dislocation and distress, and away from material affluence and peaceful surroundings. These circumstances have led blacks to develop into a peculiar class of writers and a peculiar audience, with a peculiar cultural ISA incompatible with any other. Because black literature

...is predominantly for and of a black, township reading public, polemically organized in its populist opposition to endemic conditions of racial oppression, and using literature as its polemical instrument - while at the same time being individualist and 'literary' enough to employ as its central modes of expression these genres of the imagination, poetry and the short story - is the reason why this literature has come into conflict with 'traditional' aesthetic criteria, as established within a white, liberal reading public (Vaughan in Gugelberger 1985:197).

Because of the new world views, perceptions, visions, means of subsistence, language and arts that had developed in that 'island' community new aesthetic tendencies developed simultaneously. 'Imported' and imposed artifacts and aesthetic tendencies no longer constituted

the basis of the black man's world view. The black man's immediate environment then determined what form of culture would evolve in those 'given' circumstances. It would be naive to imagine that blacks would not create and develop a culture which was alien to their peculiar circumstances and thus become something other than themselves. This is a situation which Macherey (1986:66) calls 'alienation'. Therefore if alienation exists in black culture, it is symptomatic of cultural oppression. It should be noted that to become other is to be 'alienated' and to become oneself is to be creative. This does not mean, however, that a person becomes a creator. He or she only uses available material creatively to produce a desired product. 'Now, art is not a man's creation, it is a product (and the producer is not a subject centered in his creation, he is an element in a situation or a system)...' (ibid. 67).

Black literature should therefore be conceived in the sense of being preoccupied with the harsh realities with which blacks were specifically faced. Contradictions between the Repressive State Apparatuses and the Ideological State Apparatuses, which gave rise to two polar positions, have produced new practices, within certain ISAs, which were characteristic of the marginalised community. This resulted in changed, perhaps even strange to others, outlooks on reality. For blacks reality, or truth, is their life experience and those things that directly affect them, i.e. their immediate socio-cultural environment. Therefore the question of perception is crucial here, mostly because:

The issues that form the object of criticism, its forms and functions as well as its specific ideological predilections are contingent upon the current preoccupations of society itself

While Gordimer's and Oliphant's observations convincingly explain the position of black arts and black literature, the formations of a resistant black cultural ISA, they do not deal effectively with the resolution of the 'site' aspect of the ISAs that constitute class struggles. Amuta's Dialectical theory of modern African literature, the origin of the above quotation, seems to provide a clear perspective on, as well as a resolution of, this problem of the site aspect of the ISAs:

In the African instance, the acute challenge and proper responsibility of a dialectical theory of modern African literature is to insist on the rootedness of literary art, as a constitutive social practice, in the very social experience which constitute African history and from which we can correctly characterize the African reality (Amuta 1989:80).

Amuta does not consider that the solution of the problem lies in the tendency to look at African literature, black literature in this case, from the Western perspective, whose perception of literature does not necessarily coincide with Africa's. His argument does not, however, dispute the fact that literature is universal; but he says that literature is both universal and diverse. Therefore the practice of imposing the Western concept of literature on black, is more a consequence of class interests than of artistic considerations, and it is a recipe for conflict.

Amuta also points out that in dealing with this subject at least three elements are important, viz. history, a mediating subject and

the literary event (ibid. 80). He claims that history, conceived in its materialist sense as the complex of material forces and objective conditions which shape social experience, furnishes the raw material for literature. The mediating subject is an approximation of the writer or artist who mediates between history and the literary text, 'and his mode of representing socio-historical experience is a function of objective factors such as facts of biography, class orientation, ideology and political alignment' (ibid. 81). Furthermore, the 'literary event is a product of the attempts by the mediating subject to derive form from socio-historical experience ... In short, history informs the literary artifact and is revealed in and through it' (ibid. 82). Therefore, to overlook or to dismiss the perceptions which characterize the conceptualization of literature by blacks would in itself be an attempt to wrest blacks from their cultural base, something that cannot be done without fuelling resistance and conflict.

Another important consideration is that the hegemony of the ruling class is firmly backed by the imperialist ISAs, including the institutions which they have monopolized, and is locked into the struggle with the somewhat fledgling black cultural ISA. This is another dimension of cultural practice that compounds the problem further. It is with the realization of this cumbersome problem that black literature, as a front (or another front) of the black cultural ISA, addresses itself mostly to the masses rather than to the elite, who inadvertently serve in institutions that promote the interests of the ruling class. As a result they can do very little to promote black literature at a higher level regardless of the interest they might have in, or the affinity they might claim, for this literature. Their focus is mainly on programmed professional consid-

erations and the international audience whose interest in this (black literary) art cannot be guaranteed. This in itself creates a conflict of divided loyalties within the literary community. The following statement attempts to provide another solution to this problem of the international audience:

African writers must not waste their energies trying to cater to a so-called international audience. They should write what they wish as best they could [sic]. When the world is ready to become aware of African writing, it will. Perhaps ... when that time comes, what the world will want to read will not be what the African has tried to write for her, but what the African has written in response to his genuine creative impulse (Okpaku 1966:xiv).

However, even if the international audience should manifest interest in African literature (and black literature in this instance), as has been the case to some extent, Okpaku says that this should not occur at the expense of the 'Africanness' of the literature of Africa. This also holds true for the 'blackness' of black literature in South Africa. Similarly, any form of recognition should, according to the BCM, not necessarily compromise the foundation of black literature whose function is primarily creatively to portray the 'black experience'.

It would seem though that, in spite of the attitudes which hardened during the phase of struggle which was characteristic of direct cultural conflict between the ruling and the oppressed classes, former perceptions seem to be changing. This is why the decade of the 1990s has seen volumes of previously-banned literary material returning to



the shelves for public consumption. As a specific example of such forms of cultural struggles, their causes and results will be investigated in the next subsection.

#### 5.4. Liberalism and BCM ideological tendencies as another example of ISAs as a site of class struggle

This subsection intends to show that, as a result of ideological contradiction, liberalism was the most important factor in the founding of the Black Consciousness Movement. There was, up to the late 1960s, harmonious working relationships between white liberals and a progressive group of mostly young black intellectuals in the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), a non-racial student movement. This initially promised to be the beginning of a new non-racial social ISA that would finally provide an answer to South Africa's racial problem. But with the passage of time the blacks (who were then mostly university students) began to question whether the harmonious partnership was in effect contributing towards alleviating the living conditions of the black population as a whole, or whether it was merely a way of soothing their wounds so that they did not become aware of their actual pain. Attempts to answer these doubts brought to the fore serious contradictions which the partnership could not address. The blacks found NUSAS not only inadequate but also dishonest insofar as it could contribute nothing towards the liberation of blacks from racial oppression (cf. Arnold 1987).

The disillusionment concerning the role of liberals in the black liberation struggle took a dramatic turn when, in 1968, black university students broke away from the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) to form the South African Students Organization

(SASO), an exclusively black students organization. This new student movement, whose leaders were, inter alia, the late Steve Biko and Onkgopotse Tiro, is regarded by Motlhabi (1984:107) as the 'prime mover' of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa. The BCM ideology also found expression in movements such as the Black People's Convention (BPC) and, later, the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) together with its affiliates. Stubbs (in Arnold 1987:18) defines the Black Consciousness Movement as follows:

Black Consciousness is in essence the realization by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their oppression - the blackness of their skin - and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude.

In other words 'being black' is a condition of being oppressed, whether it be psychologically, politically, culturally, etc. It is an imposed condition. And 'to be black' stems from one's realization of that oppression and the acceptance of the challenge to change that condition. Therefore 'blackness' is an attitude, a way of life and this is the basis of the principles of the ISA of the BCM formation which ultimately redesigned and redefined the functions of both the existing and the new ISAs.

Another aspect of disillusionment with the liberals surfaced in the dissolution of the PEN club, a multiracial association of writers which was ideologically opposed to apartheid and in which personalities such as Mothobi Mutloatse, Lionel Abrahams, Mike Kirkwood and Nadine Gordimer had participated. The issue that chiefly nagged members of this movement was that, while black artists in the asso-

ciation were subjected to harassment by the Special Branch of the police in South Africa, their white counterparts were treated leniently by the regime. Through pressure from MEWASA, the media workers association, black members of the PEN club were compelled to denounce their membership and participation in the association. This resulted in the establishment of Ravan Press under Mike Kirkwood and Skotaville Publishers under Mothobi Mutloatse (cf. Welz 1987:39).

This new-found attitude among the writers demanded a fresh consideration of the nature of South African society, and of its relations of production. Liberalism could not fully explore this aspect, probably either because of its anti-Marxist stance, or because liberals were the beneficiaries of the status quo. According to Sebidi (in Mosala and Tlhagale 1986:15-19) two perspectives, the race analyst position and the class analyst position, characterized the debate about social relations in South Africa. The race analysts argue that conflict in South Africa is attributable to the race ideology which classifies people on the basis of their pigmentation. Accordingly, therefore, conditions of conflict and oppression exist not between classes but between racial groups. In support of this view one can cite the case of affluent black businessmen and professionals who should be part of the ruling bourgeois class but who are not, because of the colour of their skin.

The race analysts can thus be viewed as proponents of the nationalistic liberation struggle (which includes all the oppressed racial groups) as opposed to the class struggle which would only pertain to workers. In Sebidi's (in Mosala and Tlhagale 1986:16) words 'The predominant factor here is not the so called "objective material conditions" or "one's relationship to the forces of production",

but the ideological forces of racism'.

However, it may still be argued, contrary to this view, that such a perception necessarily excludes the black South African worker from the struggle of the working class against capitalism in the rest of the world. It is, however, not necessary to continue this debate beyond this point but rather to turn to the class analyst position which might obviate further shortcomings, if any, in this perception.

The class analysts do not regard 'race' as a really potent factor in the struggle. According to them, to pursue such a view would be to save capitalist South Africa from the international workers' struggle against capitalism. In terms of the class analyst perception, race does not have any plausible explanatory framework, i.e. there is no element outside itself that can really explain it. Sebidi (in Mosala and Tlhagale 1986:18) cites, as an illustration, innumerable instances of intimate and even romantic encounters between individuals from different racial groups in South Africa often witnessed in the so-called desegregated places. Moreover

Race, as a meaningful criterion within the biological sciences, has long been recognized to be a fiction. When we speak of "the white race" or "the black race", "the Jewish race" or "the Aryan race", we speak in biological misnomers and, more generally, in metaphors (Gates 1984:4).

There is therefore only one reason, why 'race' still remains a prominent feature in South Africa's politico-economic relationships. As Sebidi (ibid.18) puts it:

Racism is, therefore, a function of capitalist exploitation and serves to legitimate the status of those who own the means of production and their functionaries. As such 'race' is not a peculiarly South African problem.

While these two perceptions, the race-analyst and the class-analyst positions, sound convincing individually, it would be naive to think that, in confronting the South African problem, these perceptions may be regarded as mutually exclusive. They may best be regarded as two sides of the same coin. Without these considerations liberalism would supposedly have remained one of the most potent factors in facilitating the aspiring liberation of the blacks.

Although there were no outright answer to the question of social relations in South Africa, or a consensual opinion in dealing with the problem of structural oppression, but merely possibilities, it would seem that the general opinion was that - capitalism and apartheid are two inseparable ingredients of the mechanism which oppressed blacks.

From such perceptions it was evident that a new economic ISA, which would have the capacity to address the historical imbalances, was necessary. Also, while trying to grapple with South Africa's social problem, one should be reminded that

Race has become a trope of ultimate, irreducible difference between cultures, linguistic groups, or adherents of specific belief systems which - more often than not - also have fundamentally opposed economic interests (Gates 1984:5)

This notion seems to be most relevant to the South African situation because 'the basic problem in our country is the fact that the presence of the black race in this country is inimical to the vital interests of the white' (Stevens 1914:12).

There are basically conflicting economic interests between blacks and whites in South Africa, and these interests have directly or indirectly affected other spheres of life as well, and are manifested in the fabric of the relations of production. The liberal view of society, favouring the freedom of individuals, is mostly relevant in a free society and not in a situation where there is structural oppression as is a case in South Africa. Therefore an observation one could make is that the BCM saw its programme as the most viable mechanism to free black South Africans from structural oppression, and the only one that could take South Africa from an apartheid to a post-apartheid era. Perhaps only then could liberal views be considered.

While Althusser's thesis on the production and the reproduction of relations of production explains how the Repressive State Apparatuses mediate, through ideology (for the ruling class's control over the ISAs), in the unity of Ideological State Apparatuses, it can be argued that the Black Consciousness Movement - which represents the oppressed class - also uses its ideology to mediate in the unity of the ISAs to restructure them in such a way that they would ultimately undermine the Repressive State Apparatuses. The latter have been defined by Althusser as the power mechanisms of the ruling class and, according to the BCM definition of oppressor and oppressed, the liberals are constitutive components of that ruling class. Hence

liberals are by this definition also oppressors. The assumption relating to the definition of the oppressor therefore makes liberalism, in spite of its pragmatic approach to South Africa's problem, irrelevant as far as the BCM perspective of the liberation of blacks is concerned.

#### 5.5. New ideological perceptions in the BCM cultural formations

In this subsection the new ideological tendencies which characterize the BCM formations, and the manner in which they ultimately influence the mode of function within aligned formations, will be explored. New perceptions regarding the social role of literature and new literary forms will also be examined, especially with regard to their thematic expression. It should be realised that the experiences of blacks in the course of the liberation struggle, their victories and their setbacks, coupled with the ever-increasing measures of oppression and repression, require a review of strategies and tactics. This ultimately presupposes a new literary tradition with a new outlook coupled with the re-interpretation of literature in relation to social reality as perceived from the BCM point of view.

There are five trends or tendencies which can be identified in the mode of operation of the black (literary) cultural ISA which will dictate the direction of this discussion. These are:

(a) The political climate preceding the conception of black literature and the one prevailing during its inception.

(b) The propagation of black literature, i.e. how authors were induced to get engaged in black writing.

(c) The definition of black literature. This will consider its nature of aesthetics as well as its mode of consumption.

(d) The process of defending black literature. This will consider attitudes of authors and statements made in defense of black writing in order to legitimize it.

(e) The illustration of the social function of black literature. This will be done through the analysis of social functions of literature as perceived from selected texts and critical works.

(a) The political climate prior to the conception of black literature and the one prevailing during its inception are two distinct phases in the black liberation struggle. Liberation organizations such as the ANC (African National Congress) and the PAC (Pan Africanist Congress) had, on the one hand, directly challenged the regime, in pursuit of bargaining power for the oppressed, and this had led to bloody conflicts. The BCM, on the other hand, decided to strive for the same ideal but without direct confrontation with the regime. Various tactics and programmes were undertaken to achieve their objective. The BCM diverted its attention from the ruling class and concentrated on the 'empowerment' of the oppressed person by assisting him or her

... to build his own value systems, see himself as self-defined and not as defined by others. Group cohesion and Black solidarity were seen as important aspects of Black Consciousness. Self-definition meant rejecting white stereotypes of



Blacks and negative references to them such as 'non-whites' or 'non-Europeans' (Motlhabi 1984:112).

Also, through this process of conscientising, the 'Black people were to affirm their recognition of the fact that their condition was not intended by God, but was a deliberate creation of man. For this reason, this condition had to be fought and removed so that black humanity could be retrieved' (ibid. 111). Also while the BCM was engaging in 'this intermediate goal of consciousness raising and creating solidarity, white people and their government were regarded as irrelevant' (ibid. 28). This perception therefore made it possible to avoid direct confrontation with the ruling class.

In order to rectify the situation which had caused the culture of the oppressed to be termed "barbarism", their religion "superstition", and their leaders "tyrants" (cf. ibid. 112-3), the BCM - with the help of SASO and the BPC - established numerous community projects to cater for the immediate and interim needs of blacks.

Macherey's (1986) assertion that literature is more a production than a creation seems to explain the process of the development of black literature in South Africa: 'The work does not develop at random, in indiscriminating freedom; it grows because it is determined at every level' (ibid p.39). It follows then that the process of black literary production will evidently also be determined by the various forces that govern social dynamics as they obtain in the situation under consideration.

This phenomenon led to the emergence of a black literature in the 1970s which was unique in both its nature and its social function.

This literature had, in the first place, not been anticipated: there were already established literary traditions that ostensibly catered for the cultural needs of blacks, viz. African literature in indigenous languages and African literature in English. However, African literature in English was automatically disqualified, in terms of the current strict definition of African literature, which in South Africa refers to literature in indigenous languages only, as being part of the African literary tradition. At the same time African literature in English was also not considered to be part of the English literary tradition. African literature in English is a literature which, like the black communities, has become marginalised.

(b) Black protest literature in South Africa, was seen as another area of political struggle and writers were induced to relate their works to socio-historical issues as they obtained in the country during the period under consideration in this study. By the mid-seventies, following the stagnation and pessimism resulting from the banning of liberation movements and the Sharpeville aftermath, several BCM-oriented cultural groupings had emerged all over the country to break that silence and to resuscitate black cultural practices. This situation initiated a new vision, which gave rise to black protest writing which was in conflict with literary practices within the existing cultural ISA. Consequently, several cultural groups, which would promote such a form of writing, were established.

According to Mzamane (1991) the Medupe Writers Group was the forerunner of the new writers movement. Other groups also made their contribution, among which should be mentioned the Mpumalanga Arts Ensemble, the Malopoets, the Bayajula Art Group, the Creative Youth

Association, the Madi Group and the Allah Poets. It is the contributions by writers from these groups that made the launching of *Staffrider* magazine in 1978 feasible.

According to Visser, in an interview with Kirkwood (in Chapman 1982:128), when Kirkwood was charged with the responsibility of establishing a black literary magazine he talked particularly to the Mpumalanga Arts Group, the members of which included Mafika Gwala and Nkathazo Mnyayisa. He also talked to the Medupe Writers Group (banned in 1977), the members of which included Mothobi Mutloatse. The publication of *Staffrider* as a national journal had recently also been taken over by the Congress of South African Writers (COSAW). Another journal, *Classic*, which was being published by the African Writers Association (AWA) had emerged and it was also making significant contributions to the development of black literature.

Seeing that black literature was not only marginalised and discouraged but also rejected by established publishers and other institutions on the basis of not being sufficiently "literary", one is inclined to argue that it should not be seen as an offshoot of another literary tradition. Although one could argue along these lines it would be a mistake to ignore the fact that one can still find some continuity in it from oral literature as well as from the *Drum* and *Journalism* schools. In spite of this evident continuity, black literature could not depend on any of the established literary traditions, especially the dominant literary traditions, for its recognition. It had to depend on the prevailing circumstances that caused its emergence and it needs to be judged against the background of that situation.

The assertion that black literature did not owe its emergence to any of the dominant literary traditions should not be interpreted as dismissing, out of hand, any contribution by some writers from existing and former traditions, some of whose writings seem relevant to the crucial questions of the era under discussion. The essence of the argument in this study is to show how, by employing a materialist analysis, developments in literature production and literary criticism finally led preoccupation with articulating the 'Black Experience'. This term has been coined to represent the collective experiences of blacks with regard to the functioning of ISAs, which have been presented artistically, and have, in turn, as a result of the inherent ideological conflict, nurtured and sustained black literature.

Mutloatse in the introduction he wrote to *Forced Landing*, articulates how the black artist virtually finds himself embroiled right in the centre of class struggle in South Africa. Black artists have, in fact, responded in concert to challenges facing them and their communities, namely, those of changing the social fabric of a South African society characterized by the ideology of apartheid.

A point of departure in dealing with this situation, as advocated by the Black Consciousness Movement, is the principle of black self-assertion, which grew like a mustard seed to become a big tree of the black cultural ISA, with literature as one of its branches. Mutloatse (1980:5) proposes a *modus operandi* for black artists in the following 'policy' statement, which is in line with the BCM ideology of rejecting any identification with the colonial structural attitudes:

We will have to **donder** conventional literature: old-fashioned critic and reader alike... We are going to experiment and probe and not give a damn what critics have to say. Because we are in search of our true selves - undergoing self-discovery as a people... We are not going to be told how to re-live our feelings, pains and aspirations by anybody who speaks from the platform of his own rickety culture.

This statement challenged established literary values head-on and should, necessarily, have raised eyebrows in literary circles within the current literary ISAs. It was, in the first place, an elaboration of Steve Biko's Manifesto of Black Literature contained in his book title, *I Write What I Like*. This did not, however, mean writing at random. It meant a realist writing for the black people, sharing their experiences, pains and ideals in whatever way is necessary, as stated in the above quotation. Any literary form that could facilitate effective communication with the masses was welcome because the BCM subscribed to the notion that the man in the street had easier access to realist writing because it had political significance. Such a mode of writing, it was believed, produced a literature that could provide answers to questions posed by the man in the street. Themes in black protest writing were in fact constructed around such questions and answers, which related to issues blacks found themselves faced with in their daily lives.

Mutloatse's assertion also refers to progressive writing which does not insist on the imposition of (given) literary standards, but is a kind of writing that liberates the mind, stimulates creativity and encourages growth and development. In other words, the act of writing should not be pre-determined but generated.

It would also be naive simply to take this statement as just another form of radicalization. It should rather be considered against the BCM programme of self-assertion, as an 'appeal' to sensitise those minds that have resigned themselves to a 'there is nothing we can do' syndrome because whatever blacks attempted to write about themselves was generally considered to be irrelevant to literature.

One therefore also needs to consider its context, i.e. the why of the new literature. Watts (1989:8) convincingly explains why relevance, experimentation and innovation are unavoidable in black South African writing:

In addition to this fundamental query about the basic relevance of their activity, black South African writers have inherited a clutch of other problems, some unique to their country, and some shared by writers all over Africa - the absence of a unified national literary tradition; the pressure from publishers to produce sensational material; the difficulty of reconciling traditional values with modern industrialized society; the need to spend too much of their time and energy dodging censorship, banning or imprisonment, and, at the most basic level of all, the well-nigh impossible obstacle of establishing the basic physical conditions which make writing possible.

These problems inevitably produced, initially, a heterogeneous literary tradition with varying modes of change, emphasis and presentation which ultimately converged into a distinct black literary (cultural) ISA. That is why black literature constitutes a

wide range varying from autobiographies and fictional autobiographies through satire to didacticism, subtle political statements and even fictional documentation of history (cf. Amuta 1989:81). This approach to writing therefore leaves ways open for aspiring black authors to identify their own themes and to develop their own means of structuring plots and portraying characters.

(c) Black protest literature, as it is defined today, gives out a distinct aura, quite different from African literature. What gives black literature its unique nature is the fact that the writers' 'immediate aim was to develop a community consciousness that would lead blacks to act as a community and give them pride in belonging to that community' (Alvarez-Pereyre 1984:35). It had to be a literature of the marginalized people, addressing itself to issues that were seen as being responsible for the black person's misery. Because black protest literature was directed at a specific audience, such considerations also determined its nature of aesthetics and mode of consumption. Its form of aesthetics was of cardinal importance because it served to relate black protest literature to its intended audience and to make it accessible to them. Such a development led to a situation where most bourgeois critics regarded black protest literature as nothing more than political propaganda. However, Lu Hsun comments as follows in this regard:

Though all literature is propaganda, not all propaganda is literature; just as all flowers have colour (I count white as colour), but not all coloured things are flowers. In addition to catchwords, slogans, notices, telegrams and textbooks, the revolution needs literature - just because it is literature (quoted by Fokkema & Ibsch 1978:105).

One therefore needs to take several issues into consideration before dismissing (all) black literature as mere propaganda. This dismissive attitude in studying black literature has deprived many literary scholars, locally and abroad, of very enriching insights. Therefore to counteract this negative attitude one needs to consider Abrahams' (1986:57) contention:

In establishing a context for South African black writing, it is imperative that the critic and reader of this literature be aware of the following standpoints: first, that South African black writing forms a separate segment of African literature; second, that the fabric of racial discrimination known as Apartheid, dominates the thematic structure of the writing; third, that even though the writers confront in one way or another this fabric of discrimination, they go beyond generalized attempts at portraying the evils of racism; fourth, that because the writers have been brought up in particular segments or pockets of racism, they are inclined to search out their line of differences within the special expression of their group; and lastly, that the difference in conception of the South African literary experience by exiled and non-exiled South African writers is imperceptible.

This implies therefore that the best way the critic can understand and appreciate black literature is by coming face to face with those realities that inform this literature. Analogously, most, if not all, critical approaches (of creation rather than those of production) which are applied as finished products only, are likely to fail (cf. Macherey 1986:68). Okpaku's assertion, the implications of



which is relevant to black literature, also needs to be taken seriously here. He says:

The present practice of judging African literature by Western standards is not only invalid, it is also potentially dangerous for a development of African arts. It presupposes that there is one absolute artistic standard and that, of course, is the Western standard. Consequently, good African literature is taken to be that which most approximates to Western literature (cf. Wright 1973:4).

One could argue along the same lines that the acceptable African or black view is the one which approximates most closely to the Western view. This tendency has outlawed experimentation on any new literary forms, as Sole (in Chapman 1982:143) observes:

Crucially, the attempts by critics to analyze South African literature of any description in terms of a printed product only, rather than as an activity (that is, in terms of the fluctuating social and cultural fields from which it emerges), has led to a great deal of literary innovation and experimentation in South Africa being ignored, especially when such literary activity has not conformed to pre-determined, often Eurocentric 'literary standards'.

It is important therefore that one should look at emerging literary forms, as well as thematic expressions, when dealing with black literature, because these feature are important in the description and definition of this literature. This implies that black literature needs to be looked at on the basis of what it is to discover its pe-

culiar features. This requires one to look at what it presents - its thematic, formal and semantic features, and how it presents them - its syntactic organisation and discourse tendencies. These will be considered against the background of the BCM cultural ISA programme of self-assertion, considering both the dialectical and the historical materialist imperatives.

These considerations should also assist one in understanding the mode of consumption in black literature. Because it is concerned with current issues, the subject matter is transmitted to the audience or reader in such a manner that it immediately impacts on his social experience. The impact of a work of art is determined by a particular design in the production of the text, which design operates in such a way that the reader/audience finds a role to play in society. It is on this basis that Mutloatse (1981) calls it a 'Participatory Literature of Liberation'.

This literature should, consequently, be (and it is) of such a form that it overcomes linguistic (and other communicative) barriers where they exist, and that it is also comprehensible to a great percentage of its audience. Over and above this, it does not distinguish between producer (artist) and the consumer (audience), i.e. it must be participatory and not elitist. It is diametrically opposed to the capitalist ideology - with its relational distinguishing features - which is also manifested in the Western concept of art. Mutloatse (1981:6) spells out this trend clearly in the introduction he wrote for *Reconstruction*. He says:

This Participatory Literature of Liberation demands more than just listening to or reading a poem: it demands too, the ab-

solute involvement of the reader/listener all the time, so that in the end the thin line dividing artist from audience disappears, since ours is a culture that does not isolate in us the experience of any facet of our lives, be it death or birth. All these activities involve the whole community.

This implies that literature performs, in the process of consumption, the social function of inducing the black people to participate in the struggle for liberation. This has largely been achieved by presenting texts in such a way that it creates a situation which allows for a spontaneous exchange of information between the addresser and the addressee, such as narrations, recitals and performances. These are largely produced in the context of specific situations which illustrate social relations and the way in which the various (social) components interact, together with their implications in the differentiated and the undifferentiated social orders. Wakashe (in *The Drama Review* Vol.30 No.4 1986:36-47) in his article, *Pula: An Example of Black Protest Theatre in South Africa*, further illustrates this situation in the undifferentiating social order with respect to the interaction between the artist and his audience, the ideal which is pursued in the black literary tradition.

Furthermore it can be argued out that black literature is participatory because the reader finds role models in the characters portrayed in the text. The images of these characters are determined at every level by events similar to those the reader experiences daily in his interaction with the larger society. Therefore by relating the events portrayed in the text to real events in life, the reader finds corresponding roles which he can play. In this man-

ner the reader is induced to participate in the liberation struggle.

Other important descriptions and definitions of this literature have been proposed by other literary scholars. Watts (1989) defines black literature as the 'literature of combat' because it is, among other things, 'a narrative form that aims not merely at historical and social documentation, but also at bringing about a movement towards commitment on the part of the reader' (ibid. p.211). It is also a literature of combat because it forms part of the whole process of raising the consciousness of blacks in their search for an identity as a people.

Alvarez-Pereyre (1984:264-266) defines black literature as a 'literature of commitment' because it seeks to establish several historical truths and to develop the spirit of militarism. He argues further that it is also a literature of commitment because it is one of the critical weapons in politics which sustains blacks and moves with them to a cherished destiny of normal human existence.

Shava (1989) describes black literature as a 'literature of assertion and revolution' because it has emerged as a result of the BCM's influence, which 'has generally tended to be assertive, didactic, exhortatory and overtly political' (ibid p.98). These, and other definitions, give to black literature a distinct identity.

(d) As explained earlier, black literature was conceived at a time when South African society necessitated fundamental change. Mutloatse (1980) sees this situation as a 'forced landing', a situation in which the black man, alone, realises the need for such a change. Therefore black literature had to be presented in such a manner that

would make it appear as another legitimate agent of social change. It also had to reveal the 'hidden face of South African society as represented by the condition of the black peoples' (Alvarez-Pereyre 1984:251). Ndebele aptly comments on this situation when he says:

In societies such as South Africa, where social, economic, and political oppression is most stark, such conditions tend to enforce, almost with the power of natural law, overt tendentiousness in the artist's choice of the subject matter... Clearly thus, according to this attitude, artistic merit or relevance is determined less by a work's internal coherence (a decisive principle of autonomy), than by the work's displaying a high level of explicit political preoccupation... (Staffrider Vol.7 No.3&4 1988:328).

Essentially, therefore, the work of art is written and read as offering certain political insights. In Ndebele's terms it must 'strike a blow for freedom' (ibid.). In other words, the work should be directed at, or be in response to, a specific issue viewed as an aspect of oppression. It is, in fact, these very issues which have been used as rallying points to mobilize or to raise the consciousness of blacks because

Literature is, in addition, one (only one) of the instruments for the sharpening and mobilization of social consciousness in pursuit or negation of qualitative change, an instrument for the preservation or the negation of the existing order (Amuta 1989:9).

It follows that black literature, in order to legitimize itself,

had, as a social obligation, to present a particular view of reality which was concomitant with the aspirations of blacks. It had to portray the existing situation as undesirable and thus encourage qualitative change. Unless it did so it would not elicit support from the black community. In other words, the author's attitude had to explicitly or implicitly negate the existing order. Particular structural formations, such as politics, education, economics, etc., were targeted as manifestations of arenas of class struggles in order to illustrate this attitude.

It should also be pointed out that these formations should be considered to have, interchangeably, kept the liberation struggle alive. That is to say, once one issue ceased to appeal strongly to the masses, whether or not notable success had been attained in that direction, attention would shift to other issues that would kindle the spirit of resistance. Black literature had to reflect this tendency and therefore changed approaches to the themes and modes of writing.

This trend in the historical development of black literature coincides with what Watts (1989:29-36) sees as stages in the trend of black literature, namely:

- (i) a time of change: from protest to consciousness,
- (ii) a time for action: from consciousness to participation,  
and
- (iii) a time of experiment: new attitudes to form, language,  
production and distribution.

However, to consider these tendencies as stages would imply that certain objectives in that continuum have been attained, while in reality they have not, and still remained important rallying points in the liberation struggle during the eighties. One would rather view them as aspects of the whole liberation movement and to add to the list the aspect of re-education. This last-mentioned aspect seems to be the most important because it will ultimately determine the final outcome of the liberation struggle.

Seeing that the social role of literature, which gives it a certain measure of legitimacy, has assumed another dimension, one needs also to mention that the liberation struggle, as waged by blacks, is also perceived as a struggle against dehumanisation and for humanity. Similarly black literature, as an agent, can be seen as being justifiably involved in the struggle for the liberation of humanity, i.e. to restore the lost humanity of blacks as a people. The story of a Negro slave girl, Phillis Wheatley, whose literary prowess surprised a panel of English-speaking adjudicators, dispelling the myth that blacks are inferior and consequently cannot write, i.e. produce creative art, illustrates this fact (cf. Gates 1984:7-8). Gates observes:

Writing, especially after the printing press became widespread, was taken to be the visible sign of reason. Blacks were 'reasonable', and hence 'men', if - and only if - they demonstrated mastery of 'the arts and sciences', ... Writing, for these slaves, was not an activity of mind; rather, it was a commodity which they were to trade for their humanity (ibid p.9).

While it can be accepted that the ability to write is proof of one's humanity, the question remains as to who are the adjudicators who will assess one's writing. However, much as this remains a complex subject which could be elaborated upon, one would think that conditions within which literature emerges are the most likely to produce the best adjudicators, much as they are, in the same way, expected to produce the best authors.

The following assertion by Gwala, one of the early black writers and a defender of black literature, concisely summarises the attitudes of writers in defence of this literature by blaming the socio-economic situation for whatever shortcomings are raised regarding black literature:

If black writing, which is cultural expression, is bad - then the socio-economic pattern prevailing is equally bad. On the other hand, if the cultural is part of the socio-economic pattern, then the blackman 'must not appeal to a culture for the right to live,' ... (quoted by Chapman 1982:174).

Such a defensive position is the only measure that could ensure the continued existence of black literature. Otherwise practitioners in this literary tradition would sooner or later have been overwhelmed by pressure and forced to close shop, unless they stood up to defend and to justify their tradition. It follows then that the tendency to marginalize black literature, if it had been allowed to continue unchecked, would have been a serious blow not only for this literature but for the black liberation struggle as well.



(e) To illustrate the social role of black literature and the expressed as well as implied attitudes of authors, a few texts will be considered. When one of South Africa's popular black poets, Mongane Serote, was asked about the direction the poet would take, he answered: 'What direction does the liberation struggle take in the 1980s? That is the direction of the black South African poet' (Shava 1989:146). Several literary texts and critical tendencies have as a result been produced and developed to sketch the absurd episode of the distortion of structural relations in South Africa. Mqotsi's book, *House of Bondage* (1989), portrays the functioning of the mechanisms of the divide and rule ideology of the apartheid system and the resultant conflicts.

It is characteristic of the apartheid ideology to legitimize illegitimate structures and to discredit, by decree, all traditionally legitimate structures. Mqotsi exploits the 'invaded' traditional social setting, where only the authority of traditional leaders who co-operated with the 'colonial' government was recognised and upheld by the regime. The latter group of traditional leaders created a sort of a buffer state between the ruling and the oppressed classes. This is the case because

The oppressors do not favour promoting the community as a whole, but rather selected leaders. The latter course, by preserving a state of alienation, hinders the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in a total reality. And without this critical intervention, it is always difficult to achieve the unity of the oppressed as a class (Freire 1963:112).

Mqotsi's book does not only expose the apartheid ideology of 'divide and rule'. It goes on to illustrate how this ideology is detrimental to the existence of blacks as a people. He also shows how the system can be undermined and overcome by unifying blacks to collectively oppose it. He also effectively uses the rural setting of his book to show that, even though blacks are exposed to different environments as a result of the migrant labour system and urbanisation, these conditions do not have a negative effect on the national interests of blacks as an oppressed class. They merely serve to expose the various mechanisms of oppression. Therefore their 'blackness' is more important for their liberation than any supposed differences that might exist between them. His book illustrates an ideology which undermines the divisive racist-capitalist ideology of the ruling class.

Mqotsi's novel is but one of the many literary texts which depict the Black Consciousness ideology which defies artificial barriers between blacks, and draws a line only between the white ruling class and the broad oppressed black communities. It argues that it is only through presenting a united front (constituting all the oppressed groups) that lost political rights can be reclaimed. This is the position black art, in particular literature, has found itself compelled to assume and to advance.

It is no longer a debatable issue that black literature, as cultural production, largely unfolds and takes form and content within a polarised South African society, in a kind of we-they consciousness. According to Ndebele (1991:59)

... this situation has resulted in two distinct perceptions of

the reality by South Africans. For the oppressed, political knowledge came to be equated with the recognition of the blatant injustice which occurs in various forms throughout the country. To know has been to know how badly one has been treated. Every other thing is irrelevant unless it is perceived as contributing to the extension of this knowledge (also in *Pretext* Vol.1 No.1 1989:40-41).

The other perception is that of the ruling class. To them knowledge has been equated with the power to maintain racist, political, and economic domination. All these views suggest that, if the black artist hopes to reach his audience, he must reflect this 'knowledge of oppression' because his audience is interested only in whatever adds to that knowledge. These are the social relations that black literature reproduces in whatever form and manifestation.

Therefore 'political knowledge' that coincides with the perception of blacks is the primary determinant of their literature. This fact has already been explained earlier and will not be elaborated on again. What is important here is to consider the aspect which - illustrates how black literature performed a useful social role.

Ian Steadman (1989) in his paper, *Collective Creativity: Theatre for a Post-Apartheid Society*, demonstrates how the social role of literature is made explicit by narrowing the gap between the artist and his audience by relating performance texts to the daily experiences of the people. He analyses numerous performances most of which portray mass stayaways and other labour disputes. What he highlights is the immense impact of the message of the performance text on the audience in an undifferentiating artist-audience relationship. It

means, therefore, that artists in protest literature are more concerned with the aspect of 'reaching out' to their community than is usually imagined, because those are the people who must actually get the message of the text in order to transform themselves. They need to 'see' and understand how the social order (which they must necessarily change) in which they find themselves affects them, as well as how they will be affected by a different social order (which is being aspired for).

#### 5.6. An examination of some of the ISAs that have contributed towards the production of black protest literature

This subsection will examine some of the ISAs that have contributed towards the development of black literature by providing authors and artists with raw material which they creatively refashioned into works of art. Raw material here refers to the views that developed as a result of the perceived social practices of ISAs, real or apparent, relating to these formations. This discussion will be carried out in four stages. While all necessary precautions will be taken to handle arguments relating specifically to each ISA, it will not be possible completely to avoid a certain measure of overlapping because, as it will be realised in the course of discussion, there are certain conditions that make such overlapping inevitable. This trend can in part be attributed to the tendency of the Repressive State Apparatuses to mediate by ideology in the ISAs in order to impose the hegemony of the ruling class, and to the collective resistant effort of the oppressed class.

The discussion will be confined to a debate on contending ideologies in the following ISAs:

(a) The political ISA. Here issues that have a bearing on the debate within the political ISA and the extent to which they have generated literary texts and scientific arguments will be investigated in relation to the whole liberation movement.

(b) The economic ISA. Perceptions and the related debate and the manner in which they have contributed to generating literary works will be discussed, as well as the impact they were intended to make in the black liberation struggle.

(c) The educational ISA. Here also perceptions relating to the perceived social role of education as far as they contributed to the development of black literature will be investigated. This will also take into account the implications of the role this ISA will play in advancing the liberation of blacks.

(d) The religious ISA. Here focus will be mainly on Black Theology which is an aspect of the religious ISA. The vision of Black Theology, as far as it views the nature and role of religious practices as they affect the social life of blacks in particular, will be investigated. The argument will be guided mainly by the Black Theology view of religion as a social practice, and particularly its implications in the black liberation struggle.

Seeing that these formations affect lives of people (black people in this case) and shape people's understanding of life, it is argued that they constitute the (raw) material which artists can use to portray life as they 'see' it. This notion of (raw) material, in

the production of literature, as the lived experiences of people is elaborated by Adams (1971:632):

The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the material intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behaviour. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics of a people.

Thus it can be argued that the material behaviour, the way of thinking and consciousness of the black people relate significantly to their material life. In this way the literature produced largely reflects the black man's perceptual thinking of that material reality. It is with these considerations in mind that the term 'raw material' has been coined in order to illustrate the substance black authors generally use in their writings.

Structural formations or ISAs that are currently in place, which were intended for other social functions by the ruling class, especially as a means to reproduce the existing relations of production, have, because of their intrinsic contradictions, helped to inspire and to bolster the production of black literature. The process of the production of black literature was given further impetus by the re-interpretation and the extension of the (original) functions of these ISAs by the BCM cultural structures. Both the technical and functional aspects of these ISAs were designed in a way that was consistent with the BCM perception of the liberation struggle. Thus

literary works generally reflect this perceptual consciousness of reality.

To present a particular view of reality authors have consequently constructed their themes, plots and characters around sets of the relations of production that exist and are supposed to exist between relations within the superstructures and those between the superstructures and the infrastructure.

The following paragraphs will briefly illustrate how ideological contradictions in some of the existing ISAs have contributed towards the production of black literature through both the analysis of their (perceived) functions and as vehicles for the articulation of the aspirations of the black people. This discussion will mainly deal with the debate surrounding the different perceptions relating to the functions of these ISAs insofar as they raised the need for liberation among black South Africans in general, and the development of black literature in particular.

#### 5.6.1. The political ISA

The question of land, which is intrinsic to the political ISA, has been one of the issues that dominated the political scene. This is so because central to the issue of land is the question of political rights, a kind of 'no land no political rights' equation. The ideology that was propagated by the ruling classes and hence reproduced in the functions of this ISA was that blacks do not own land and they cannot, as a result, participate in government. Therefore, some of the earlier authors, and some more recently, have been inspired by this issue. While they approach this question from dif-

ferent positions, the common denominator in their views is that they all value, with unmistakeable nostalgia, the manner in which land was distributed among people in traditional African communities. The contradictions that exist as a result of the present land issue is an aspect that has been exploited by authors to direct the course of the black liberation struggle.

For instance, to show the unacceptability of the continuation of the existing relations they even tend, through a kind of a utopian ideology, to romanticise the system of land allocation as it was practised in African communities. Letsoalo (1987:19), for instance, makes the following observation in this regard:

The size of the arable plot was historically not measured. The size was considered 'big enough to support the family'. Because there was no yardstick to measure the arable plots, they were not exactly equal, but not significantly unequal.

The point the author makes here is that the system of land allocation in traditional African communities seldom gave rise to discontent, which was negligible, if ever it did occur. What enhanced this situation further was the fact that apart from individual landholdings for individual families which could be regarded as 'private property' - although this concept was not emphasised - there were also communal pastures and drinking places. This situation, therefore, gave every member of the community a feeling that he had a right of access to available resources and therefore none felt deprived. This tranquil situation is the core of the argument for the justification of opposition against the land system as practised in the apartheid-capitalist social order in South Africa.



Letsoalo continues to illustrate the far-reaching implications of the apartheid-capitalist system which would of necessity embitter blacks and motivate them to agitate for the transformation of the land system. She says:

Because the landowners in the Western sense have excess land, they have tenants who use the land on the landowner's terms, which are inevitably exploitative. In the African sense the landowners control both their production and consumption without being dictated to by any person - not even the chief has control over the individual landholding beyond allocating them to tribesmen (Letsoalo 1987:76).

Such assertions not only provide insights into different systems of land allocation but they also engender a debate, which is necessarily ideological, on this issue, which is an instance of the ISA being both a stake and a site for class struggle.

Chief Albert Luthuli, who was himself a chief and had practical experience in bitter land disputes with the state, shares the same sentiments. He enlarges on this point by saying that:

It does not stop either, with the ownership of land (and wealth and participation in government). In this view the whites, because they are 'whites', extend their possession to the ownership of the remaining eleven million people, who are expected to regard themselves as fortunate to be allowed to live and breath - and work - in a 'white man's country' (Luthuli 1962:79).

Luthuli's statement re-inforces a consciousness on the part of blacks that loss of land means forfeiture of citizenship and the related rights of participating in government - something that can be described as a mechanism of the Repressive State Apparatuses of the ruling class to retain a monopoly of power. This means, for blacks, a state of perpetual servitude as long as the land question remains unresolved. This also makes the myth of black-white conflict being a purely racial matter devoid of truth. The true nature of the conflict is also between the haves (the oppressor) and the have-nots (the oppressed) and entrenched in the racist-capitalist ideology. As already stated 'white' as a racial reference has merely been used as a mechanism to maintain the *status quo* and to legitimise certain rights and privileges which have been denied blacks.

In order to avoid addressing the land question the state devised an ideology of ethnicism, and granted wholesale autonomy and semi-autonomy to homelands. Like its counterpart, the racist ideology which denied blacks the right to land, it also produced a contradictory (black) ideology on the subject. According to Tutu (1983:2) blacks will never accept political rights if they are confined to the homelands because they feel that they are part of the whole country and that they have contributed substantially to the development of South Africa. Therefore to perpetuate the alleged inferiority of blacks by confining them to inferior homelands, remains unacceptable and hence a powder keg of conflict. It is the resultant debate surrounding this issue that has provided black authors with themes to explore.

For instance to demonstrate the unacceptability of the so-called

homelands and their leaders, no genuine praise-songs were sung for these structures, nor were praise-poems composed for the so-called homeland leaders. Praise-poems were instead composed for earlier African traditional leaders as well as political activists of earlier and more recent generations as can be seen from J. R. Ratshinga's poem, *A Dirge to the Gods*:

Hear me O Sobukwe and rejoice  
 For your falling gave the grains to grow.  
 Hearken for you cannot mistake the Voice,  
 Tears on the cheek and sweat on the brows.

Hear me O meek and loving Luthuli,  
 And you Biko who recently departed,  
 Rejoice for your labour shan't be forgotten,  
 By all black flesh still animated.

Hear me O martyrs of Sharpeville and Soweto,  
 And you all of the smouldering Vaal Triangle.  
 And weep no more but thunder praises,  
 For what follows not long shall resemble a miracle.

.....

Hear me O African son and daughter,  
 Buried at home and on foreign shores.  
 Rejoice now everywhere with song and laughter,  
 For Azania shall be free to refree Africa.  
 (Staffrider Vol.7 No.2 1938:49).

While the leaders and "heroes of the people" had not been acknowledged by the white political leadership of South Africa, so had imposed black leaders in government and other civil structures. The general perception among the oppressed was that such imposed leaders used their questionable positions for self-enrichment rather than rendering service to the people. Frank Chipasula's poem, *Friend, Ah You Have Changed*, conveys such a perception:

Ah, friend you have changed; neckless,  
 your smile is so plastic  
 your cheeks are blown-out balloons  
 and your once accordion ribs  
 are now drowned under mountains of fat;  
 your belly is a river in flood threatening your head,  
 your woollen three-piece exaggerates the cold.

.....

Though I am pushed near the edge  
 of your skyscraping platform to touch your shoe for salvation  
 you do not see me, your eyes rivetted on imaginary  
 enemies whom you vanquish with our chorus strung together.  
 The picture men will not notice me buried in this crowd  
 and the papers will print your shout clearly into news.

Ah friend, how you have changed,  
 you will never flow back here.

(*Staffrider* Vol.7 No.3&4 1988:254).

There are two other significant issues expressed here, apart from

the questionable credentials and obsession with self-enrichment, of imposed leaders. It is firstly their perpetual fear of the inconceivable enemy, who are necessarily progressive forces. Secondly it is the possibility of being permanently ostracized by the communities they were placed to represent and lead.

Such fears were then exploited by the regime to further divide the oppressed communities. Hostel communities, which are products of the notorious migrant labour system, were fertile ground for such a sinister purpose. It will be recalled that at the height of country-wide riots in South Africa, following the 1976 Soweto Uprising, the Zulu inmates of Mzimhlophe hostel were manipulated to frustrate calls for stayaways. A bloody conflict ensued between those hostel dwellers and township residents which left scores dead and many more injured. Landi ka Themba derived the theme of his poem, **Bloody Tears on Mzimhlophe**, from that incident.

No breath of wind over Mzimhlophe,  
 No crack of sound in the gloomy atmosphere,  
 No whispering echoes on that dark Tuesday,  
 No burst of laughter and delight on that crucial day.  
 Only death glows in the eyes of Azanians.  
 Only graves open jaws for the struggling Blacks.  
 But the power behind enjoyed the battle of Blacks against  
 Blacks.

Songs of the Zulu impis roared,  
 Residents crawled for safety,  
 Screams and deaths pierced through the hearts,  
 Spear of brother penetrated brother,

Cries and deaths mocked the innocent.

Life was a toy of circumstances,

Death was a close alternative in the din.

But the power behind rejoiced at the sight of Blacks against  
Blacks.

.....

Burned, swollen and frozen corpses

Lay scattered in the gloomy cosmos,

Waiting to be thrown into police-vans

By the master who had used us as instruments

'Wenafile - Zulu."

Words rolled rhythmatically

And eventually burst into laughter

While the Black nation

Was enveloped in a blanket of tears.

But the power behind

Scored a victory over Blacks against Blacks.

(Staffrider Vol.7 No.3&4 1988:228-9).

Sentiments expressed in the above poem are indicative of the problems the liberation movement, particularly the Black Consciousness Movement, was faced with to try and forge unity among the oppressed communities. However, black writers had contributed in addressing this problem by raising questions, tracing causes and providing answers to the political problems the entire black community was faced with.

#### 5.6.2. The educational ISA

This subsection is intended to illustrate the manner in which the debate surrounding the educational ISA contributed to the development of black literature by acting as a source of textual themes, especially as another front in the black liberation struggle. As Althusser (1984:24-25) points out certain ISAs can become dominant at different stages by being used by the ruling class in cumulative functions of reproducing relations of production. Education is one such ISA that has been used massively by the ruling class to promote repression. Education has, as a result, become another site of class struggle and it has produced a corpus of literary works which has explored and explained its contradictions. That is, education, as an ISA, has in turn also acquired other functions in the wake of (intense) black resistance.

Among the authors who were either instrumental in producing, or were inspired by, these ideological changes, one can mention -- *inter alia* -- Steve Biko, Wally Serote, Frank Chikane, Miriam Tlali and Sipho Sepamla. A characteristic of the literature they produced is that it usually portrays the youth/students as the vanguard of the liberation struggle, not only restricting them to matters related only to the issue of an equitable system of education, but also associating them with those that are related to other ISAs as well. In fact the youth became the prime movers of the new ideology and are also portrayed as the custodians of the Black Consciousness philosophy of self-assertion.

Stubbs (quoted by Arnold 1987:158-159) points out that it was the growing awareness among black students that they were called upon to contribute to the emancipation of their community that mobilized

them. He regards the unity of black students as giving proper direction to the student movements and awakening in them the consciousness of the need to prove themselves as worthy leaders of tomorrow. However, this consciousness was good only insofar as it gave students the morale to organise themselves. Other precipitating factors were still required to mobilize them. The following are a few of such factors:

\*The strikes of the workers from January 1973 to June 1974 and also in September, where several mineworkers were killed and scores injured, led to mass protests on several university campuses (Parold & Butler 1985:236).

\*In 1974 there were Frelimo Rallies at various university campuses celebrating the victory of the Frelimo Movement in Mozambique over the Portuguese colonial government (Chikane 1988:25).

\*Then there were the June 1976 uprisings in protest against the compulsory use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, the event which demonstrated how the ruling class can employ the Repressive State Apparatuses - the army and the police forces in this case - to maintain its control over the oppressed class.

The last phenomenon not only illustrates contending ideologies but also reveals the effects of extreme polarization, not only of classes but of ideas and expectations as well. Authors generally treat this issue in such a manner that the risks and casualties involved are translated into symbols of victories attained through



determination. They tend to create a belief that every casualty is a building block towards the attainment of freedom, and also a rallying point for mobilization, features which are characteristic of the BCM ideology of self-assertion. For instance the first stanza of Muhammad Ommarudin's poem, *When I Die*, reads as follows:

When I die  
 may my funeral (like any life) be political  
 and serve the struggle  
 may my people  
 use my coffin as a platform  
 to raise the banner.

(Staffrider Vol.7 no.3&4 1988:189)

In this text Ommarudin is signifying the characteristic of extending the (normal) functions of ISAs. Students in most cases had become actively involved in 'organizing' such funerals and these occasions served to enhance the spirit of group consciousness, not only among themselves, but also among all the people within oppressed communities.

Something else of importance to note here is that the youth, who generally used learning institutions to organise and to mobilize, as stated earlier, did not direct their activities purely at educational matters. They also focussed on issues such as rent hikes and workers' wages which are by-products of the economic ISA. There has been close collaboration between workers' movements and students' movements, and a great measure of overlapping in their demands, especially those related to their economic well being. The logic here is simple. A living wage, for instance, means chances for better ed-

ucation; better education means better chances of competing in the labour market, and ultimately a better living standard.

This trend can also be viewed as a culmination of the failure of government's educational policies (in the educational ISA) which were motivated by capitalist ideological interests. While they were intended to train blacks to become 'better' workers, these policies also brought the worker's and the student's needs closer to each other in a kind of ideological alliance. Parold and Butler (1985:242) argue, in illustration of this fact, that students included workers in order to broaden their struggle and that they (students) had been instrumental in organizing the August 1976 stayaways and the prevention of rent increases in Soweto during the same period. According to Parold and Butler the success of these campaigns partly account for the economic recession which resulted in the increase in black unemployment from 11,8% in 1970 to 21,1% in 1981, the situation which further plunged the country into deeper crisis.

It would seem that there was a realization among students, and other parties interested in education, that the working class is the most powerful component of society to bring about change using its labour power. There is therefore, in terms of this study, an intrinsic link between the educational and the economic ISA.

### 5.6.3. The economic ISA

The economic ISA looked at insofar as it affects the condition of the black worker *per se* in South Africa is one other subject that has produced volumes of literary works. Themes which ideologically

'justified' the migrant labour system and the (implied) effects of the host of laws that were passed to regulate urbanization, dominated the earlier literary scene. However, later on the spotlight shifted from these issues and focussed more on the role of the black worker in the liberation struggle of his people.

One realises here a significant shift in the worker's aesthetics from isolationism to structural participation, an aspect of the trade union resistance against the dominant economic ISA. Commenting on the poetry of Mzwakhe Mbuli, which denounces the existing relations and articulates future visions, Mafika Gwala says:

Likewise, the oral poetry recited by COSATU workers is a clear testimony of workers increasingly becoming aware of themselves as a member of a class locked in a struggle against a racist capitalist class. Conscious of the nature of their exploitation and organized to secure their demands, these workers utilize poetry to free themselves and other workers from anything that might bar them from acting in accordance with the struggle for liberation (Staffrider Vol.7 No. 1, 1988:90).

On the same note, Ian Steadman (1989) perceives theater as playing a similar role, especially in what he terms Trade Union Theatre. He claims that 'worker plays' have not only achieved an important educational function, but have also provided a context for solidarity within the working force, as well as raising its consciousness of the material function. But the resultant consciousness of national responsibility should not be perceived as merely a new development. Rather, it should be seen as the consequence of the existence of certain conditions, underpinned by certain ideologies. In fact, it

constitutes part of the decades-old culture of resistance against the racist-capitalist ideology of apartheid, seeing that there have always been factors, such as mass exploitation, unemployment and the migrant labour system, which encouraged workers' unity. Tutu (1983:53) argues that the eradication of these conditions, which he calls the by-products of Apartheid, will remain a national responsibility.

Nokucqina Mhlophe (in Mutloatse 1981) sees the problem of the worker as more enormous than this. It is not a matter of where one works. It is also concerned with where one lives, the means one has to get to work, how much one earns, security at work, fringe benefits, and the general conditions of service. This is another indication of the extended function of the (economic) ISA and how these functions complemented one another to promote a particular ideology of the ruling class.

Workerist literature covers a wide spectrum of the conditions of black workers, which conditions are the consequences of both the racist-apartheid and the capitalist ideologies. Mhlophe, in her short story *My Dear Madam*, describes the functions and effects of the racist ideology on a domestic worker, often called a 'girl' irrespective of her age: how she was made a topic in her employer's every telephone conversation, how, just to keep her busy, unnecessary work was created, which often denied her enough time to have lunch, how she was openly mistrusted by her employer and had to listen to many stories about how bad previous 'girls' were.

Bob Leshoai in his play, *Revolution* (1972), shows how oppression can eventually give rise to resistance. A black man, Sebetsa (which

means 'work!') is assigned the task of cleaning the church for a white congregation in the conservative city of Bloemfontein. He is confronted by a white policeman while cleaning and the latter accuses him of praying in 'this sacred place'. After intimidating him and hurling much abuse at Sebetsa, while the servant tries subserviently to explain, the policeman realizes that the poor man was merely scrubbing the floor and he leaves. Having been subjected to such abuse and intimidation, Sebetsa decides to kneel down and pray, thanking God for saving his life. While praying the priest returns and accuses him of praying instead of scrubbing the floor. The argument that ensues results in such tension that Sebetsa ultimately discards his docile character and starts hurling every object he can lay his hands on - including the Bible - at the priest until the priest dies.

One also realizes the effect of the religious ISA whose ideology teaches man to commit his problems to God and to thank Him in turn for any miraculous resolution of those problems. In other words, this ideology discourages man from analyzing his problems and encourages him to consider them as something inexplicable. However, because this view is not compatible with reality, its contradictions cannot be concealed forever and they often exacerbate conflict.

Mhlophe, in the short story discussed above, like Leshoai does not domesticate the problem; she also points out its far-reaching national and racial ideological implications. For instance, when the 'girl' can no longer stomach the abuses to which she was always subjected, and particularly in response to the instruction from her madam that she should address every white male person as 'Baas', she retorts: 'I am very sorry if that is the case, because I never call

anybody "Baas", whether he is white, red or yellow', in reply to which statement her madam gives a stern warning:

I am warning you about your behaviour, my girl. You must be careful about what you are saying, I am telling you. South Africa is not a very lovely country for a black person if you do not learn to be respectful.

Here Mhlophe presents intimidation as another strategy for enforcing racial supremacy in South Africa. Situations such as these have often compelled the worker to seek refuge in collective action, and have produced antagonistic or radicalized trade unionism which makes the workers suspicious of any normal relationship between employer and employee. Any worker who attempts to adopt a healthy relationship with his employer is generally suspected by his fellows of being an *impimpi* (an informer). Even those of the workers' leaders who attempt to negotiate in good faith, that is, excluding real cases of conniving, are often looked upon with suspicion. Alfred Qabula in his poem, *Praise Poem to FOSATU*, clearly illustrates this suspicion:

Keep your gates closed FOSATU  
 Because the workers' enemies are ambushing you  
 They are looking for a hole to enter through  
 In order to disband you  
 Oh! We poor workers, dead we shall be  
 If they succeed in so doing  
 Close! Please close!

You are the mole that was seen by the bosses' *impimpis*

Coming slowly but surely towards the factories

Fast ran the impimpis

And reported to their bosses...

But to our dismay,

After we had appointed them, we placed them on the

Top of the mountain,

And they turned against us...

(Staffrider vol.7 no.3&4, 1988:279-280).

Qabula's poem also describes the feature of late-capitalism which permits trade unionism, and the growing awareness amongst the working class that their struggle can only be won through presenting a united front. Consequently they want no middle ground for opportunists to take advantage of. Workers seem to believe in clearly differentiated worker-employer ideological positions. This poem also highlights the feature of collective consciousness which encourages the condemnation of leaders who, as a result of assimilation, fail to serve the people once they have been elected into office. The radical working class view is that there should be two strictly polar positions, the worker on the one hand and the employer (behind whom capital hides) on the other. Workers' leaders are oft expected to remain, and to be seen as, part of the working class.

As the working class consciousness grew so did workerist literature and the strength of trade union movements. A testimony to this effect is COSATU, the largest federation of workers in South Africa, which may be symptomatic of the functional success of the trade union ISA. The trend in the working class to act increasingly as a

group rather than as individuals has often baffled employers and occasionally forced them to adopt more realistic approaches in dealing with the workers' problems because they could no longer successfully take the easy option of firing striking workers. Makhulu wa Ledwaba clearly depicts this situation in his poem, 'Workers Say...':

WORKERS SAY...

Those who hire now and fire now  
This they will have to know,  
that we are now like the ball of fire  
running through drought-stricken  
farms of cheap labour.  
We are the sun that refuses to set  
when darkness goes through  
poverty pockets.

(Staffrider vol.7 no.3&4, 1988:276)

This poem reflects not only the influence of the trade union ISA on the production of black protest literature, but it also indicates the worker's heightened consciousness: he has finally come to realize that he has rights which must be acknowledged and upheld, and that he has the power to sway matters in his favour. This development has forced serious dialogue between workers and their employers.

#### 5.6.4. The religious ISA

Alongside the other ISAs, discussed above, which have inspired black literature, the religious ISA, in the form of Black Theology, has also made immense impact insofar as the course and the meaning of



the black liberation struggle is concerned, and the development of black protest literature in particular. Sole (in *English in Africa* Vol.10 No.1 1983:57) observes:

Black Consciousness has, since its genesis among black theologians and students in the late 1960s, become an important ideological and political force on the South African scene. Its emphasis on black consciousness-raising, cultural revival, initiative and self discovery and, above all, on the elimination of of the psychological and physical oppression of blacks, has allowed many black people as individuals to acknowledge and come to grips with the feeling of inferiority engendered in them by apartheid.

Against this background, it would seem, the study of black protest literature would incomplete without mention of the contribution Black Theology has made in the liberation struggle in general and in the development of black protest literature, in particular. Ravan Press and later Skotaville Publishers, produced series of writings relating to the debate on the religious ISA which, to a great extent, propagated the Black Theology view of this social formation. These writings mainly consisted of collections of essays, seminar papers, speeches, sermons and letters by various black theologians. This has led to the publication of writings such as Desmond Tutu's collection of speeches and sermons *Hope and Suffering* (1983) and *Crying in the Wilderness* (1990), Frank Chikane's autobiography *No Life of my Own* (1988), Simon Maimela's critical essays *Proclaim Freedom to my People* (1987), and another collection of critical essays by various theologians *The Unquestionable Right to be Free* (1986), edited by Itumeleng Mosala and Buti Tlhagale.

Some of these writings would, under normal circumstances, not be considered as 'literature'. However, because of the demands of the situation pertaining in South Africa, they assumed the role of literature and thus setting a new trend in literary studies. Because of this unique situation literary, scientific and other relevant sources have been consulted in order to develop the argument of this subsection. Thus it is necessary to provide a concise philosophical framework of Black Theology as background information to run concurrent with this discussion.

Black Theology emerges against the background of the White Theology which justifies racial oppression, another feature of the contending ideologies which constitutes the site of class struggle in South Africa. Maimela spells out the genesis of Black Theology:

... is born out of the awareness by blacks that they are not poor and oppressed by accident or by divine design. Rather they are made poor, powerless, and they are oppressed by another racial group, the rich and socio-politically powerful whites (in Mosala & Tlhagale 1986:102).

The intention is to consider Black Theology, including its philosophy, insofar as it has contributed to the development of black literature in the course of the liberation struggle in South Africa. It is necessary to mention that Black Theology uses Marxism as its analytic tool, in this way providing insights that would not have been gained by alternative approaches. It should be noted in this respect that the concern of Marxism

... is not so much to show the theoretical emptiness of religion but rather its practical use by the ruling class as a camouflage for unjust socio-economic structures. As long as the victims of injustice seek their salvation in a heavenly world, they will not develop a revolutionary practice for the transformation of unjust conditions in this world (Cone 1985:180).

Cone's view suggests a critical evaluation of humanity's (in this case a black humanity) circumstances which should necessarily give rise to a person's creative impulse to depict himself or herself, i.e. his or her experiences, in relation to reality. Black Theology has - as a result, in numerous writings published so far and in seminars, provided some of the most useful insights into the nature of the dynamics operative within the South African society. From a theological perspective it probes, *inter alia*, three fundamental questions of a social nature. These questions pertain to contingent issues of the South African period under consideration:

- (i) whether there is any moral justification for apartheid,
- (ii) whether the armed struggle is justified, and
- (iii) whether, as it suggests, a peaceful settlement to South Africa's problem is possible.

These issues provide some of the material for reflecting on the Christian faith. These considerations are important to the study of black protest literature because of their high profile in the social experience and perceptual thinking of the South African people, who either support or abandon certain social practices in terms of the

ideological divide. In probing these and other related questions Black Theology operates from the following premise:

Since the situation in which the oppressed majority find themselves is closer to reality, the reality of the conflictory and unacceptable nature of our world, black theologians argue that, in order to see reality as it is, it is imperative that Christian theologians should try to see and understand society from the point of view of the poor, of the little ones, of the marginalised, and the oppressed black (Maimela in Mosala & Tlhagale 1986:105).

One finds in this proposition the basis of any religion which focuses on dichotomies of opposition or contradiction between the sacred and the profane. These questions are probed insofar as they are manifest in human existence. On the one hand there are those things which conform to, and characterise, the good godly world and, on the other, those things that tend to spoil that 'good godly world' and which are characterised as bad and ungodly. The task of theology is to understand how the sacred becomes contaminated by the profane. Seeing that religion is for humanity, answers cannot be sought anywhere except within human relations. Therefore it is necessary to probe causes, symptoms and effects of whatever is damaging to good human relations.

What Maimela wants to suggest above is that the condition of oppression, with all its ramifications, which characterises the life experience of the oppressed, must form the context of theology. Therefore, any theology that ignores these glaring realities will be irrelevant, and guilty of abdicating its responsibility of preaching

the Gospel, which is the good news that must give the oppressed hope of liberation. In other words, to overlook these circumstances would be tantamount to deceit and to a deliberate ploy to falsify the Gospel.

Some of the issues raised here have already been dealt with, but they will be dealt with here again in as far as they relate to the religious ISA's theological perspective. Such issues would, under normal circumstances, be irrelevant to the study of literature. However, because the ruling class has also used religious morals in African literature to impose and to maintain its dominance over the oppressed, the consideration of such moral issues also become relevant to the study of black protest literature to facilitate the process of liberation.

(i) The first question relates to the religious ideological perspective on apartheid. To arrive at some plausible solutions in dealing with this question, one needs to consider Stubbs who suggests that

To get the right answers, we must ask the right questions; we must find out what went wrong - where and when; and we have to find out whether our position is a deliberate creation of God or an artificial fabrication of the truth by power-hungry people whose motive is authority, wealth and comfort (quoted by Arnold 1987:37).

The immediate theological response to the question posed above is that God created all people equal and that any historical barriers that might have existed between them have been effectively destroyed by the historic liberatory act of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore,

there no longer are Jew or Gentile, Pharasee or Scribe, free man or slave, and master or servant, dichotomous relationships which differentiate statuses of people. Analogously black theologians pursue the (Christian) ideology of equality of humanity. Thus apartheid is viewed as heretical and anti-christian. Sebidi (in Mosala & Tlhagale 1986:18) contends that apartheid based on colour is a myth because racism does not exist. It merely 'exists as a social, not natural, construct. It is a socially acquired habit, the source or origin of which is something other than itself'. He draws the following illuminating conclusion in this regard: 'The basic, structural polarization is not between black and white, but between labour and capital' (ibid.19).

(ii) The second question pertains to the armed struggle. According to Maimela (1987) this subject was probed extensively at a conference of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and subsequently a decision was formulated in the 1974 Hammanskraal Resolution on 'Conscientious Objection', which dealt specifically with what was then called the border war. In fact, that conference interpreted the border war as civil war. This issue is important because it had become another important component of the liberation struggle.

Maimela starts by tracing the origins of the theory of the so-called 'just war' or 'holy war'. He discovered that this theory has its origins in paganism and that it was, per chance, adopted and redefined by Christians. St Ambrose based his theory of the 'holy war' on the story of Moses in the Old Testament. St Augustine 'defined a "just war" as one which is undertaken to avenge the wrongs perpetrated by invaders and to preserve the safety of a nation or city so that innocent people could live in peace unharmed'

(Maimela 1987:134). St Thomas Aquinas set out the conditions that had to be met before such a war could be waged. It must, among other things, 'be the last resort as a means of achieving peace' and that 'the good achieved must outweigh probable evil that will ensue from war' (ibid.). This theory therefore excludes and is opposed to the use of the army - a mechanism of the Repressive State Apparatuses - by one class to attain or to maintain control over the other classes as has been the case in South Africa. While numerous black writers have used war as their theme, Black Theology provides a religious moral assesment of such a practice so that it does not degenerate into abuse even in the future free society.

On the basis of these theories war can only be waged in the interest of the whole nation, that is, to defend it, reclaim its lost autonomy, peace and freedom. In other words, the concept of a 'just' or 'holy' war excludes all wars of aggression, intervention, or those waged for self-interest. It should also be noted that these theories do not cover civil war, a notion which seems to represent the conditions of conflict in South Africa, conflict which is attributable to divergent ideological positions with regard to the legitimate political ISA. The position of black theology, as a representative of the (black) religious ISA, is that it understands the causes of 'war' in South Africa, but neither condones nor justifies such a war.

(iii) Lastly, there is the question of a possible peaceful settlement of South Africa's problems. Because Black Theology understands the use of violence as a means of restoring a legitimate social order, but does not condone its adverse effects, proponents of this school of thought have suggested, in numerous publications, deputa-

tions to authorities, and even in personal initiatives, that a peaceful settlement would be to everybody's interest. In support of this statement, one would briefly quote from Bishop Desmond Tutu's letter to the former Prime Minister of South Africa, Mr B.J. Vorster, which letter is dated the 6th May 1976, and written, therefore, just a few weeks before the 16 June 1976 Uprisings. This letter has been published in Tutu's collection of essays under the title **Hope and Suffering** (1983) and in another collection of essays, **Forced Landing** (1980), edited by Mothobi Mutloatse. Tutu (1983:1) writes as follows:

I am writing to you as one who has come to be accepted by some blacks (i.e. Africans, Indians and Coloureds) as one of their spokesmen articulating their deepest aspirations as one who shares them with equal steadfastness. I am writing to you, Sir, because I know you to be a loving and caring father and husband, a doting grandfather who has experienced the joys and anguish of family life, its laughter and gaiety, its sorrows and pangs. I am writing to you, Sir, as one who is passionately devoted to a happy and stable family life as the indispensable foundation of a stable and healthy society... In short, I am writing to you as one human person to another human person, gloriously created in the image of the selfsame God, redeemed by the selfsame Son of God who for all our sakes died on the Cross and rose triumphant from the dead and reigns in glory now at the right hand of the Father; sanctified by the selfsame Holy Spirit who works inwardly in all of us to change our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh.

This extract is optimistic in a way which blurs Althusser's notion



of ISAs as a site of class struggle. It opens another dimension that can be attained in the ideological functioning of ISAs, i.e. that of being a site for reconciliation despite underlying (ideological) contradictions. However, notwithstanding the black theologian's optimism in hoping for a peaceful settlement, Tutu (1983) enumerates several realities that have first to be acknowledged as a step towards achieving such a settlement. He argues that

\*History has proved that 'absolutely nothing will stop a people from attaining their freedom' and he cites as an pertinent example the wars of self-determination fought by the Afrikaners against British rule. He adds that, for blacks, freedom is not to be found in the homelands, but should be attained within an undivided South Africa (ibid. p.2).

\*Blacks accept the realities of this country and 'are grateful for that which has been done for them, but now they claim an inalienable right to do things for themselves, in co-operation with their fellow South Africans of all races' (ibid. p.3).

\*There should be justice for all in society and 'the wonderful riches and wealth of our country will be shared more equitably' (ibid. p.3).

What is also striking in this view is the emphasis, by way of assurance, that social changes should in the final analysis result in mutual bargaining, because no one 'will be free until all sections of our community are genuinely free' (ibid. p.3). On the surface Tutu's comments are acceptable and they may be endorsed and passed without further questioning. However, there are two issues which

tend (and have tended) to raise obstacles.

These obstacles pertain to the mechanisms of working out the new dispensation. Firstly, there is the perception of the final product resulting from the equitable distribution of resources. Tutu proposes, as a mechanism of change, 'a National Convention made up of genuine leaders (i.e. leaders recognized as such by their section of the community) of all sections of the community' (ibid. p.5). This is the question which will still have to be resolved through ideological positioning.

The second issue, which pertains to the equitable distribution of wealth, is equally problematic. To the oppressed this phrase means redistribution of wealth and a more socialist economy coupled with state intervention. To the ruling class it means a free-market economy that will retain capitalism coupled with privatisation.

While issues pertaining to the oppression of blacks in South Africa have found their way into black protest writing and, in some cases suggesting steps to be taken to remedy the situation, the contribution Black Theology has done in this respect is to act as a conscience of the oppressed by providing the moral basis for their actions. If the intention, as it were, was to attain freedom for all South Africans, it would be futile to achieve this by replacing one evil system with another.

#### 5.7. The essence of materialism as an approach to the analysis of black literature

Black literature, as a literature that has developed in a situation

of revolutionary social change and was intended to facilitate that change, requires a kind of analytical theory that would also take into account social processes. That theory is none other than a materialist approach to literary criticism.

Since literature is a cultural production, within a particular mode of production with inherent contradictions, social contradictions expressed in literary works have also to be accounted for. This can best be achieved by employing both the principles of dialectic materialism and historical materialism. In this chapter these considerations have been taken into account and have yielded very useful insights.

As shown in the above discussion, ISAs tend to have influence on one another, although the dominant one will have influence on all other ISAs. For instance it was shown how the political ISA impinged on other ISAs, the economic, the educational and the religious, by influencing their function to further oppression. But at the same time developments in these ISAs, especially in relation to resistance practices in the liberation movement, have also impacted on the political.

Arguing from a Marxist perspective it can further be stated that, while the economic mode of production - which was racist-capitalism in this case - influenced practices in other ISAs, it would also be affected by developments within ISAs, thus effectively changing the mode of production. To facilitate change in South Africa black protest literature, which drew its material from practices in various ISAs, was used to play a supportive role by bringing such developments nearer to the people.

As could be realized in this discussion the socio-historical context of black protest writing has been used to explain Althusser's notion of ISAs as both a stake and site of class-struggle. Therefore the analysis of black literature from the materialist perspective has proved to be both a legitimate and worthy undertaking in the light of the fact that it has provided some of the answers to some of the pertinent questions that would not have been addressed by any other critical approach. A similar approach will be adopted for the analysis of texts in the rest of the study although Fagleton, not Althusser, will be chiefly used. The next chapter, in particular, will show the importance materialism by providing a method of analysis which will be used for the analysis of texts selected for this study.

## CHAPTER 6

TOWARDS A METHODOICAL MATERIALIST ANALYSIS OF BLACK PROTEST  
LITERATURE

## 6.1. Introduction

The question of ideology is basic to the argument engaged in this chapter because of its determinate significatory function in both literary production and literary analysis. In fact ideology forms an essential link between literature and history as will be demonstrated later in this chapter. There is therefore a need to employ a Marxist critical approach in analysing black literature in terms of its ideological significatory function. This is so precisely because:

Marxist criticism is part of a larger body of theoretical analysis which aims to understand ideologies - the ideas, values and feelings by which men experience their societies at various times. And certain of those ideas, values and feelings are available to us only in literature. To understand ideologies is to understand both the past and the present more deeply; and such understanding contributes to our liberation (Eagleton 1976:viii).

Therefore in the case of black literature, which is perceived by its adherents as engaged in a liberation struggle, a clearer understanding of ideologies is crucial.

For this reason the aim of this chapter is, by especially looking at its ideological dimension, to specifically show the relevance of a dialectical-historical materialist approach in the critical analysis of the texts selected for this study. The process of production as well as the signifiatory function of literature are important here because 'To understand literature, then, means understanding the total social process of which it is part' (Eagleton 1976:5-6). In this regard Eagleton (1978:100) also makes the following enlightening observation:

Ideology presents itself to the text as a set of significations which are already articulated in a certain form or series of forms, displaying certain general structural relations. Ideology also presents to the text a determinate series of specific modes and mechanisms of aesthetic production - an ideologically determined set of modes of aesthetically producing ideological significations.

However, he argues further that these 'aesthetic modes of production, on the basis of the determination of the general representational forms of the ideology, then reproduce a set of ideological significations which are themselves the product of certain general ideological categories - categories which articulate such significations in a certain form (ibid.).

One should note at this stage that, for Eagleton, ideology is the systematic link between the text and history or reality. This means that ideology as such is not reflected as a content in the text.

Rather it is produced by the text. One could also link this assertion to Althusser's argument that the literary text is 'always in ideology' and ask whether the two scholars do indeed consider social formations as facilitators in the writing of literary texts.

The answer is yes, especially when one considers Eagleton's assertion that literature is, in fact, a production, and also considering Knox-Shaw's (in *Theoria* No.77 May 1991:73) argument that: 'To speak of the text as production is to insist on its links with the infrastructure', i.e. a collectivity of social formations, a position also adopted by Althusser. From this position one is also inclined to argue, like Alvarez-Pereyre (1984:116), that a work of art does not develop and take its form in a situation of mysterious abstraction, but that it is determined at every level by the prevailing material conditions, the bases of the historical dimension of its raw material.

Therefore the discussion of the various ideologies below will relate to several ideological structures and social formations. These are seen as co-producing literature or art and not as reflected and talked about in the literary text. The text is altogether a different kind of production producing its own ideology. Therefore the relation between text and production is a relation of labour, where textual instruments transform the raw materials of the text into a specific product which cannot be mechanically extrapolated from an inspection of the text itself (cf. Eagleton 1978:65).

For the purpose of a systematic approach in this chapter the following subsections have been devised: 6.2 will discuss a survey of con-

stitutive elements in the process of textual production, 6.3 will discuss why a Western Marxist approach is preferred to an African Marxist approach and, finally, 6.4 will devise a method for the next chapter's actual textual analysis.

## 6.2. A survey of constitutive elements in textual production

Constitutive elements in the process of literary production are considered as a collectivity of all those signifactory factors, internal or external, that give a work of art particular aesthetic and formal features. Several propositions have been made by various scholars as regards these constitutive elements. Chidi Amuta (1989), for a similar purpose, identifies history, the mediating subject, the literary event, context, and content and form. According to Amuta:

(i) History is conceived in its materialist sense as the complex of material forces and objective conditions which shape social experience and therefore furnish the raw material of literature (ibid. p.80).

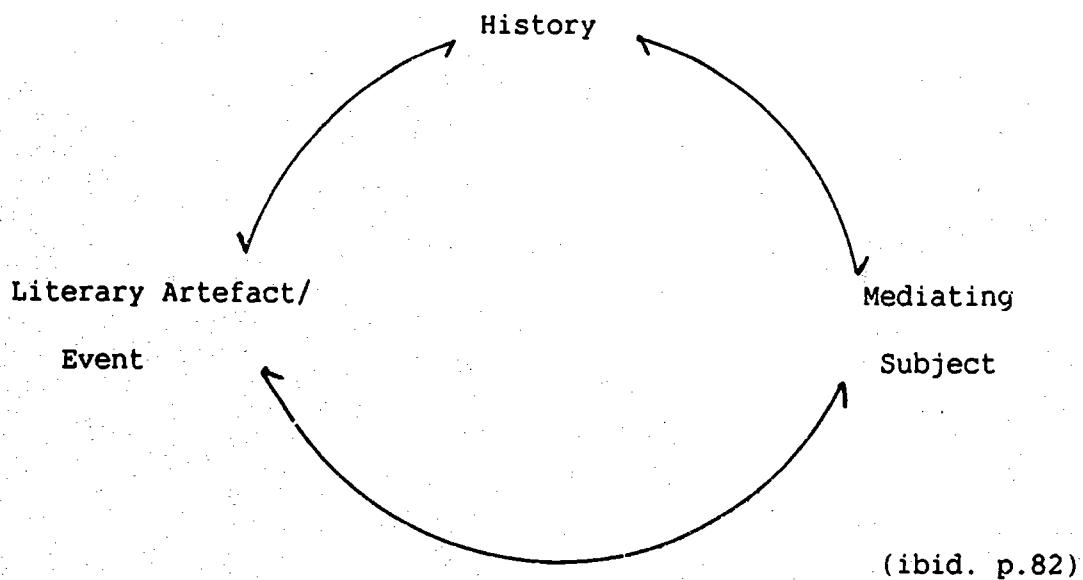
(ii) The mediating subject is the approximation of the artist or writer. It is the process by which socio-historical experiences enter a work of art and is essentially one of mediation, the active and purposive transposition of the empirically real into a fictive reality (ibid. p.81).

(iii) The literary event is the product of the attempt by the mediating subject to derive form from socio-historical experi-



ence. It manifests itself variously as text (novel, play text, poem, etc) or event (performance, recitation, chant) (ibid. p.82).

The relationship among these three categories may be schematically represented as follows:

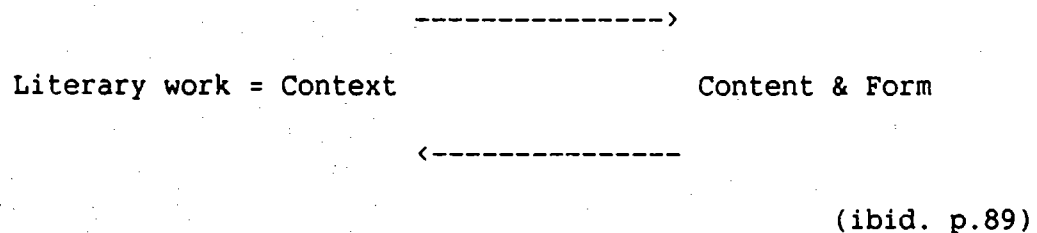


(iv) Context: The context of a literary work involves the totality of its historical ambience. It includes such factors as the level or development of productive forces which in turn determine the mode of literary production and the amount of leisure available to members of society for the creation and consumption of literature (ibid. p.84).

(v) Content and form: This distinction is basically an epistemological proposition (ibid. p.87) because while context caters for the external relationship of a literary work to its informing socio-historical totality. A consideration of the

dialectics of content and form is concerned with a more complex issue because, in practice, it is not easy to separate these two concepts. In practice content is expressed in form while in turn form has a potential of influencing content. Therefore this relationship must be rooted in the fundamental relationship which historical materialism makes between base and superstructure (ibid. p.86).

To link the two last-mentioned categories, Amuta proposes the following schematic representation:



The implication of this scheme is that a literary work derives from a particular context and that its content is presented in a particular form. This assumption suggests that content and form cannot be unravelled without destroying the context of a work of art. Hence content and form remain inseparable.

A point to note also here is that while there is neither explicit reference to, nor explicit definition of, ideology in Amuta's model, the concepts he has used can be slotted, as will be shown below, into various categories of ideologies identified by Ngara and Eagleton.

Ngara (1990:11-12) attaches special importance to ideology in his

thesis relating to the analysis of (African) literature. As mentioned earlier in this study, Ngara identifies three categories of ideology which he believes are crucial for the understanding of literature. These are dominant ideology, authorial ideology and aesthetic ideology which one could argue are adaptations of Eagleton's (1978) chapter on the Categories for a materialist criticism as discussed in his book Criticism and Ideology (1978). Ngara's three categories of ideology may be briefly explained as follows in terms of their function in literature:

(i) Dominant ideology refers to a generally-pursued practice which largely determines the way of life in any given society. In Ngara's words: 'By the dominant ideology of an epoch we mean the beliefs, assumptions and set of values that inform the thoughts and actions of a people in a particular era' (ibid. p.). In other words, a dominant ideology has a potential of permeating other ideologies in such a way that they work towards its promotion or reinforcement. In such a situation, however, there may also develop an oppositional ideology. This may best be explained in terms of Althusser's thesis, namely, that the ideology of the ruling class is projected through ISAs such as the religious ISA, the educational ISA, the political ISA and the cultural ISA which includes literature and art. Such a development may ultimately give rise to conflicting literary traditions.

(ii) Authorial ideology leads us to a deeper understanding of the content of a work of art by relating it to factual data or lived experience, i.e. history. It is what determines the

writer's perception of reality, whether he presents an accurate analysis of social reality, or a view of society characterised by false consciousness. All these considerations depend largely on the understanding of authorial ideology. In the case of black protest literature of the eighties it has been discovered, as already proved earlier and to be taken up in the discussion that follows, that authorial ideology is more determined by 'blackness' than by class position.

(iii) Aesthetic ideology enables us to appreciate the dialectical relationship between content and form in a work of art, thus enabling us to account for various modes of writing (cf. Ngara 1990:5). Thus romanticism, modernism, realism, and protest writing can be viewed as the aesthetics of literary ideology. In fact aesthetic ideology views what the literature or text is supposed to be in terms of function, aesthetic value or beauty, form, taste, etc. (ibid p.12).

In the case of black protest literature in the eighties aesthetics is linked to the BCM ideological practices where the author sees his or her duty as that of 'relaying' experiences of his or her people, thus making it also an 'aesthetics of identification' because much as the author forges identity with his or her audience, so do the audience identify with the author's work. In other words, both the author and the audience find common identity in the portrayal of their common life experiences.

A more comprehensive analysis of the categories of ideology is the

one provided by Eagleton (1978) who identifies five categories, namely, General Mode of Production (GMP), Literary Mode of Production (LMP), General Ideology (GI), Authorial Ideology (AuI) and Aesthetic Ideology (AI). These concepts can be briefly explained as follows:

(i) The General Mode of Production (GMP) refers to a unity of certain forces and social relations of material production, one of which will normally be dominant (cf. Eagleton 1978:45). In this instance the GMP will include capitalism which will ultimately designate how other social formations are characterised by this mode of production. For instance, in the case of the South African society the General Ideology (GI) will respond to capitalist practices not only in terms of its influence on relations of production but also in terms of the problems of race relations. Therefore, because of its mode of function, the GMP will also yield relations of inequality, domination or subordination.

(ii) The Literary Mode of Production (LMP) refers to a number of distinct modes of literary production, one of which will normally be dominant and thus force other modes into positions of subordination or partial exclusion (cf. Eagleton 1978:45). For instance, while Western societies generally produce for a capitalist market, some writers can opt to sell their handwritten manuscripts in the streets or to exclusive groups, thus giving rise to conflicting LMPs. From this observation it may be argued that the LMP and Aesthetic Ideology (AI) can co-exist where a writer might choose to write for specific groups or in-

stitutions. Another important aspect of the LMP is that it can be viewed from two intrinsically-linked concepts: the physical mode of production and the technical literary mode of production, which will be discussed later in this study.

(iii) General Ideology (GI) is a relatively coherent set of 'discourses' of value, representations and beliefs which, realized in certain material apparatuses and related to the structure of material production, so reflect the experiential relations of individual subjects to their conditions as to guarantee those 'misperceptions' of the 'real' which contribute to the reproduction of the dominant social relations (cf. Eagleton 1978:54). In other words, the GI which in this case is the BCM cultural ideology, will produce a particular Aesthetic Ideology (AI) which views literature as having a particular function in society.

(iv) The Authorial Ideology (AuI) is regarded as the effect of the author's specific mode of biographical insertion into the GI, a mode of insertion overdetermined by a series of distinct factors such as social class, sex, nationality, religion, geographical region, etc. It should be noted however that AuI ideology is never treated in isolation from GI which gives rise to it (cf. Eagleton 1978:58).

(v) The Aesthetic Ideology (AI) is considered as a specific aesthetic region of the GI, articulated with regions such as the ethical, religious, etc. in relations of dominance and subordination determined in the last instance by the GMP. It also

includes the ideology of aesthetics which is a signification of the function, meaning and value of the aesthetics itself within a particular social formation which is in turn part of an 'ideology of culture' included within the GI (cf. Eagleton 1978:60). In short AI can also be termed 'literary ideology' which encompasses the view of what literature or the text is supposed to be in terms of function, aesthetic value or beauty, form, taste, etc.

Having said this, one should perhaps note a few observations put forward by these scholars, and also demonstrate why Eagleton's model is the most viable option. Firstly, Ngara's concepts of history and context may be slotted into Eagleton's notion of GMP, which in a sense also relates to the GI because both these two concepts, history and context, relate to existing material conditions in terms of the mode of production. The literary event will analogously relate to the LMP. The mediating subject relates to AuI because of its relationship with socio-historical experience, while content and form relate to AI because of its relationship with a particular social grouping with a particular cultural practice. Marx himself has observed that literature should reveal a unity of form and content, that form is of no value unless it is the form of its content. Therefore defectiveness of form arises from defectiveness of content (cf. Eagleton 1976:20-21). Finally, context can be linked to AuI because it is determined by its informing socio-historical totality catering for the needs of a specific community. For instance, in black writing 'blackness' is more important than class position. Therefore the exploration of the AuI will describe the ideological placing of the author.

Secondly, considering Ngara, one is inclined to argue that his dominant ideology embraces the GMP, the LMP and the GJ, which have the potential to assume dominant status in a given society by attempting to reproduce existing social relations or by giving rise to oppositional ideologies. Ngara's notions of authorial and aesthetic ideologies, however, do not markedly differ from Eagleton's conception of these notions.

Abiola Irele's (1981) approach concentrates on the interface between oral and modern African literary traditions which interface accounts for the cultural dislocation of modern African literature. He examines the impact of Western imperialism and cultural hegemony and also the ideological significations of a work of art, a signification which he re-enforces by employing the linguistic, structuralist and semiotic techniques. Such techniques, Irele argues, give rise to a particular aesthetic value. Hence his assertion that:

There can of course be no sensible discussion of literature that does not imply an awareness of the close and intimate reciprocity between form and content, between structures of expression and their significance in an outer world beyond the text. It is this which makes literature, the reference value of words intervening all the time to indicate some order of reality, however tenuously signified, which those words point to ... Whatever the case, I do not believe that there should necessarily be an opposition between the formal, the technical approach, and the sociological approach (ibid. p.21).



One should note the concurrence among Amuta, Ngara, Eagleton and Irele on the inseparability of form and content, as well as on the ideological link between the text and history, which Irele describes as 'an outer world beyond the text' (ibid. p.21), while Amuta (1985) argues on the same score that the relationship between form and content 'must be rooted in the fundamental relationship which history makes between base and superstructure' (ibid. p.86).

To conclude this subsection one should make a few observations regarding the views of African Marxists like Irele, Amuta and Ngara, concerning their conception of processes of literary production and literary criticism vis-a-vis the Western Marxist Eagleton's conception of these subjects which will be discussed in the next subsection. The general view is that all these scholars regard literature as a cultural and historically-determined product with a signifiatory ideological social function. Eagleton, however, emphasizes the signification of ideology as a link between history and the text. In other words, while African Marxists see the author as a mediating subject between history and literature, Eagleton sees ideology as a link between history and literature.

### 6.3. Why a Western Marxist approach is preferred to an African Marxist approach

In this subsection an attempt will be made to contrast the African Marxist views on literature with the Western Marxist views on the subject, while focussing especially on Terry Eagleton. This will be done by way of a broad summary of these contrasting sets of views. The intention is not necessarily to discredit one set of views in

favour of the other, because the differences between them appear to be essentially historical. In this study the distinction is largely being made for strategic reasons. These differences will be briefly discussed below.

African Marxism tends to view literature as having a direct relation to reality. That is, it does not take into account the fact that a text might be of the nature of a sign. African Marxism, excepting an attempt by Ngara to this effect, does not discuss the AI properly as Eagleton does. This tendency in African Marxism warrants, among others, the following considerations:

(a) The evaluation of the real social conflict is the same as the evaluation of the text, whether the text is good or bad. African Marxist criticism holds that literature is the product of the social conflict and that literary criticism should reflect that conflict. Therefore the issue of whether literature is good or bad seems to be of secondary importance. This perception of literary criticism is, however, not completely out of step with Eagleton's notion of the role of the critic because he holds that: 'The critic's task is not to range works upon an evaluative scale but to achieve scientific knowledge of the conditions of their historical possibility. Whether the work in question is to be approved or censured is irrelevant to that end; evaluation is thus evacuated from the realm of literary science, to be furtively cultivated, perhaps, as a private pleasure' (Eagleton 1978:162-3). This view, therefore, also seems to eliminate the essence of the 'goodness' or 'badness' of a work of art by whatever standards, and instead fore-

grounds the essence of the ideology of literature.

(b) The LMP seems, in terms of its use for discerning how fictional works are produced as well as how it influences the technical modes of production, to augur well for issues raised by both African Marxist critics and black writers alike. They have been less concerned with the practice of ranging literature upon an evaluative scale as was the practice in other literary traditions. The emphasis has been placed more on conflicts relating to the undesirable structures which black writing seeks to change. Hence Irele's (1981:12) observation that 'we have a literary history which is concerned with the external circumstances and deals with questions of development and relationship of literary movements to current ideas at particular periods or in particular areas; more modestly, it investigates matters such as sources and influences'. For instance, the black literary forms or aesthetic tendencies which could be considered to have developed under certain established LMPs, especially European, have shown a significant shift from those established traditions in terms of value and function. The black literary tradition has consequently become identified with a subordinated and a marginalised LMP.

Therefore the investigation of the deviation of black literature, in terms of Western Marxism rather than African Marxism, is viewed as capable of providing answers to the LMP in black writing, especially if one considers Watts' (1989:40) assertion that 'Black South African writers, over recent years, have consistently consolidated their refusal to write in a literary

way, and thus to collude, not merely with the division of languages and the division of classes, but also with the division of races. (Indeed blacks have come to perceive that their struggle is as much a struggle about class and language as about race.)'

(c) The African Marxist approach also seems to read the text as if it were a sign of a dialectical historical materialist theory instead of a literary sign. Similarly it reads reality as if it were merely a sign of a dialectical materialist theory. Again here one could raise the question whether or not what is perceived as a sign in the Western Marxist sense carries the same meaning as what is perceived as a sign in the African Marxist sense. A possible answer to the question whether or not that very 'dialectical materialist theory' does not lead to the African sense of the sign, especially if one considers that both literature and literary criticism signify, in the final sense, a terrain of class struggle, seems to provide a clue to this crucial question. Hence events, plot and characters should be considered to signify that struggle.

The issues discussed above in relation to the African Marxist approach should, then, be looked at in terms of their contribution towards a better understanding and appreciation of African literature, in general, and black protest literature of the eighties, in particular. When one looks at notions of the significance of black experience, of social reality and of identification regarding the relationship between the writer and the reader around their common experiences, one realizes that black writing constitutes a different

field of aesthetics - the aesthetics of the oppressed developed under conditions of subordination and partial exclusion. These notions, according to Eagleton's thesis, cannot be successfully explained within his categories of the AI and its exchange with the LMP without taking into account the views of Africans regarding current modes of production.

Irele's (1981:27) observations relating to modes of production in African literary criticism partly explain why there are functional differences between the African Marxist and Western Marxist critical approaches. He explains that a distinction between traditional African literature and modern African literature is important because:

... traditional African literature is something which exists in our indigenous languages and which is related to our traditional societies and cultures, while modern African literature has grown out of a rupture created within our indigenous history and a way of life by the colonial experience, which is naturally expressed in the tongue of our former colonial rulers ... this distinction is useful because in their separate characteristics, both with regard to content and to form, the two kinds of literature do show clearly marked differences and derive from two different sectors of the African experience. Furthermore, the fact that they relate to different moments and phases in the collective experience and consciousness of African peoples, gives to their present-day, side-by-side existence a certain historical and sociological significance (ibid.).

The point made in this statement is that Modern African literature,

hence black literature, in whatever form carries the stigma of colonialism. One may also add here that, in terms of Eagleton's Western Marxism, the description of production, experience, identification, etc., as aspects of the fictional sign, does not necessarily subject the text to an external political or economic theory but to the significations of the intrinsic class and cultural struggles. Hence the co-existence of the dominant LMP and the subordinate LMP, which are serving conflicting interests and are in conflict with each other (cf. Eagleton 1978:46). This situation of conflicting interests will, of necessity, give rise to different Marxist approaches being adopted in literary criticism. As Ngara (1982:29) observes: 'Marxist criticism is socially conditioned. Form is the result of historical, social and ideological factors.'

Therefore if black writing of the eighties requires a Marxist approach for its analysis, then this 'Marxism' is different because its definition of an AI or an LMP does not exclude particular political theories and social theories of reality. It should, against this background, be noted that the birth of the BCM ideology is a result of political oppression and social injustices perpetrated against blacks, and therefore the definition of any BCM cultural production cannot completely exclude these crucial issues. Cultural production during the historical epoch under consideration was not only shaped by these conditions but was also seen as another site of the struggle for liberation. Hence the LMP and the AI, in spite of whatever external influence they might have had, largely functioned to achieve an ideal - the liberation of blacks. Hence the differences between dominant LMPs and dominant AIs of conventional literatures and black literature are of crucial importance, both in

terms of deviation and function.

By way of summary the following observation can be made. On the one hand, African Marxists either collapse certain specific categories of Western Marxist criticism into one (cf. Ngara), or exclude the ideological signification of history as stated by Eagleton, except for the fact that history provides raw material for the text (cf. Amuta). On the other hand, Eagleton's model provides a theoretical approach which explicitly states the various categories of Marxist criticism, including their relationship with the structures (signs) of the text which are ideologically linked to history. Therefore it has been found more appropriate to adopt Eagleton's model for the analysis of black protest literature, seeing that he provides a more comprehensive framework for both textual and historical analyses in terms of their ideological link. This is made even clearer in the following assertion:

That the text is in a certain sense self-producing is ... a valid claim. Yet the notion that the text is simply a ceaselessly self-signifying practice, without source or object, stands four square with the bourgeois mythology of individual freedom. Such freedom is not mythological because it does, after a fashion, exist, but because it exists as the precise effect of certain determinants which enforce their own self-concealment. The text's 'freedom', similarly, is the precise effect of its ineluctable relation to history, the phenomenal form of its real necessity (Eagleton 1978:73).

Eagleton's model cannot, on the basis of this statement, be limited

to a particular literary tradition which may ultimately elevate the theory to the status of absolute authority while the text is relegated to the status of mere subject. Eagleton's model rather engenders interaction between text and theory in such a way that the two ultimately yield a particular ideological production, something which is neither the reproduction of the text nor of the theory.

To this effect, the application of his thesis in analysing a literature nurtured by a revolutionary class conflict enables one to identify not only social contradictions but ideological contradictions as well. These contradictions embedded in the whole edifice of ideology, as in the General Mode of Production, the Literary Mode of Production, Aesthetic Ideology, etc., can then be identified and rationally explained. In this way the risk of a dogmatic approach is greatly reduced.

Another aspect to note here is that some of the arguments made in Eagleton's thesis have found their way into the critical works of radical African Marxists such as Emmanuel Ngara. This scholar has identified three categories of ideological criticism, namely, Dominant Ideology, Aesthetic Ideology and Authorial Ideology, which categories one may consider to have been derived from Eagleton's (1978) **Categories for a Materialist Criticism**. Eagleton's, rather than Ngara's (1990), model will be adopted because it provides a clear relationship between the text, ideology, and history. Furthermore, Eagleton's argument can also function alongside Chidi Amuta's (1985) approach explained in his chapter on 'Dialectical Theory of African Literature', without necessarily making any exclusions, or raising serious contradictions, because history and ideology form the basis



of the arguments of both these scholars of textual analysis.

Although Althusser's structuralist approach can still provide useful insights in the identification of social formations and their relationship to the dominant social formation, his model has been found not suitable for textual analysis because it fails clearly to locate the position of a text within those formations, except as a component of the cultural ISA without a specific signifying function. Eagleton, on the other hand, states that: 'The "textual real" is related to the historical real, not as an imaginary transposition of it, but as the product of certain signifying practices whose source and referent is, history itself' (1985: p.75). He goes on to say:

The literary text, accordingly, is characterized by a peculiar conjuncture of 'concrete' and 'abstract'. It resembles historiography in its density of texture, yet is analogous to philosophical discourse in the 'generality' of its object. It differs from both in taking this 'abstract' object as concrete. The text strikes us with the arresting immediacy of a physical gesture which turns out to have no precise object - as though we were observing the behaviour of a man urgently gesticulating, and so imitating an actual state of affairs, only to realise that his gestures were in some sense mere ritual and rehearsal - learnt, studied actions which indicated nothing immediate in his environment, but revealed, rather, the nature of an environment which could motivate such behaviour (ibid. p.75).

In other words, any attempt to search for an environment to corre-

late with the gestures, rather than to correlate the gestures with an environment, will create the kind of problems already alluded to above, i.e. those relating to the signification function of a text. If this signification function is not taken into account, the signification function of a work of art might be completely lost or distorted.

The above considerations thus require of a critic, a particular way looking at the text, i.e. s/he should look at it as a sign. The answer to this problem of signification takes one back to the notion of a text as production. To this end, Eagleton (1976:vi) states that: 'Marxist criticism analyses literature in terms of the historical conditions which produce it; and it needs, similarly, to be aware of its own historical conditions.' By implication it should be realized that the writer is placed in a particular position in history and that he responds to a general history from that particular standpoint. This being the case, then 'The writer translates social facts into literary ones, and the critic's task is to decode them back into reality' (ibid. p.44) according to a particular acquired consciousness or ideology.

If one concedes that history is ideological, and hence literature and literary criticism also, then Eagleton (1978:167) provides an argument in this regard which relates to the determinants of a literary work, and consequently to the necessity for a materialist analysis of a work of art:

The histories of value are a sub-sector of the histories of literary-ideological receptive practices - practices which are

in no sense a mere consumption of a finished product, but which must be studied as a determinate (re)production of the text. We read (consume) what an ideology reads (produces) for us; to read is to consume the determinate material of a text in a specific ideological production of it. For the literary text is always the text-for-ideology, selected, deemed readable and deciphered by certain ideologically governed conventions of critical receptivity to which the text itself contributes. Those conventions are embedded in the material apparatuses of culture and education, and represent a conjuncture of general ideological discourses and that specific, overdetermined instance of them which is the literary-aesthetic.

These statements, taken from Eagleton's (1978) chapter on **Categories for a Materialist Criticism**, which include some of Amuta's and Ngara's views, are considered relevant and can be summarised as follows:

Within the Marxist tradition, the question whether a particular consciousness is true or false cannot be decided by empirical means. It is highly dependent on the class position of the people whose consciousness is discussed, as well as on the current teleological interpretation of their social conditions (Fokkema & Ibsch 1978:132).

That the author and the text are mutually produced by a particular history and particular ideological leanings are crucial in the study of black literature. It should also be noted that blacks have, as a result of their collective (historical) oppression, developed a par-

ticular group consciousness (ideology) which ultimately determines their material, cultural and mental productions. Therefore any form of approach that neglects the ideological function of the text, may fail to capture the nitty gritty issues in black writing.

#### 6.4. The method of critical analysis

The method of analysis which will be followed in this study will largely hinge on the ideological link between the text and history as propounded by Eagleton (1978). The principles of both dialectical and historical materialism will be considered in identifying and explaining signficatory functions of ideological tendencies and practices as they manifest themselves in literature.

This means that the production of a work of art is not accidental. It is extrinsically influenced by various factors and therefore in its analysis these constitutive elements need to be identified and their significance accounted for. In other words, one should look for a systematic category which covers the critical analysis of existing institutional modes of production because

...the Marxists have discovered, (that) institutional discourses affirm rituals and conventions of Western capitalism, thereby justifying and even glorifying unjust, denigrating divisions between classes, races and sexes. A critique of the institution of unacknowledged politics can undermine the literary production of these divisions (Goldstein 1990:219).

This consideration of literature as the bearer of ideology should

therefore help to explain why black literature, apart from the truth of detail, is generally seen as performing the signifiatory social function of 'the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances' (cf. Fokkema & Ibsch 1978:88), i.e. the existence of blacks under conditions of institutionalized oppression.

Therefore while Eagleton's (1978) chapter on **Categories for a Materialist Criticism**, which explains ideological significations in literary criticism, as well as the one on **Towards the Science of a Text**, which explains the signification function of a text, will be given priority. Amuta's (1989) argument in his chapter on **Dialectical Theory of African Literature**, which employs dialectical materialism to explain social contradictions and historical materialism to explain both textual and discourse tendencies, will also be implicitly employed, especially against the background of Goldstein's observation quoted above.

Goldstein makes a further conclusive observation which makes Eagleton's approach all the more important in this regard because one is dealing with an emerging literary tradition which could find itself, in one way or another, in confrontation with existing ideologies or modes of production. Therefore Eagleton's comparison of the signifying system of literature to the production should facilitate the analysis of black literature. Goldstein (1990: 139-140) observes in this regard:

Eagleton does not say that literature knows what it cannot state; rather, he compares the signifying system of literature to the production ... as the production may develop ... in var-

ious ways so, too, can a text rework ideology in different ways. Moreover, by reworking ideology, a text transforms it into aesthetic material, whose complexities and difficulties distance and disturb ideology. The productivity of the text turns ideological conflicts into aesthetic issues, which, in turn, pose new and troubling ideological difficulties.

In relation to Goldstein's argument, and seeing that there are diverse determinants of notions of what is perceived or not perceived as ideological, of what are its manifestations and its functions, the question of new and troubling ideological difficulties can still, unless they are minimized, pose a problem in this study.

This problem may, however, be resolved by considering the GMP as a starting point in the analysis of a text. This will help to crystallise the relationship between the GMP, and other categories of ideology which derive from it, in order to see whether they conform to or contradict this dominant mode of production. This procedure will be followed by the investigation of the LMP, which should enable one to (i) describe the manner in which the plot, time structure, style, space in the novel, and characters have been used as significant; (ii) establish whether the GI in its relationship with the AI promotes the production of an elitist or non-elitist literature and (iii) whether, in terms of the AuI, the author's biographical insertion has any bearing on the plot structure, character portrayal, time, milieu and narrative perspective. Therefore the terms of reference in the foregoing argument and their perceived signficatory functions in relation to their ideological historical signification, are central to the development of this study.

It should also be noted that in discussing the LMP two levels will have to be distinguished: (i) the physical mode of production, in which one will look at groups of writers, publishing houses, reviewers, as well as the ideology of the publication structure; (ii) the technical literary mode of production, which is responsible for the formal features of the text, will be examined to show the modes of writing which were available to, and might have influenced, black writers with regard to style, realism, documentation of reality, experimentation and genre types, the use of humour, and the use of characters such as victims, heroes or villains. In this way it will be shown how ideology performs certain signifying functions between the 'textual real' and the 'historical real'.

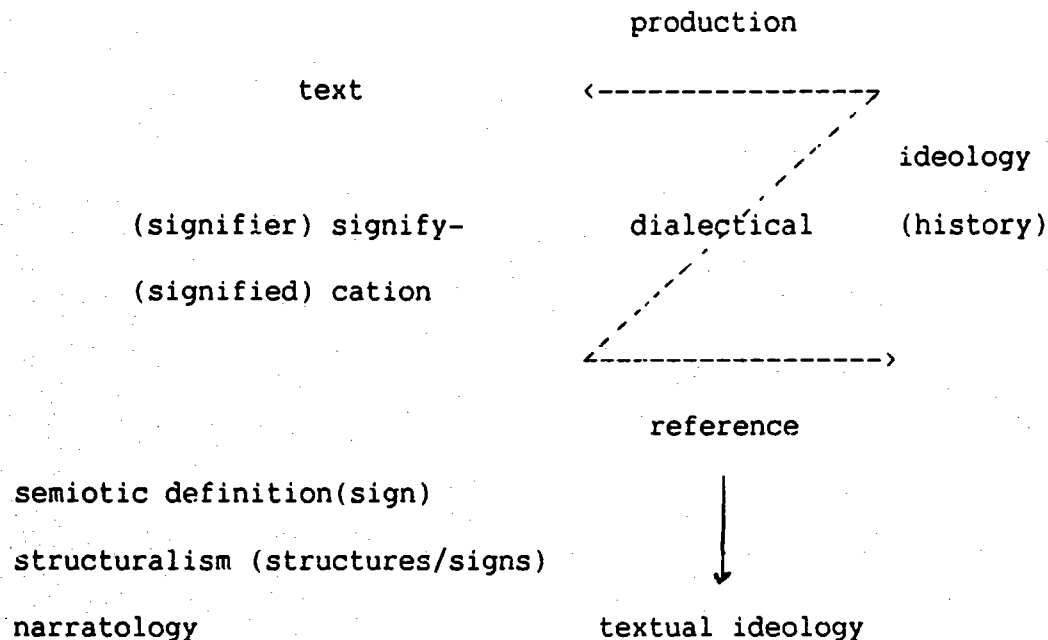
This insistence of Eagleton on a text as production and on the signifying function of the structures of the text is summarized in precise terms in the following observation by Frow (1986:21):

The conception of literary production as a process implies that on the one hand, as a produced object, the text is seen as a component of the general system of social production, that the 'real' is not its object but its institutional conditions of existence; and on the other hand, as a productive activity, the text is seen as a distinct practice of signification which is related not to a nondiscursive truth but to other practices of signification.

From the foregoing argument it seems that two levels in the analysis of the text can be distinguished. (a) First, the text is seen as a

sign constituting the signifier and the signified whose significations, ideology and, subsequently, history are mediated by textual ideology. This can be schematically represented as follows:

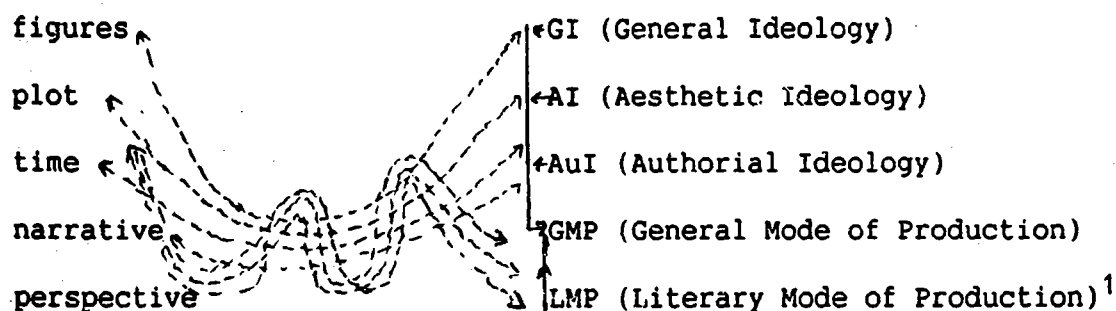
Diagram (a)



In other words, the text as a narrative structure derives its attribute of the sign from both structuralist and semiotic principles, and it assumes its 'concrete' form of signification as a literary product informed by history and signifying a particular ideology linked to a particular history. (b) Secondly, this relationship gives rise to two intrinsically-linked polar positions: the edifice of the structures of the text (constituting signs), on the one hand, and the edifice of the structures of ideology (constituting significations), on the other. This can be schematically represented as follows:



Diagram (b)

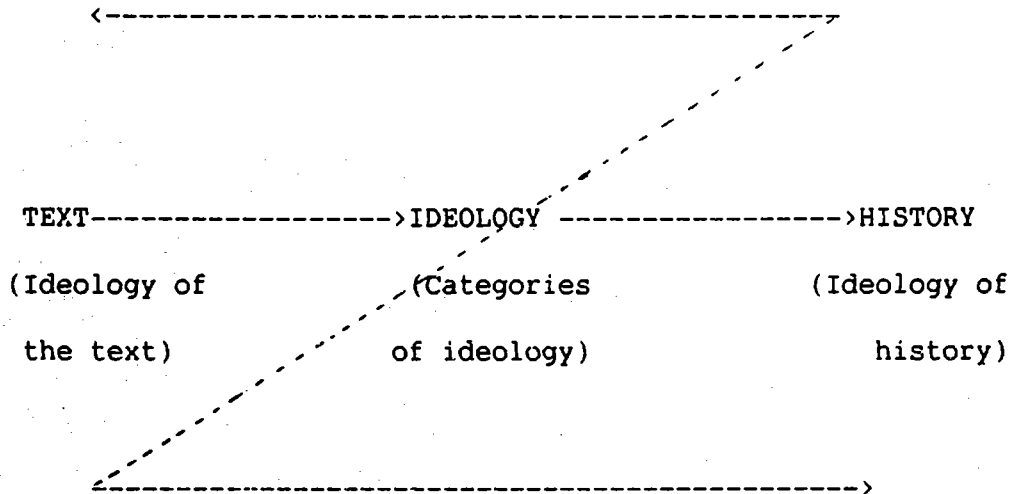


In other words, in this analysis the text as a sign related to a signification is considered as having, on the one hand, a signifi-  
 catory function, constituting the edifice of its components of struc-  
 ture (characters, plot, time, etc.), which is linked to history  
 which informs the text by the edifice of ideological structures  
 (general ideology, aesthetic ideology, authorial ideology, etc.), on  
 the other. It should also be pointed out that in employing this  
 method 'history' is not used in the sense of referring to the past  
 only, but in terms of its reference to both the present and the fu-  
 ture as well. This history largely characterises the BCM cultural  
 regions of General Ideology which is the determinant of both the  
 Literary Mode of Production and Aesthetic Ideology, which are in  
 conflict with dominant modes of production. The above models can be  
 schematically represented in a simplified manner:

N.B. See next page.

<sup>1</sup>For diagrams (a) and (b) I am indebted to Ms M. de Jong.

Diagram (c)



This means that the textual structures as a sign signify a particular ideology which in turn signifies a particular history. In this way the signifiatory function of ideology as a link between the text and history becomes a crucial aspect of analysis. This is largely because the text's aesthetic devices yield complex historically-significant perceptions which are determined by their productive relation to ideology. In other words, the literary text produces ideology which is itself a production in the way that it reveals its relation to history. In this way ideology 'blocks true historical perception' (Eagleton 1978:69) from entering the text directly, but only in a disguised form. Eagleton's (1978:72) claim, referred to earlier, clarifies this contention particularly well. It is repeated here for the sake of convenience:

History, then, certainly, 'enters' the text, not least as 'historical text'; but it enters it precisely as ideology, as a presence determined and distorted by its measurable absences.

This is not to say that real history is present in the text but in disguised form, so that the task of the critic is then to wrench the mask from its face. It is rather that history is 'present' in the text in the form of a double-absence ... This inversion, as it were, of the real historical process rather than vice versa, is itself naturally determined in the last instance by history itself.

From this argument one gathers that history is present in the text as ideology and this means that it is doubly absent: firstly, since it is not present in the text as itself (as history) but as ideology, and secondly, since, as ideology it is present only in the "distorted" misconception form of ideology.

It should be noted that the above model (c), which will be used in this study, is the re-interpretation of Eagleton's (1978:80) model, and that it is not in conflict with it. Rather it is an elaboration of it, because the text still retains the aspects of the 'signifier' and the 'signified' and still has ideology as its 'signification'. In turn ideology as a 'sign' has its 'signifier' and 'signified' linked to (a particular) historical epoch which is its ultimate signification - in this case, the Black Consciousness Movement historical epoch.

Furthermore it should also be noted that the notion of a text as a 'sign', with a 'signifier' and a 'signified', is basically a structuralist concept which has been elaborated in semiology by including the concept of the 'signification'. Therefore in adopting these concepts, Eagleton interprets them in terms of 'ideological signification'.

tion' and 'function'. It is together with this consideration of ideology as a link between the text and history that the proposed model (c) will serve as the basis for analyzing the texts under consideration in the next chapter. In other words, the structures of the text will be looked at in terms of their ideological signification and ultimately in terms of their ideological link with history.

To summarize: (a) is Stage I where a text is seen as a sign in terms of structuralist and semiotic principles, and where this sign signifies a particular ideology (history); (b) is Stage II where structures of the text are linked to certain categories of ideology; and (c) is Stage III which establishes the ideological link between the text and history. However, in the practical sense Stages I and II overlap, to the extent that they finally function together in Stage III in their application.

## CHAPTER 7

## A MATERIALIST ANALYSIS OF SELECTED TEXTS

## 7.1. Introduction

The argument that has been pursued throughout this dissertation has been that of demonstrating that black protest literature in South constitutes a literary tradition different from that of the African, and for that reason requires a critical approach that will account for both its deviation from other literary traditions and its peculiar features. As has been inferred, both implicitly and explicitly, Marxism has been found to be the most relevant critical tool to achieve this purpose. The preceding chapter has explored the most critical issues which need to be taken into account in the process of analyzing black protest literature in South Africa. This chapter will be devoted to addressing this matter, i.e. specifically to proving the importance and relevance of the historical-dialectical materialist approach to black protest literature, in South Africa especially by demonstrating the ideological link between the text selected for this study and history.

The books that have been selected for analysing in this chapter are *Amandla* (1980) by Miriam Tlali, *Third Generation* (1986) by Sipho Sepamla and *On The Eve* (1986) by Boyd Makhoba. This selection was motivated mainly by their tendentiousness in so far as black literature and the black man's understanding of reality are concerned.

Thus the insights which these books yield, provide and represent are, because of their specific ideological relationship with social institutions which either have to be changed, subverted or replaced, to a large extent trends that are inherent in the literature under review.

The crux of the analysis of these texts is the exploration of the various modes of production, together with their inherent ideological contradictions, which gave rise not only to institutionalised oppression and its maintenance, but also to the oppositional BCM (nationalist) ideologies of resistance. This resulted in the specific LMPs, GIs, AuIs and AIs which sought to remedy the situation through resistance, self-assertion and defiance. It is the signification of the edifice of ideological interaction between the structures of the texts as signs, which will be analyzed in relation to history, which has ultimately given rise to deviant GMPs, LMPs, GIs, AIs and AuIs. All these terms of reference have finally come to constitute the BCM cultural aesthetics of the oppressed, aesthetics of identification, and the aesthetics of commitment.

In terms of the aesthetics of the oppressed it should be noted that this aesthetics is the result of an oppression where the oppressed considered it their vocation to write a literature of the oppressed people, about their oppression and for their liberation. Concerning the aesthetics of identification one will argue that, because black protest literature has become a subordinated LMP, authors have tended to write in a manner that engenders participation of both authors and their audience in the cause of the liberation struggle. Lastly, regarding the aesthetics of commitment, one will argue that

black literature was seen, from the BCM perspective, as having a social function to liberate blacks. Therefore literature was written to attain this objective.

The exact construction of the text, including its structures as signs, will be considered in relation to what Eagleton (1978) has described as (i) the GMP, (ii) the LMP, (iii) the GI, (iv) the AuI and (v) the AI, all of which form the ideological link between the text and history. While Eagleton's model will be explicitly used in the analysis of the texts under consideration, Amuta's model will be implicitly used, largely because, as in the case of Eagleton, history is an important factor in determining the author's mode of writing. This is largely so because both the text and the author are, in the final analysis, produced by the ideology of the history of a particular epoch.

## 7.2. *Amandla* - Miriam Tlali

Miriam Tlali is one of the writers who contributed to the emergence and growth of black writing through her stories published regularly in the then *Staffrider* magazine, owned by Ravan Press, which magazine has since been acquired by COSAW and renamed *Staffrider Journal*. Her first novel was *Muriel At Metropolitan* (1975), and she has also published a collection of short stories, essays and interviews under the title *Mehloti* (1984).

When one considers *Amandla* against the background of the General Mode of Production, which in South Africa is necessarily capitalist, one presumes that this novel went through the usual capitalist mode

of production, i.e. from the writer to the publisher and to the bookseller. However, one recalls that, although the manuscript had to be processed through a seemingly 'privately'-owned printing press producing for the capitalist market, its mode of distribution and consumption differs from that usual to classical capitalism. The tendency under this GMP is for emphasis to be put on 'high art' which conforms to the requirements of the market forces which promote capitalist interests vested in surplus value. The resultant effect of this GMP is that there will be categories of domination and subordination, in which particular products will be promoted while others will be marginalized.

*Amandla* was produced under such circumstances and, because it did not conform to the GMP of the time, it logically fell into the category of 'marginalized products'. One should also note that this novel was published at a time when Ravan Press did not exercise the monopoly of publishing and distribution, as was the practice of the GMP of this historical epoch. In the case of Ravan Press printed works were not only sold over the counter by producers and booksellers, but were also given to ordinary people to sell in the streets for commission. Furthermore, from its cost price, which was at the time R3.95, it is clear that the novel was under-priced in order to make it more accessible to the majority of disadvantaged people. In this way the capitalist power relations of labour and production were not completely reproduced.

Also it should be noted here that because capital, in South Africa, is intrinsically linked to white racial supremacy and white economic monopoly, black literary production was bound to be stifled in the



same way as the black community was stifled by being economically and socially repressed. However, because black writers and producers were aware of this fact, their purpose was never to compete in the economic market. Rather, it was to produce for the underprivileged readership, under the given circumstances, a literature that was theirs regardless of the cost. It is therefore not surprising that, under a dominant GMP, there appeared distinct literary traditions, existing side-by-side.

While in terms of the Literary Mode of Production *Amandla* can be termed a novel, i.e. it has adopted one of the prestigious forms of Western writing, Miriam Tlali's book in various ways flouts the definition of this genre. The physical mode of production and the technical mode of production will firstly be considered.

Concerning the physical mode of production it is important to note that *Amandla* was conceived at a time when BCM-oriented writers and cultural groups were in place. These groups were bound together by the fact that blacks have to write for blacks about their condition of oppression. From such sentiments developed the aesthetics of the oppressed. The reviewers of the then publishing house, Ravan Press, shared these sentiments and promoted works that dealt with current subjects, namely, the raising of consciousness among blacks and the rallying of them around their oppression. All BCM-aligned structures endorsed this purpose. It is therefore not surprising that *Amandla* derived its theme from the historical 1976 Soweto Uprisings which changed the quality of the liberation struggle in South Africa.

Coming to the second issue, that of the technical literary mode of

production, it can be argued that while there had been the *Drum* and *Journalism* schools of writing, black writers of the eighties resorted more to 'realism', documentation of reality, experimentation with form and genre types, as well as the portrayal of characters in terms of victim and villain only. On this basis *Amandla* becomes an 'autobiographical' novel in Watt's (1989) terms. It is 'autobiographical' in the sense that the author writes about her own experiences and those of her people, the blacks. In other words, it is a narrative work by a black person for black people about black people, just as some of the realist novels are about 'real experiences' of people in their collective struggles against injustice. Therefore *Amandla* is not about an individual character trying to establish his identity, but about a people yearning for a collective identity founded on their circumstances of collective oppression.

Furthermore, the novel is not part of the 'high art' world of romanticism, existentialism or modernism which tends to divorce art from 'social reality', but is part of the process of documenting reality, didacticism, and of consciousness raising of the oppressed masses. In terms of its AI *Amandla* is also part of a radical renewal of genre types and the experimentation with form, in which novels built around the experiences of the black people. Characters in this novel are meant to enact those experiences. In this way *Amandla* is in contrast with the dominant LMP, which generally serves the interests of the GMP, which in its turn tends to deny reality by ignoring it and implicitly promoting a false reality. *Amandla* does not seek to perpetuate existing power relations, instead it seeks to destroy them by exposing the 'truth'. It is for this reason that Watts (1989) has classified this novel as 'The Literature of Combat'

alongside Sepamla's *A Ride on the Whirlwind*, Mzamane's *Children of Soweto* and Serote's *To Every Birth Its Blood*.

Looking at Tlali's novel in terms of Aesthetic Ideology (AI), which generally is the aesthetic region of the General Ideology (GI), this book stands in sharp contrast with the conventional Western novel because its aesthetic value is determined not so much by linguistic beauty, character portrayal, plot structure and other structural considerations, as by its relevance to the situation of the target audience - the oppressed majority in South Africa.

Some of the essential considerations in black literary aesthetics, and especially in *Amandla*, are the fictitious depictions of 'victim' and 'villain' relationships where generally the victims becomes very cunning and elusive.

Although Pholoso, a victim, is the main character of the novel, Tlali does not portray him as an individual but as an embodiment of the plight and struggles of the oppressed. His role in the events of the novel creates scenes where characters of different age groups, social standing and sexes, such as Gramsy, T Moremi, unnamed characters, and Pholoso's comrades, congregate to reflect on their pasts and futures in terms of their present. This technique introduces what could also be termed an 'aesthetics of identification', whose signifiatory function would foster black solidarity against oppression.

As regards AuI - through which the author makes her biographical insertion into the work, which in this case can be defined as a direct

result of the 'aesthetics of commitment'- Tlali bases the plot of *Amandla* on the 1976 Soweto Uprisings. Although one appears to progress in leaps and bounds through the novel, the plot's unity is maintained by following the sequence of events which marked the students revolt, such as the burning of administration buildings, beer-halls, police houses, funerals, etc., with people engaging in dramatic dialogues punctuated by shouts of 'Amandla! Amandla!' For instance, in the crowd which is watching the burning administration office, the following conversation develops between Betty and her two friends Nana and Mamphuthi:

'He was sitting against that window and he kept on sniffing through his hairy nostrils and opening it as if something was smelling.'

'Who? When?'

'Botma. The Superintendent!?' answered Betty, snapping back at Nana impatiently as if she should have known who she was talking about. She went on: 'It was the day my dear brother experienced the final humiliation of being considered an outcast in the land of his birth.'

'When? You mean Buti?'

'Yes. The day he drove Buti to the hostel and chased his wife out of Johannesburg. The morning after the Board's blackjacks had raided our house at three o'clock in the morning (p.18).'

By creating such scenes in which characters share their experiences Tlali displays a LMP, which impinges on her AUI and which can be explained in terms of 'realism' and 'documentation of reality'. The purpose of this ideological tendency is to signify a realization

that blacks in South Africa have for long been collectively humiliated and this should necessarily cause them to become aware that they have for too long remained docile and therefore need to press for immediate fundamental social change - something which blacks should see not only as commitment but as their vocation as well.

Also, although Pholoso does not feature in every chapter of the book his implied presence as another unifying factor in the novel is maintained by the accounts of events he and his comrades instigate. Each episode in the novel reflects an historical event which fanned the anger of the people and made them more vocal about their situation, for example, the scene where T Moremi and Zwane are reflecting on the current events:

'And where's Pholoso now? Hasn't he gone to hospital for treatment?' Zwane asked.

'What? They're holding a meeting - and he is presiding over it!'

Zwane shook his head.

'These children,' he sighed, 'they can be so determined!' ...

'I could see that there was trouble brewing. Why enforce Afrikaans?'

'Yes, why? I mean if people want a thing you don't have to force it down their throats. They'll ask for it.' (p. 23).

This attests to the fact that characters and events in Tlali's book, as significations, reflect a particular GI, the BCM ideology, which in turn relates to a particular historical epoch, the history of op-

pression, resistance and defiance which prompts one to contemplate the future. Characters are here used as signs and the fact that they are technically used as such indicates a specific AI, the aesthetic of the oppressed. Therefore, GI, which is nurtured by the spirit of resistance, is significant here in terms of its effects on the AI, the aesthetics of commitment, a subcategory of resistance, which also characterizes Tlali's novel.

Furthermore, on the question of Authorial Ideology (AuI), which signifies the effect of the author's specific mode of biographical insertion into the GI, one realizes that Tlali's work is determined by social class struggle - opposition against institutionalised oppression. As pointed out earlier, Tlali exploits the June 16, 1976 Soweto Uprisings, as the theme of her novel. This she does successfully by not limiting her choice of characters to students only, but by also including characters who are from all walks of life and narrate their particular experiences under the apartheid regime.

Tlali here puts the conflict between the Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs), such as the administration and police, and the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), such as education and religion, into perspective by introducing an element of revolution into her novel. The RSAs are being symbolically destroyed, while the ISAs, which have been used by the ruling class to impose its hegemony over the oppressed class, are being made unworkable. The township administration buildings, which enforce the influx control laws, and the police stations and police, which enforce the unjust laws, are either destroyed or made unworkable.

For instance, on the one hand, police detention cells are depicted as yet another venue for the meeting of political activists, while the prison system is portrayed as ineffective, manipulated as it is from both outside and inside to secure the release of detainees. On the other hand, education and religion, with their related functions, are used as rallying points for political activism to consolidate resistance against oppression. Here again Tlali's AuI is prominent its signification of the severity of the conflict between the ruling and the oppressed classes.

In this regard Tlali's LMP is more of a 'reflexive realism', which prescribes that literature should teach certain political attitudes and assumes that literature indeed reflects or reproduces social reality in a fairly direct way (cf. Eagleton 1976:48-49). In the same spirit Tlali tries to bring reality to the fore with the help of the novel form, and this is clearly linked to the AI for, as Eagleton (1978:61) argues, the 'GI may occasionally impress itself upon the LMP to produce a particular form (say, "socialist realism") which is then encoded and elaborated by AI...'. The author is influenced by this ideology to exploit her experience, in this instance, to create a scene where Pholoso meets another detainee who relates his ordeal of torture:

... Of all the methods of torture they use, I fear the 'wet cap' most. It takes the breath out of your body, and when you're sure that you are dying and you are ready to gasp for the last time, they remove it. Then they yell: 'Komaan kaffer, praat!' ... Some say they are more scared of the electric shock ... when the numbing waves seem to run in all directions

throughout your body and your brain feels like it will soon pop out of your skull ... Those shocks man ... They prick the private parts with them. I understand they use them on the girls' breasts until they talk ... I understand they stretch the girls' thighs right out until they speak - before they are torn apart through the middle!' (p. 145).

One should also realise here that characters generally assume their roles in the novel around the functions of victim and villain, in this way signifying the unsavoury relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. In other words this mode of the AI, as reflexive aesthetics', seeks to lay bare the conditions under which blacks live and in so doing urges them to change their situation.

Another aspect of the AI is found in the names which Tlali gives to her characters, another example of fiction as documentation of the reality being related in the theme of the novel. For instance, Pholoso's own name, which means saviour, and his assumed name, Moses, are explicit in the context of the novel. They refer to someone who carries the keys for the liberation of the down-trodden, and as such has a historical significance, not only in terms of the past but also in terms of the future. Essentially this form of aesthetics further explains the BCM-informed GI which militates for the need to triumph over oppression.

Tlali's novel ends on a militant note, re-enforcing the aesthetics of commitment: Pholoso and other youths leave the country to undergo military training in the camps of the liberation movement abroad. This ending nurtures the notion that, if need be, liberation should



be attained by force of arms. This determination of the youth is fostered by the perception that time is on their side and it will be possible for them to live in a liberated South Africa. Hence the need for commitment on the part of the youth as the vanguard of the struggle.

The didactic nature of Tlali's aesthetics finally appears at the end of her novel where Pholoso utters assuring words to Felleng, his long-time sweetheart, as he is about to cross the border:

'Let us not lose faith, Felleng. We are still young and the future belongs to us; it is in our hands. Let us continue to look ahead and work hard. It is only when we work towards the attainment of our ideals that there can be hope for Azania. We can never fail, we shall win because history is on our side.'  
(p.293).

The ideological significance of this didacticism, in terms of its social function, is that while the struggle requires sacrifices and will claim casualties, victory will be attained. In this attitude one identifies the AI of the eighties, when writers considered it their duty to relay the social experience of the people. In this connection one also notes how Tlali has been conditioned and influenced by the GI to reflect various categories of aesthetical ideology in building her story up to its climax - a point of no return. Her approach displays a systematic ideological link between text and history as generally displayed in the black writing of the eighties, whose essence can be explained only in terms of an historical-dialectical materialist analysis.

### 7.3. Third Generation - Sipho Sepamla

Sipho Sepamla is an established author who has written many poems, the novel *The Soweto I Love* (1977), as well as another novel, *A Ride In The Whirlwind* (1981). His involvement in cultural projects aimed at developing blacks necessarily has had immense impact on his world view.

His novel, *Third Generation*, testifies to this impact in that it deals with certain dynamics operative within society. The novel is about the 'third generation' but most significantly it is also about the role of women in the liberation struggle, which emphasis tempts one to dwell on the aesthetics of feminism. Events recounted in the novel include aspects of three distinct historical periods or generations in the black liberation struggle, thus locating it in the region of the aesthetic of commitment. Sepamla ideologically situates the developments in the liberation struggle along an historical continuum which culminates in the militant BCM generation from which he derives the title of his book, *Third Generation*.

As a means of clarification it should be noted that the first generation is the one of the fifties to the early sixties, marked by the 1950 Sharpeville Shootings; the second generation is the one of the late sixties to the seventies, marked by the 1976 Soweto Uprisings; and the third generation is that of the eighties, marked by the birth of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the most protracted state of emergency. Distinctive ideological approaches which are

peaceful resistance, self-assertion and militancy, characterize these generations, respectively. Sepamla's perception illustrates how set backs in each of the generations did not dampen the spirit of resistance within the liberation movement. Instead, those past experiences made later generations increasingly militant.

**Third Generation** is, with respect to the General Mode of Production (GMP), also produced within the circumstances of the dominant mode of production, i.e. from the producer (author), through the production (printing and binding), to the consumer (reader). The mode of distribution and consumption, however, differs from that of capitalism in that black writing during this historical epoch was not intended for the capitalist market, the elite and the privileged, but was aimed at raising the consciousness of the masses.

Therefore special emphasis was placed on the accessibility of literature to the underprivileged. This tendency is not surprising because, as Eagleton (1978) has aptly observed, within a dominant GMP there can co-exist other modes of production which might be in conflict with the GMP even if they are subordinated to it. This novel is also not the kind of work that wishes to reproduce existing power relations. Rather it wishes to undercut or destroy them. **Third Generation** is about an orchestrated revolution against the status quo, and is not in favour of maintaining the status quo.

Therefore, in terms of the existing GMP, **Third Generation** is also relegated to a position of subordination, or is marginalised, because it conflicts with the interests of the dominant mode of production which is geared towards the promotion of capitalism. For

this reason it could not have been published by institutions which supported apartheid-capitalism. Instead it was produced by a black writer and published by a black-dominated publishing house, Skotaville Publishers, a company which is ideologically in opposition to the *status quo* and consequently, as regards its stature, does not rank among the 'big' South African publishing houses, which publish for the capitalist market. Because there is a dialectical relationship between the GMP and the LMP, the BCM mode of literary production was subsequently affected by conflict within the GMP, as will be explained below. In this case the situation that pertains to Tlali's novel also holds for Sepamla's.

As far as the Literary Mode of Production (LMP) is concerned, Sepamla's book, like Tlali's, is also in the novel form, but it flouts this dominant mode of literary production (the novel), and stands in contrast with it. In fact, Sepamla's work is also what Watts (1989) terms 'autobiographical writing', 'autobiographical' in the sense that the author writes about his world experience and the experiences of his people. This trend of writing is significant in terms of its ideological function which fosters a collective identity.

In terms of its physical mode of literary production it is also a subordinated category whose mission is to rally blacks around their collective oppression rather than to promote the interests of capitalism which, together with racism, is responsible for the oppression of blacks. The publishers and reviewers of this genre are geared towards the ideology of resistance. Hence any book of this kind would be passed for publication in the interest of national

liberation. It should, however, be noted that literary merits are not necessarily compromised because of ideological leanings. The work of art which is published needs to satisfy certain literary criteria, which, in the view of its editors, are suited to the spirit and literature of the moment.

In terms of these considerations a literary text does not need to distinguish between producer (author) and consumer (reader), but needs to be a text which rallies them, as participants, around their common struggle for liberation. That is why characters like Sis V, Buda B, Papa Tuks, etc., are technically positioned around scenes where they can talk and reflect about their past and present experiences and even contemplate their future. In other words, characters and events are portrayed in such a manner that they link up with the 'real' experiences of people out there, a technique which is akin to 'realism' and documentation of reality.

It is for this reason that the black literary mode of production can be considered as a subordinated LMP in the sense that it enters 'into contradiction with the dominant LMP by "anticipating" the productive forms and social relations of a future social formation ...' (Eagleton 1978:46). Sepamla writes from the position of a section of society (blacks) engaged in a revolutionary struggle to dislodge the **status quo**, i.e. white supremacy and other Apartheid structures. He writes about a section of society which through collective experience under oppression has developed a particular GI which has interpenetrated both the LMP and AIs.

As far as Aesthetic Ideology (AI) is concerned, Sepamla's work is

also grounded on the BCM General Ideology of black self-assertion which is nurtured by the call: 'Black man, you are on your own!', a slogan rallying blacks around the common purpose of their struggle for liberation. For this reason his work is not just another area of the General Ideology, seeking to reproduce and sustain the dominant ideology. It belongs to a different area, the aesthetics of the oppressed, because it deals with the oppression of blacks and the aesthetics of identity, and associates itself with writers who seek to identify themselves with their audience through the liberation struggle.

In this case, also, 'blackness' is more important than class. It should be noted that while black writers should, in terms of their social standing, belong to either the elite or the petty-bourgeois classes, they remain part of the oppressed class and they identify with it. Therefore the plot structure, milieu, character portrayal, etc., of Sepamla's novel are strategically constructed in such a manner that the story will in the end signify the resistant spirit of the oppressed against the oppressive forces. This is also done by depicting the victim-villain character dichotomy where eventually the victim outmaneuvers the villain, as members of the third generation did to the police. The tendency not to portray victims (blacks) as mere lame ducks in their opposition to the powerful villains (forces of oppression) sends the important signal that 'victory is attainable'.

Seeing that the AI also has implications for literary form it could be argued that the choice of the novel form is of strategic importance because it allows for various trends, such as, realism, docu-

mentation of history and the inclusion of social experience. Sepamla exploits the post June 1976 political climate which was characterized by intense political activity. His novel illustrates a highly-politicized community in which people from all walks of life are making a collective effort to stamp out oppression. Against this backdrop one realizes that Sepamla has constructed his novel in such a way that components of its structure, characters, time, setting, etc., provide logistic support for the liberation struggle.

His characters represent a wide range of prominent professional figures, such as teachers and nurses, who through their experience and social standing are able to marshall the political activities of the students. They not only offer students advice and material support, but also act on behalf of the students. The documentation of history and realist approaches of Sepamla's novel are some of the distinctive characteristics of the novels of the historical era under consideration, which era had as one of its missions the portrayal of 'black experience'.

With regard to the Authorial Ideology through which the book displays the author's biographical insertion, Sepamla's work posits a distinctive feature, viz. the notion that there are several lessons to be learned from past generations, lessons which have contributed to the ideological outlook of the present generation, the third generation. He constructs his work around characters of different social classes, young and old, moulded by previous ideologies, but who find themselves together in the BCM ideological outlook of the liberation struggle. Sepamla's main characters are an ensemble of the third generation consisting of the narrator, Potlako, Solly and

Thandi. These characters are technically assembled to signify various facets of the collective struggle of the oppressed. Sis Vi also features as a prominent protagonist who carries out most of the missions for the group.

Sepamla's important tactic, like Tlali's, is to select characters from different generations and sexes to consolidate his work around the experiences of the oppressed. His ideological leaning, for instance, drives him to portray the character, Papa Tuks, an old confidante of characters constituting the third generation, himself belonging to the first one, in order to demonstrate various modes of resistance strategy during the different historical eras. In a dialogue with members of the third generation, Papa Tuks seems to be recognizing the necessity for a change of strategy from previous resistance tactics of the past which have proved to be ineffective. He says, when he urges members of the latest generation to sustain their onslaught on the regime:

Come on, sons, let's not despair. Nothing is over yet. One setback cannot mean defeat. Not for me. Nor for you, sons. You belong to a new generation - third, fourth, fifth, what's the difference, you are of the new times. You carry weapons undreamt of in the past. How can we give up at this point? How can we? (ibid. p.46)

What at once emerges from this piece of dialogue is that one is once again dealing with the aesthetics of commitment whose contention is that literature should be committed to the liberation struggle. The author demonstrates that this issue persists along the historical



continuum when he says that, while there have been changes in the mood, ideology and tactics of the liberation movement over the generations, the will to be free has not changed. This notion is further confirmed in the following statement relating to Buda B, who belongs to the second generation:

What was different between us and them was how we saw the masses. To them the masses had to be initiated to the level of everyone before action happened. We saw ourselves as the masses. We decided when we were ready for action: it is now (ibid. p.29).

The unfolding of this episode, especially in the dialogue between Buda B and his son, the narrator, further underlines the GI characterised by the militancy of the third generation, the late BCM ideological tactic. The significance of this perception is that the third generation does not have much of the past to rely on, seeing that earlier generations have exhausted themselves in vain, and that some of them, as they nursed their wounds, were now no longer interested in the struggle and, consequently no longer in a position to contribute meaningfully to the new mode of the liberation struggle. The author uses the youth's disillusionment about the earlier generations' ability to alter the status quo as a reason to agitate for a more militant approach in the resistance movement.

One should also here notice the implicit ideological framework within which Sepamla operates, which is commensurate with the fact that ideology does not have a history of its own; its history is finally determined by the history of the actual material conditions

from which it emerges. By implication the author's ideological leaning exploits the interplay between the text and real material conditions (history) to signify how they mutually influence each other ideologically. His fiction is also infused with certain well-known historical events which turn his writing not only into 'realism', but also into a reflexive ideology, because his work also tends to reflect the social real.

Furthermore, the author's mode of writing, in spite of his upbringing in a male-dominated society, disposes of the fallacy of a widely held notion (ideology) that 'women and children are innocent civilians'. What Sepamla portrays in the mould of the aesthetics of identification is the fact that, by virtue of being human, women and children are also moulded by material conditions (in the process of producing and making history) just as men are. Therefore social awareness, as a level of consciousness or ideology, is determined by neither gender nor age, but by existing material conditions.

Sepamla's mode of writing is described here in terms of the aesthetics of identification in the sense that the author does not deny women and children important roles in the liberation struggle, as one can see in the portrayal of Sis V who sacrifices her profession as a nursing sister to join the liberation movement. What Sepamla also dispels is the myth of the assumed inferior status of women in leadership, which myth cannot be rationally justified. The following passage, which refers to Sis V, illustrates this fact, i.e. that the blackness of the oppressed is the unifying force in fighting oppression at all levels:

When she agreed to join the Third Generation, it was with this conviction in mind. She saw the group as a unit bent on eliminating the causes of disease, however roundabout their ways. (ibid. p.51-52).

This statement serves to introduce the notion of the GI which is nurtured by the realization that blacks are victims of disease as a result of the squalid conditions in which they live - the overcrowded houses and/or shacks, the poor sanitation, the poverty in general. Therefore all resultant AIs point to this issue, and also to the fact that these conditions were deliberately created, and need(ed) to be changed.

The following dialogue between members of the third generation also displays Sepampla's biographical insertion into the General Ideological framework, which nurtured the militancy of the eighties, and is significant to the need for commitment:

Ya, the line cannot be broken anymore. The days of the assegai are gone forever. We meet bullets with bullets. There's no more monopoly of power. No more (ibid. p.45).

In this passage one can also deduce the GI of optimism in the belief of the ability of the guerilla armies of the liberation movements to win freedom for the oppressed. Another issue that emerges repeatedly from Sepampla's work is the emphasis on the way in which the dominant colonial ideology, in this case the apartheid ideology, attempts to entrench itself by warding off threats from the opposing nationalist ideology.

In the foregoing argument the author's AuI becomes more articulate as an area of the GI which represents certain beliefs reflecting the experiential relations of individual subjects to their social conditions. Sepamla creates a scene showing how the dominant class generally employs brutal and intimidating tactics to suppress and to contain opposition in an attempt to convey the impression that it, the dominant class, is unassailable and invincible, as can be seen from the following speech from the fictitious interrogation of an opponent of the regime by a state security officer:

There is a lot we know about you, why you went to PE for a start. I can throw you into jail for a long, long time ... You communist dog! And you know something? No one in this country cares for communists. Nobody really cares what happens to a communist dog like you. Your lawyer friends cannot bring you back from the dead. What happened to Steve Biko? (ibid. p.57).

The implication of this statement is that in South Africa any opponent of the state, alleged or real, was labelled a communist becomes ever more evident. This labelling enabled the state to apply the most dreaded Suppression of Communism Act, indiscriminately, to curb the mobilization of its opponents. Heavy sentences were passed on political 'offenders' as a result of the 'seriousness' of the offence related to this Act. This signifies not only the author's personal experience but also the experience of the victimised group to which he belongs, and as such provides the basis for his Audi.

Sepamla is also driven by his own experience to exploit the situa-

tion of skipping the country, and guerilla infiltration, in order to highlight the militancy of the later BCM generation. He achieves this by successfully employing the technique of naming, not only as part of characterization but of plot construction as well, as a different LMP akin to that of the eighties. Here the role of each character contributes towards achieving the ideal of the liberation movement as signified by a particular character's name. Potlako (the swift one) is an essential link of the movement's communication network. Mpiyakhe (the one prone to fighting) helps a returned guerilla, Thamsaqa, when he is besieged by security forces. The likes of Thamsaqa (a blessing) are generally regarded as a blessing to the oppressed community because of the immense sacrifices they make for the cause of liberation. The perception that the armed struggle is the most potent strategy for attaining liberation has been born out of historical necessity:

Over the years my people strove by peaceful means to have redressed wrongs perpetrated on them. They have been repaid with violence, all forms of violence. Over the years I have wondered at my own patience in the face of inhumanity and the harsh laws which waylaid me from birth to grave. I wondered at the Christian basis of these laws; I wondered that my share of the wealth of the country was disease, hunger and ignorance. I couldn't stand by to watch this legacy be the lot of my people only. My life is defined by a struggle meant to redress the position but my reward has been jail and more jailing. I was called an agitator and a communist (ibid. 151-2).

Contained in these words are some of the issues which constitute

what is called the BCM GI of 'black experience'. Mutloatse's remarks, which links Sepamla's AuI to the GI, might clarify the writer's use of a central dichotomy of victim-villain throughout his work, and hence also a different LMP:

We as black people are all oppressed, landless and at the mercy of the government. So how can we as black people be different from one another?... It is called Black Experience, not just black literature. It is not the same thing as white literature, which is of privilege, unlike that of black writer, which is of the underdog (Mutloatse as quoted by Sole in *English in Africa* Vol.10 No.1 1983:48).

Although Sole (in *English in Africa* Vol.10 No.1 1983:51-53) wants to argue that the 'problem with the "black experience" approach is that it downplays the diversity of cultural expression in South Africa today to assert the existence of monolithic "black" and "white" cultures', his view fails to take cognizance of the fact that in South Africa at macro level there were essentially two distinct cultures. There was the culture of the white ruling class, on the one hand, and the culture of the oppressed black class, on the other. That there were structural differences at micro level in each of these distinct cultures is a fact that cannot be disputed. What is important, however, is the fact that a collectivity of those structural differences, at micro level, in each of the two cultures constituted the two distinct cultures at macro level because:

We ... don't believe there is any black man, rich or poor, who is free. And we also don't believe that there are whites who are oppressed (Biko as quoted by Sole in *English in Africa*

Like Tlali, Sepamla's novel ends with the note that the struggle can best be waged from outside, and also that liberation should be attained by force of arms, signifying the recurrent belief in commitment which gave rise to an aesthetics of commitment. To this purpose he also describes the youth leaving the country to undergo military training abroad.

On this basis, therefore, the ideology of racial oppression, in so far as the BCM perception is concerned, remained intact until perceptible structural changes could be effected in South African society. This BCM ideological perception of the liberation struggle, in which the youth were at the forefront, is clearly discernible throughout Sepamla's novel, as well the perception that blacks are 'black' because they constitute an oppressed class yearning for freedom. This finally determines the LMP of Sepamla's book in the context of the argument this subsection wants to make.

#### 7.4. On The Eve - Boyd Makhoba

*On The Eve* is Makhoba's first published novel. As with the two novels analyzed above, Makhoba also focuses on youth activists as the vanguard of the struggle and, of course, collective activism. However, this emphasis is not sustained throughout the novel. Makhoba eventually focuses on a man to man encounter to expose the fallacy of racism. In spite of these strategic differences Makhoba's work remains an 'autobiographical novel' articulating his and his peoples' social experiences. This quality also overrides the GMP,

which is not only determined by the demands of the capitalist market but is also specifically geared towards the reproduction of existing social relations.

Looking at Makhoba's work on the basis of the General Mode of Production (GMP) one realizes that it has also been produced under the capitalist mode of production, although it functions slightly differently under a black-owned publishing house. In terms of its ideological leaning and mode of distribution *On The Eve* seemingly was also not meant to bolster the capitalist market nor was it aimed at the elite only; it was also aimed at the collectivity of the oppressed black masses. It addresses itself to the issues affecting both the privileged and the under-privileged, as human beings, not just as racial or class entities.

However, the inclusion of socio-political problems in Makhoba's work qualifies it as literature of commitment, thus relegating it to a subordinated mode of production. Under these circumstances this publication did not serve to promote existing power relations but served to undercut them, especially in terms of its ideological leanings. Therefore being literature of commitment rather than of appreciation, literature that teaches, and raises the consciousness of, the masses, and sensitizes the elite, *On the Eve* can at least be considered as a special category of black protest writing. It is a category that addresses itself to humanity in its entirety rather than portions of humanity, such as caste, class or racial groups.

On the basis of the Literary Mode of Production (LMP) *On The Eve* is a skillfully-constructed novel. It does not flout the Western



definition of this genre to the same extent as do the other two novels. This observation creates an impression that Makhoba's novel does not necessarily address an exclusive audience. His work can thus be appreciated by both the privileged and the under-privileged sections of society.

For instance, as will be indicated later, Makhoba demonstrates insight into both sections' needs and expectations. There are, on the one hand, those that arise from the physiological and/or emotional being of mankind, such as love, sexuality, pain, etc. There are, on the other hand, those that arise as a result of social constructs, such as oppression, racism, rebellion, etc. To illustrate this point Makhoba builds his plot around two couples, one black and one white. One can distinguish at least three levels in the development of his plot: issues that affect an individual, issues that affect a married couple, and issues that affect people socially.

One realizes, in this continuum, how the last-mentioned level of social existence impacts on the other two. From Makhoba's story one is able to discern the manner in which perceptions at the level of social existence can disrupt the life of an individual by denying him/her certain basic human rights. This disruption is carried over to the level of family life, which is disrupted in a similar manner. Analogously virtually the whole society reaps the whirlwind of this disruption.

Therefore, South Africa being a racially-segregated society, Makhoba exploits this phenomenon to advance the course of his story line. Because racial conflict is at the core of social problems in this

country Makhoba's work has both racial and political overtones. He, like Tlali and Sepamla, acts, through creative writing, as a spokesperson for his people, to explain the cause of racial conflict and its effect, and to suggest possible steps to remedy matters. This mode of writing therefore also affects the portrayal of the characters.

The novel, through various characters, not only narrates the collective experiences of blacks under an oppressive regime, but goes on to show how this system also affects whites. Some of the specific experiences relate to influx control laws, pass laws, The Population Registration Act and The Immorality Act. Various episodes in the story address themselves to these pertinent issues, whose effects on social relations are the determinate factors of this work.

The plot structure, character portrayal, style, time, etc., are technically used to demonstrate the victim-villain dichotomy, albeit in a different version. At the micro level blacks seem to be portrayed as victims and whites as villains. However, at the macro level people in general are portrayed as victims and the apartheid system as a villain. Against this backdrop Makhoba portrays a discontented society at both levels. At the micro level this claim is, for instance, signified in the following statement by a youth activist, called Dana, while addressing a mass meeting in the township:

On the other side of the ledger, the black workers are ceaselessly decimated by a demoniacal monster known as 'job reservation,' so that no matter how qualified a black is for the job,

he cannot be engaged if it's officially stipulated as a white man's job only. Consequently thousands of educated and skilled blacks - Africans, Indians and Coloureds - of both sexes are out in the streets, year in and year out around the cities. Their only hope is to go for inferior or semi-skilled jobs, for there is no salvation in the so-called reserves with their staggering rate of unemployment ... (p.43).

This is, in the first place, evocative of the unjust laws of the regime which disadvantage blacks on the basis of racism. To illustrate this, Makhoba uses, on the one hand, Zola who runs a small wood and coal-yard business. Zola's description does not befit that of a successful businessman. To convey his 'merchandise' he uses a stallion and a rickety cart. His home is also no different from other houses in the township. It is also a symbol of abject poverty. On the other hand, there are street vendors who congregate at the bus rank daily to market an assortment of goods from fat cakes to stale meat to desperate workers. These goods are exposed to dust and a strong stench of urine which is compounded by the smell from an assortment of other rotting items lying around. The problem is not only that such business areas are not upgraded because they are in the so-called townships. It is also because blacks cannot do business in the nearby exclusive 'white' town where there could be better facilities. This situation foregrounds racism as a vital economic factor in South Africa bent on stifling black-advancement regardless of whether they are employed or self-employed.

Makhoba, however, perceptually exploits this situation and makes it a sight where political activities are also conducted. He con-

veniently creates scenes where activists like Dana addresses 'meetings' to militate blacks to stand against their oppression. Dana's emotional speeches condemning racism and blaming it for the suffering of blacks, are given substance by the very surroundings in which they find themselves.

One should recall, against this background, that the Black Consciousness Movement has come out very strongly against the notion of racism, because, as discussed earlier, they insisted that 'racism' does not in fact exist. This comment brings one to a second point, which makes one realize that *On The Eve* tends to downplay racism by concentrating more on human problems. This quality induces one to consider Makhoba's novel as a special category in the product of the BCM culture of resistance and self-assertion. As an element of the ideological apparatuses of this culture, *On the Eve* also projects an ideal which seeks to unify and to mobilize all the oppressed groups, Africans, Coloureds and Indians, around their 'blackness' rather than as racial or ethnic groups, and build them into a formidable force of resistance.

On the LMP level, in which literary technique and form are implied, one also realises that Makhoba builds his novel around two parallel themes: the struggle of blacks against white supremacy and people's struggles against life problems. Through this mode of writing Makhoba introduces the issue of humanity as the basic problem to be addressed rather than the problems relating only to social classes or races, as it has been the case in mainstream black writing in the eighties.

However, despite the writer's sound handling of this novel in terms of plot construction, time and character portrayal, *On The Eve* is also relegated to a subordinate category of the LMP, especially in terms of its criticism of the *status quo*, and its explicitness concerning inter-racial sex. Another issue responsible for its relegation to this category is the question of the undifferentiated target audience to which one could argue the novel is directed, as an obliteration of institutionalized social stratification.

As regards General Ideology, Eagleton (1978:54) argues that just as the GMP can historically give rise to certain LMPs, so can it also give rise to a dominant ideological formation which can be described as the General Ideology (GI). However, if one follows his argument closely, especially where he states that: 'A dominant ideological formation is constituted by a relatively coherent set of "discourses" of values, representations and beliefs which, realised in apparatuses and related to the structure of material production, so reflect the experiential relations of individual subjects to their social conditions...' (ibid.), one could argue that in South Africa 'subjects' have different experiential relations relating to their social conditions. Therefore there will be more than one GI, with the one producing a dominant LMP, and the other producing a subordinated LMP, because this is the politico-linguistic sphere in which struggles are being fought out.

It follows from this argument that the GI, and consequently the aesthetic and authorial ideologies which characterize black writing, will be subordinated. This, however, is not the issue that seems to bother black writers because their target audience is the sub-

ordinated social category. What is important here is the fact that the dominant LMP is informed by the racist-capitalist GI, while the subordinated LMP is informed by the spirit of the BCM GI, which regards racism as a non-issue insofar as South African social problems are concerned. Therefore Makhoba, like other black authors, writes from within the GI which is informed by the BCM cultural ideology.

However, unlike other black writers whose works are dominated by the disruption of the lives of blacks as a result of racial oppression, Makhoba's work does not look at South Africa's problem from the black person's point of view only but from the point of view of all South Africans. He presents the notion that the demise of the system of apartheid, as proponents of the BCM argue, will mean freedom for all South Africans. Hence Makhoba's novel is not dominated by what is termed 'black experience', as will be shown when the AI and the AUIs of his novel are discussed later in this chapter, but by the experiences of all South Africans under the system of apartheid. However, owing to the fact that the BCM is opposed to both apartheid and racism, a position which Makhoba also adopts, it is logical to argue that he also writes from within the BCM-oriented GI, albeit with a different slant. Through this assertion, this study neither confirms nor denies that Makhoba is a member of the BCM. What it claims is that his novel shows signs of influence by the BCM ideology which has been instrumental in the development of black literature in South Africa.

As far as Aesthetic Ideology (AI), which is by definition the aesthetic region of the General Ideology (GI), is concerned, it

should be noted that Makhoba's work is in conflict with the conventional writings with respect to its ideological leanings. His work is the product of the cultural ideology of the BCM, which represents the subordinated LMP in relation to the racist-capitalist GI of the dominant LMP characteristic of the writings of the dominant class.

Therefore because it manifests specific characteristics within the GI, in the spirit of the BCM, *On The Eve* also bears the characteristics of the aesthetics of identification and of commitment. As an illustration of this claim it should be noted that Makhoba portrays characters and events around common problems of racial oppression as they affect blacks, on the one hand, and also, on the other, racial problems as they affect society in general and give rise to some kind of group consciousness. This phenomenon can be accounted for in terms of Eagleton's (1978:59) argument that 'AUI, then, is always GI as lived, worked and represented from a particular overdetermined standpoint within it'.

In terms of the signification function, meaning and value of the aesthetics, *On The Eve* is critical of existing power relations, thus relocating it into the school of black protest writing. This is made clear by the text's explicitness in portraying the people's day to day experiences with which they can identify, and from which they can discover roles to play in real life. For instance, the text depicts a scene around the LMP of the documentation of history, which is the insertion of biographical experience, i.e. issues relating to the writer's and the people's real life experiences, where Zola's wife is suddenly transported to the city hospital after experiencing premature labour pains. On the way to hospital their

kombi is stopped by the police, who demand passes from them and proceed to ransack it regardless of the obviously ailing 'patient'. Their ordeal is compounded when they arrive at the hospital, where the official at the reception desk ignores both them and the urgency of the matter until Zola's wife lies prostrate on the floor, groaning in pain. The following passage precisely signifies this perception of oppression from the black man's point of view:

It was close on two and a half hours since they had left the township, and they had been waiting for more than ninety minutes in this chilly, groined vault with the cold marble floor. Nothing seemed to be happening. They sat there in resigned silence, flinching at each suppressed groan that escaped from the suffering woman ... As the last stroke of eight o'clock sounded from the clock above the entrance, a short, white-haired man came out of the lift, walking towards the exit at a leisurely pace. He turned back before reaching the door, and was questioning the clerk about the waiting group of people when he was interrupted by a piercing scream from the woman. Delivery had begun (p.6-7).

In order to signify the evils of this racist attitude Makhoba goes to the extent of portraying the consequences of this behaviour. The woman gives birth to twins but one of them dies through excessive exposure to cold. This causes a wound that never heals in Zola, because whenever he looks at the surviving twin he remembers that fateful day. To him the only reason for that shabby treatment is the fact that he is black. It is this notion of 'blackness' which authors of the BCM generation use to rally their people around their



collective oppression, because their AI includes the idea that literature has a social function.

In general black writers of the eighties, of which Makhoba is one, see their literary works as performing the crucial function of making people aware of their oppression so that they can fight for their liberation. For this reason their writings, like those of Makhoba's, are characterised by the aesthetic of the message. The story makes an implicit message which, in this instance, is the elimination of causes of suffering in the black community.

Now, coming to Authorial Ideology (AuI), that is, to the effect of the author's specific mode of biographical insertion into the GI, and a category determined by social class, sex, nationality, etc., one realises that Makhoba portrays, from the black man's perspective, the ordeal of every black man's experience under apartheid rule in South Africa. He describes the squalid conditions under which blacks live and the perpetual police harassment of the oppressed. He also presents the resistance, in the form of mass meetings and stayaways, to the prevalent conditions, including the acts of the state's forces to quell resistance. It should, however, be realized that Makhoba does not present these 'realities' as raw facts but as significations of the particular historical epoch and of the social and ideological forces involved.

That this is so is made even clearer, as pointed out earlier, by Makhoba's tendency to extend the problem of South Africans beyond the confines of racial conflict. He seems to be concerned with the problems of all South Africans and consequently downplays the ele-

ment of racism at macro level. In so doing Makhoba also broadens the notion of an aesthetics of identification which is determined by 'blackness' only, to an aesthetics of identification that is determined by 'humanity'. This is not, however, an attempt to introduce a new category of the aesthetics of identification. Instead, what it does is to show that Makhoba does not consider people solely as members of different races, but also as part of one humanity. One is, therefore, inclined to believe that, Makhoba thinks that South Africa's problems can best be solved by the people on the ground rather than state officials.

Therefore the writer's method of handling his subject can also be interpreted in terms of the aesthetics of a message, largely because the statement being made is that problems generally face people as human beings, and not as members of different races, regardless of whether the problems are material, psychological or emotional.

To illustrate this point Makhoba portrays an estranged childless white couple Koos and Bertha. Bertha eventually finds the answer to her frustration in Jake, a young black man who comes to her home seeking employment. Their very first encounter unnerves Bertha, who finds herself unable to treat Jake like any other kaffir. There is a notable difference between the way she treats Doris, her 'girl', and Jake. Doris has been working for her for some time, but Bertha does not find it necessary to know about her people, her home, and whether or not Doris is married. One would think these details about her 'girl' are of no significance to her, but with Jake she finds them important.

Makhoba gives Jake certain attributes to explain Bertha's perception of this young man. On seeing him for the first time, Jake is standing confidently with his legs firmly planted on the ground. She has very strange feelings, which she cannot understand, about this newcomer. In their ensuing conversation, Jake makes short and precise statements relating to what he is capable of doing and what he would accept for his labour.

After engaging him, and giving Jake the job to paint her house, Bertha is further fascinated by the speed and neatness in which he does his work. A decisive moment comes when Jake is assigned to fit the kitchen units. As Jake sits in a squatting position, working and his muscles showing around his strong arms, Bertha's eyes fall between his legs and her emotions are charged. Makhoba uses this scene to develop his plot to link Bertha's past experiences with Koos and the cat she has found helpful in satisfying her sexual needs. Bertha then grows to admire Jake and eventually they enter into a romantic relationship. Jake becomes everything Bertha has been looking for in a man, something she has not found in Koos since their honeymoon in Mozambique. The fact that Bertha warned Jake on his arrival not to bring girlfriends becomes significant. She did this not because she was high-handed or insensitive to Jake's emotional needs. She might have perceived, and rightly so, that Jake's girlfriends would be obstacles to what she intuitively considered a logical development. Makhoba depicts here a latent jealousy which explains Bertha's relationship to Jake.

In his style of developing this issue of sexuality, one finds, in Makhoba's novel, elements of Western aesthetics which make his book

open for an inclusive readership. Bertha takes the initiative to seduce Jakes, which is something alien to African culture. In African culture men take the initiative in romantic relationships, including related activities. One would argue that this is Makhoba's attempt to show cultural differences and the need for the tolerance of cultural diversity. Makhoba, to the contrary, also depicts instances where Bertha is encouraged by her friends to dress attractively, to visit social places and to accept offers from men who date her. The fact that Bertha ignores advises from her friends, who believe that she might find a suitable man among people of her own race, is indicative of Bertha's emotional attachment to Jake and Makhoba's tendency to dispel racism as a factor in human life. To make his statement clear, Makhoba takes his story further to demonstrate the absurdity of racial laws.

From Bertha and Jake's relationship a child is born who according to the laws of South Africa could not be classified either as black or white. However, Bertha plans with Jake that she will eventually persuade Koos to adopt the child. Here one finds black and white working together, as human beings, to solve the common human problem. With these episodes Makhoba raises an important issue which signifies that problems and conflicts pertain not only to broader social relations, but also affect people emotionally and psychologically. These issues are significant in that they militate against both racial and gender oppression. They raise problems that stare an individual right in the face, compelling him or her to extend a hand to give, or to receive, assistance. It is along these lines that, in Makhoba's novel, one finds an element of inter-racial collaboration between traditional enemies which is missing in Tlali's and

Sepamla's novels. This again reiterates the idea of an aesthetics of identity based on humanity.

However, like Tlali and Sepamla, who end their novels on militant notes - 'We shall fight for our liberation!' - Makhoba's novel ends with a reference to future aggressive action, although the form of fighting is that of mass mobilisation. The novel ends with a strike, likened to the Sharpeville massacre, being planned by Dana, and with blacks resolving to defy any decree to prevent the strike from taking place. The significance of the impending strike at the end of Makhoba's novel is that there is disaster pending unless things are changed expeditiously. This manner of ending the story also relates to the novel's title, viz. *On the Eve*.

If one looks back to the beginning of the story where the delivery of the twins is narrated, at least two things come to mind. Firstly, the premature delivery of the twins signifies that liberation might come sooner than expected. However, it will not be a smooth process. There will be serious problems to overcome before this ideal is realized. Secondly, the death of one of the twins signifies the demise of the selfhood-otherness dichotomy of social existence in South Africa. After liberation, signified by the delivery of the twins, there will be only one race, the human race, in South Africa.

#### 7.5. Conclusion

The works analyzed in this chapter obviously do not cover the entire spectrum of the black protest literary tradition in South Africa. Only three novels have been analysed. However, in spite of this rel-

actively narrow selection, these works perform the crucial function of demonstrating significant features in this literary tradition. These include arguments concerning various subordinated modes of production vis-a-vis dominant modes of production. The dialectical relationship between these modes of production has led to peculiar features in the black literary tradition, characterised by the undifferentiating relationship between the author and the audience, the tendency to document history, the non-elitist style, the aesthetics of commitment, of identification and of the message.

Another important factor that has contributed to these peculiar features in black literature is that the BCM black writers claim that they had to start from nowhere, because, as a consequence of the severe censorship laws which had 'outlawed' writings by earlier black writers (see Staffrider Vol.7 No. 3&4, 1988 p.303-309), there was no available literary tradition upon which they could build. This state of affairs virtually forced them to start experimenting with new literary forms, because even the material from the *Drum* and *Journalism* schools were not readily available to South Africans.

These novels therefore, together with the other black writings considered in this study, belong to this new trend of writing which can be described as follows:

They have a more direct, less mediating relationship with the forces of history and politics than western [sic] novels, seeking, indeed, a much more interventionist role than their counterparts in the West would dare to lay a claim to, and seeking also access (through indirect transmission via the

whole consciousness and world view of readers who in South Africa are integrated in daily life with the illiterate mass) to a mass audience - a mass audience already receptive to literature through its exposure to street and community theatre and oral poetry (Watts 1989:248).

These books also provide some reasons for why and how black literature has evolved in a particular direction as pointed out in the following statement:

Whereas the western novel has developed from tracing the individual's search for identity and values to the point where the individual disappeared into the mists of existentialism or modernism, with only sporadic attempts to produce a novel with a collective subject (one thinks of the revolutionary community of Malroux's *Condition Humaine*), as abortive as parallel political developments, in South Africa the concatenation of a long-term revolutionary struggle and a heroic essay at constructing an appropriate literary tradition is resulting in the development not of a new novel form, but of a new range of novel forms which have certain elements in common while allowing for difference of approach (Watts 1989:248).

Judging from the novels analyzed above, this new range of novel forms is characterized by three features: Firstly, it has an overt political context which has been made possible by the existing social environment, in which the highly politicised South African society makes politics a way of life. Therefore whatever the black author produces is political as s/he herself/himself has been pro-

duced by this politicised environment. Secondly, it blends democratic values with socialist ideology, which espouses communalist values. While democratic values allow for free activity of writing and reading, the socialist ideology tends to encourage the author to be accountable to his audience by relating his works to their way of life. Thirdly, it has autobiographical features of the kind that record the deeds of a group rather than of individuals (cf. Watts 1989:248-249). In other words the notion of selfhood is realized via group identity.

To go again over the debate concerning the digression of black literature from the mainstream of so-called 'high art' in African literary tradition in indigenous languages and in English, is not desirable here, except to re-state that black protest literary production has been a subordinated mode of production in terms of its oppositional ideological attitude to the dominant modes of production. However, to state that black literature has been subordinated is not to say that it has not made any impact in the literary world. As a matter of fact, it has captured the interests of both local and international communities.

In spite of its 'inferior' status as ascribed by the elite, what is significant here is the fact that black literature has succeeded in 'speaking' for itself and has been 'listened' to. Were this not the case, nothing would have been said about black literature, and black literature has made its mark whether it was warmly received, or whether it was given a cold shoulder. The fact of the matter is that it has been able to make its presence felt by engendering a debate among numerous interested parties.



This claim is attested to by the fact that numerous scholars, both locally and abroad, have produced a considerable number of research works on this subject. One would think here about scholars such as Mbulelo Mzamane, Njabulo Ndebele, Ian Steadman, Nadine Gordimer, E'skia Mphahlele, Kelwyne Sole, Jane Watts and others who have contributed immensely to the writing and study of black protest literature through publications of various kinds - conference papers, research articles, and even research projects such as theses. It is partly the contribution of these scholars which has made it possible to explore various critical tendencies, and to discover the one that best articulates the features of black literature as a different tradition.

From these sources it has been established that black literature, with its aesthetics of commitment and of identification, is engaged in the struggle for liberation to redress social ills. Therefore the choice of its line of action is determined by existing material conditions. Consequently these conditions make it imperative for the writer and the reader to become partners in this liberatory process of blacks. Therefore:

There is now no question of writers, as manipulators, attempting to work upon and influence the attitudes of their readers, for in South African novels their readers are in effect the subject of the book, their actions are the book's content. For they too are only individuals in the great collective of the struggle, participators rather than instigators, and it is their self-identification with the people, the processes, the

development of consciousness they write about that gives them their authority (Watts 1989: 249).

This assertion also attests to the 'Participatory LMP' which characterize the black writing under consideration, and which, by implication, gives rise to the aesthetics of identification. This mode of writing, according to Mutloatse (1981:6), has been drawn from the 'Communal GMP' of the traditional African society where everything, be it birth or death, is a communal affair. Analogously all social production is a communal production in which every member of society is a participant. It is from this deeply rooted 'Africanness' that black writing derives its GMP, LMP, GI, etc.

Therefore the AI that has developed within the GI of the BCM culture of self-assertion and identification is that it is inappropriate for one to attempt to write from outside one's own circumstances and from outside the experiences of one's people. The black author sees himself as bound by his relationship to the community and he remains accountable and responsible to his audience, which implies that he is bound to the aesthetics of commitment. Black literature is conceived as having a moral duty to the oppressed, and the legitimacy of black literature depends on its remaining a collective cultural product, enabling the black community to raise itself from its position of subordination.

Michael Vaughan comments on the 'staffrider' figure, Magawulana, as symbolizing black literature:

The 'staffrider' is a humble/popular figure, who does not rise

above the level of the people, in terms of any social attributes or qualifications. This is particularly stressed in the presentation of Magawulana, whose essential attribute is that of generosity. Magawulana is essentially a helper of those in need: he shares his wisdom of experience absolutely spontaneously with anyone who requires its benefits. In this way, he is the embodiment of the virtues of community, of communalism (in Gugelberger 1985:211).

This passage precisely summarizes black literature's non-elitist character and mode of functioning. It concentrates on the 'basic condition of the black population as a whole - a condition of poverty and oppression - while at the same time representing, in some sense, a victory over those conditions' (ibid. p.203), something which is accomplished by the authors in relating their AI to the GI and the LMP.

It is for this reason that Eagleton's model was selected for analyzing black literature. It provides not only a comprehensive framework of ideological significations of a literary text but also the ideological link between text and history. His approach affords a unique opportunity of linking textual aspects as significations ideologically to history, as is made clear in the following statement which is repeated for the sake of clarity:

That the text is in a certain sense self-producing is ... a valid claim. Yet the notion that the text is simply a ceaselessly self-signifying practice, without source or object, stands four square with the bourgeois mythology of individual

freedom. Such freedom is not mythological because it does not, after a fashion, exist, but because it exists as the precise effect of certain determinants which enforce their own self-concealment. The text's 'freedom', similarly, is the precise effect of its ineluctable relation to history, the phenomenal form of its real necessity ... It is, however, intrinsic to the character of literary discourse that it does not take history as its immediate object, but works instead upon ideological forms and materials of which history is, as it were, the concealed underside (Eagleton 1978:73-74).

Applying Eagleton's thesis to the analysis of a literature nurtured by a revolutionary GI of racial class conflict enables one to identify not only social formations but ideological contradictions as well. These contradictions are embedded in the systematic relationship between the edifice of the structures of the text as signs and the structures of ideology mediating between the text and history. For instance, in the three novels analysed above, characters and events relate to a particular historical epoch which is represented in the BCM ideology. As explained earlier, events in the story portray social struggles against racism and oppression.

Similarly, if one looks at Amuta's approach, one realises that he considers the author as a mediating factor between the literary event or the literary text and the history which informs the text. If one therefore concedes that the author is socially produced in the same way as the text, this then means that the relationship between the GI and the AI and AuI ideology still holds. In other words, if history (as the bearer of the GMP) is the informing sub-

ject giving rise to certain textual forms - the expression of the text's content, i.e. the LMP - then the BCM-produced GI will still give rise to the AI and the AuI that are peculiar to black writing.

Amuta's (1989:81) main argument against this contention is that 'African history is the primary condition for the existence and understanding of modern African literature especially since the contact with the West.' For Amuta it does not matter whether one approaches literature

...either in terms of definite stages in the historical transformation of Africa or in terms of the local variations of the historical challenges which African literature has had to grapple with. Either way, the critical intelligence cannot avoid the inevitable conclusion that modern African literature is a historically determined and complex admixture of art forms marked by a reactive stance towards major historical experiences (or misfortunes) such as slavery, colonialism, cultural emasculation, political corruption, apartheid, class antagonism and imperialism (ibid. p.81).

Following this assertion he goes on to argue that 'Literature and art have a primary commitment to freedom and can only thrive in a free state' (ibid. p.81). Although Amuta's argument is not as explicit as Eagleton's in relation to the various categories of ideology, both the aesthetics of commitment and of identification are implied as some of the distinctive features of African literature and black protest literature in this respect. Also what is notable is his insistence on the relationship between literature and history,

which in this case has been described as documentation of reality. Finally, it can be argued that most of the arguments in Amuta's theoretical principles have been and can be explained in terms of Eagleton's model.

## CHAPTER 8

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The basic aim of this dissertation has been to explore material conditions that have given rise to the emergence of black protest literature in South Africa. To achieve this aim the history of the emergence in South Africa of African literatures in indigenous languages, and African literature in English, has been explored in order to establish factors which account for the void in African literary traditions in South Africa, which void had to be filled by black protest literature.

This quest for the discovery and identification of trends in the historical developments, in South Africa, of African literatures in indigenous languages, and African literature in English has necessitated a search for an appropriate critical tool for unravelling the complexities relating to the emergence of black protest literature in South Africa. Marxism, being a theory of both social and literary analysis, has been found to be the most appropriate critical tool, and it has yielded very useful insights.

In the course of this study several views from broader Marxist theory were investigated as deemed necessary. For instance, the classical Marxist argument that literature as part of the superstructure is in the final analysis determined by the base structure initiated a discussion in motion which reached the conclusion that literature should be analyzed in terms of existing material conditions (cf. Marx & Engels). However, in this study this view was found wanting

in its application, firstly, because Marx and Engels did not develop a comprehensive literary theory and, secondly, because the classical Marxist view does not recognize the fact that the superstructure consists of semi-autonomous formations. Consequently, the classical Marxist view cannot completely account for the influences which components of the superstructure have on one another.

After considering the classical Marxist view this study went on to consider vulgar Marxism, which views literature as a 'true' reflection of society. Central to this view is the assumption that there is a relationship of one to one correspondence between the literary text and social reality. Seeing that this assumption amounts to a reductionist approach and, as such, does not acknowledge the autonomy of the text, in that it views literature as a reflection of something else, viz. society (cf. Craig), it was consequently abandoned. The vulgar Marxist view was also found wanting in its application and consequently could not be adopted as the most appropriate approach to the study of the literature under consideration.

The search for a more appropriate approach then continued via a consideration of the structuralist Marxist argument, which holds that the superstructure constitutes various social formations, or ISAs, such as the educational, the cultural, the religious, etc. It was established that the dominant ISA may be used by the dominant class to influence other ISAs, in so doing imposing its hegemony on the subordinate class. Therefore literature, as part of the cultural ISA, may be influenced in the same manner (cf. Althusser). Although Althusser's approach in terms of his definition of ideology, and its dialectical relationship with other formations provides useful prin-



ciples which could be efficiently applied in this study, Eagleton's approach, which views the text in terms of its ideological relationship to history, was ultimately found to be more appropriate.

However, before adopting Eagleton's approach, the views of African Marxists, such as Ngara and Amuta, were considered. This study established that Ngara's approach, which distinguishes three categories of ideology, viz. the dominant ideology, the aesthetic ideology and the authorial ideology, is to a large extent accommodated in Eagleton's approach. Ngara does not, however, carry the notion of the text as the signifier as far as Eagleton does. In this respect he tends to compress what Eagleton terms the General Mode of Production, the Literary Mode of Production, and General Ideology into a single category, namely, the Dominant Ideology. Chidi Amuta, on the other hand, does not consider ideology to be a link between the text and history. Rather, he considers the author, who anyway is socially produced in the same way as the text, as the mediating factor between history and the text. Amuta views history as the informing subject of the text, while Eagleton views it as the ultimate signified of the text.

Seeing that the literary text is essentially not the representation of the 'real', but rather its signification, this study has adopted Eagleton's approach. His view that literature is ideologically linked to history and that the significatory function of the elements of the literary text are ideologically interpreted was explored. The last-mentioned contention has been extensively used in analyzing the literary texts selected for this study and has yielded very useful insights in terms of the GMP, the LMP, the GI, the AI and the AuI as manifest in black protest writing in South Africa.

From these categories of ideology certain distinctive features of this literature, such as the tendency to document history, the aesthetics of commitment, of identification and of oppression, have been discovered and explained.

With the help of some of these Marxist theories, particularly that of Eagleton, a comprehensive account of the history of the emergence of black protest literature in South Africa has been presented in this study. This account has considered the material conditions that gave rise to the emergence of African literature in indigenous languages, and African literature in English and also the development of a distinction between African protest literature, on the one hand, and black protest literature, on the other. The effect of liberal ideology on material conditions as one of the precipitating factors that facilitated the emergence of black protest literature in South Africa was also considered.

The significance of this study lies in the fact that the emergence of black protest literature in South Africa in the late seventies stimulated vigorous debates both in literary production and in literary criticism. As a result the issues of authentic black literature and authentic black literary aesthetics in South Africa can no longer be swept under the carpet. It has since become essential to examine these issues seriously in the study of black protest literature. Recent developments in black protest writing in South African have provided important insights into both the cultural and social developments in South Africa.

Black protest literature, it has been argued, represents a branch of both African literature and African literary criticism in South Af-

rica. This branching off is indicative of the fact that there were certain needs of the black people that were not addressed and could not be fulfilled, in South Africa, within the previous African literary traditions in indigenous languages and in African literature in English. The constraints placed on these literatures have not enabled these traditions to cope with pressing social and political changes in South Africa in order to fulfil the aspirations of the indigenous people, in particular, and those of other oppressed communities in general. There was therefore a need to found a cultural tradition that would cope with the demographic realities of change in South Africa.

The founding, in the late sixties, of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa provided, through its policy of self-assertion, a vehicle for the development of such a tradition. This development not only had political implications but had cultural implications as well. Within this movement the reference 'black' came to be associated with all the oppressed communities in South Africa, whether African, Coloured or Indian, and in this way the scope of black protest literature in South was broadened to include the writings of all oppressed communities. From this development then also emerged South African black protest literature, which not only challenged existing social relations and literary principles, but also attempted, by establishing its own literary principles, to replace the existing social order. However, for reasons stated earlier in this study, it has not been possible to include writings from all ethnical groups referred to as blacks.

While it might have appeared, in other circles, to have been merely a radical move, the emergence of black protest literature in South

Africa has brought to the surface critical questions which would not otherwise have been addressed. Black literature has forced a debate in which questions of black and/or African literary traditions in South Africa can be more enthusiastically addressed. The movement, as a logical process, towards the assimilation of African literature, in indigenous languages and in English, into the imperialist culture would have continued unchallenged. African literatures in South Africa would have, to a large extent, remained mere imitations of Western literature, with no definition and status of their own. It has been through the emergence of black protest literature in South Africa that the assimilation process was finally halted.

This resistance to co-optation was, as a matter of fact, greatly influenced by the realization that Africans (and other racially-oppressed groups) in South Africa did not have an identity of their own. They had been defined on the basis of something other than themselves. They were called either non-Europeans or non-whites. Similarly, such perceptions also characterized the manner in which African arts and culture were conceptualized. They were perceived merely as something different from the arts and culture of the European, and not as separate entities with particular characteristics of their own. The Black Consciousness Movement therefore set out to establish and re-establish African identity and cultural identity. Thus the use of 'black' (not 'African') as the opposite of 'white' has been found to be a more appropriate formulation for addressing this question of identity. The black man is different from the white man and their cultures are different, because they are nurtured by different circumstances.

While cultural diversity is in itself not an anomaly it has been

made anomalous in South Africa because one cultural group has regarded differences as justification for its domination of other cultural groups. What black protest literature seeks to establish is the acknowledgement that cultural differences do exist and will continue to exist as long as there are structural social differences. Consequently, where structural social differences exist then there will be cultural differences, and under normal circumstances one would expect cultural co-existence, not cultural domination.

It is on this basis that serious considerations of the mode of production and relations of production have become crucial in the study of black protest literature. Once relations of production have been normalised, social relations, and subsequently cultural production, should become normalized. The unqualified acceptance of black protest literature as a distinct literary tradition would attest to this fact. Armstrong's (quoted by Bishop 1971:2) mediating view on a similar subject seems to support this statement:

What is required is a frank admission on the part of the critics that we are here working with a new literature that will shape its own forms, dictate its own diction, express its own values. What is needed, both from here [i.e., the West] and from Africa is a determined exploration, by the most highly-trained people, of the nature of this new literature.

While Armstrong is making a valid point he is, however, vague concerning the nature of the training, access to such training, and who should assume responsibility for such training. These considerations would necessarily determine whether the desired objective would be attained or not. Once a frank admission has been made that we are,

as is argued in this study, working with a new literature, the stage will be set for the normalization of cultural co-existence in South Africa.

There are several possibilities by means of which this normalization could be achieved. One is that black protest literature will continue to proceed along its path of redressing social and cultural anomalies, gradually attracting support from the previously-held African literary traditions until the latter disappear. Another is that the previously-held African literary traditions will be so dramatically transformed as to be truly representative of the aspirations of all the South African people and thus merge with the black protest literary tradition. Yet another possibility will be the emergence of an entirely new literary tradition or trend in South African literature, a trend which will be representative of cultural existence in the envisaged new South Africa:

We see ... a completely non-racial society. We don't believe, for instance, in the so-called guarantees for minority rights, because guaranteeing minority rights implies recognition of portions of the community on a race basis. We believe that in our country there shall be no minority; just the people (Biko quoted by Motlhabi 1984:120).

It would be naive, however, to try to imagine that the new South African social order will be without contradictions. Whereas the struggle against apartheid South Africa has been for national liberation, a post-apartheid class struggle is likely to emerge, unless an economic dispensation with a 'healing' effect is adopted. It is likely that a literary tradition or traditions will develop which

will reflect a non-racist ideological conflict between the bourgeois ruling class and the proletarian working class. In this conflict the working class will be agitating for a fair slice of the cake, while the bourgeoisie will be trying to preserve the privileges of the ruling class.

Another crucial development will involve the present English and Afrikaans literary traditions. It remains to be seen whether these literatures will continue to represent Western interests and racial supremacy, or whether they will become part of a broader South African national literature. The direction these two literatures will take will have immense impact on the definition of literature(s) in South Africa. It will either narrow or broaden the definition of South African literature and even that of African literature.

It seems therefore that a consideration of the question of aesthetics can make a substantial contribution towards resolving the problem of literary study in South Africa. If it is agreed that 'aesthetics' is reminiscent of, and develops within, certain social contexts or modes of production, then there is the possibility, unless there is deliberate resistance, of logically finding common ground in aesthetics. Furthermore, if the process of change is allowed to take its course it will mean that South African literary studies will possess one of the richest aesthetic approaches in the world.

To this end materialism, as an aesthetic tool, is, and will remain, crucial in any future social and cultural developments. Much as materialism has been used in this study to provide insights into problematic cultural issues, so it will be necessary, in the future,

to use it to identify similar or related problems, and to provide insights that will point the way forward.

Black protest literature in South Africa has already demonstrated that a move towards the recognition of various cultures and cultural co-existence is not only desirable but also unavoidable. The fact that black protest literature has drawn into its ranks people from all persuasions, in this way breaking down cultural 'barriers', is another indication that such a development is possible.

Furthermore, the awarding of the 1991 Nobel Prize for Literature to Nadine Gordimer, one of the campaigners for black literature in South Africa, testifies to this fact. While it is for her own writings that Gordimer has been honoured, the fact that she has always been associated with projects for the promotion of black literature in South Africa suggests that the honour also has implications for this literature, and that black literature has the potential for acting as a vehicle for the normalization of cultural co-existence and social relations in South Africa.

While making this optimistic claim it should, however, also be remembered that there was disquiet in some quarters of Africa, and beyond, when in 1986 the Nobel prize for Literature was awarded to Wole Soyinka. One criticism was based on the fact that his style of writing manifested Western leanings (cf. Tapping 1990). Another was that it is the West that reserves the right to bestow such a prize - yet another indication of the perpetual domination of Africa by the West (cf. Sole 1983).

However, Gates (Jr) (in Cohen 1989:339), in mitigation of this con-



tention, claims that Soyinka was aware of the controversy surrounding the bestowal of the Nobel prize and therefore used his laureate speech, which he dedicated to Nelson Mandela who was then still in prison, to challenge the circumstances of this 'nobel' gesture:

Soyinka was most concerned to analyze the implications of African artistry and intellect being acknowledged before the white world, at long last, through this curious ritual called the Nobel Prize, endowed by the West's King of Dynamite, and weaponry. Soyinka refused to address his black audience; rather, he addressed his white auditors and indeed the racist intellectual tradition of Europe as exemplified by Hegel, Hume, Locke, Voltaire, Frobenius, Kant, and others, who 'were unabashed theorists of racial superiority and denigrators of the African history and being'.

This statement is an extract from Wole Soyinka's speech referred to above which was also an appeal to the West to change its attitude towards African literature.

Nevertheless one is inclined to believe, despite sentiments to the contrary, that the according of the honour to a black writer demonstrated that the Western literary world had finally taken notice of the contribution African and black literature was making to the literary world. Because the Western world has come this far in acknowledging African arts one is inclined to believe that the era of protest against Western imperialism is also drawing to a close. However, what still needs to be acknowledged is the fact that

...when we borrow an alien language to sculpt or paint in, we

must begin by co-opting the entire properties of that language as correspondences to properties in our matrix of thought and expression" (Soyinka as quoted by Gates (Jr) in Cohen 1989:341).

This means that the borrowed language should be informed by the African language of the writer. African writers in general, and black writers in South Africa in particular, seem to have taken cognisance of these imperatives because their works are to a large extent infused with the African idiom. Therefore, if the recognition of Soyinka's and Gordimer's contributions to the literary world was not a fluke, one has reasons to be optimistic about the future of black literature in South Africa.

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