

AFRICAN-LANGUAGE LITERATURE: TOWARDS A  
MULTIPLE-READING APPROACH

by

NANGA RAYMOND RASELEKOANE

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PROMOTER: Professor M J Mafela

CO-PROMOTER: Dr M L Bopape

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## DECLARATION

**Student No.: 06708811**

I declare that **AFRICAN-LANGUAGE LITERATURE: TOWARDS A MULTIPLE-READING APPROACH** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete reference.

.....

DATE: 15 June 2010

(NR RASELEKOANE)

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“Muthu ndi muthu nga vhañwe vhathu.”

“Motho ke motho ka batho.”

“Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu.”

“Munhu hi munhu hi van'wana.”

“A person is person through other persons.”

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the following people:

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## ABSTRACT

This research is premised on Armstrong's (1990:7) argument that 'every interpretive approach reveals something only by disguising something else, which a competing method with a different assumption might disclose.' This statement indicates that preference or marginalisation of some literary theories impedes progress in African-language literary criticism because different literary theories tend to focus on one or a few selected aspects of a work of art. This flows from the assumption that no literary theory can unearth all aspects and meanings of a literary text.

This research comes against rigidity, conservatism and narrow-mindedness of those literary critics and scholars who refuse to open up and embrace literary theories which they are opposed to. The research is an attempt to demonstrate the benefit of flexibility and ability to accommodate even those opposing literary views that can make positive contribution in the field of African-language literary criticism. The research further calls for pragmatism, tolerance and co-existence of opposing literary views for the benefit of progress in the field of African-language literary criticism. This research is an acknowledgement of the fact that no literary theory is infallible because all literary theories have their own strong and weak points.

In this research, a survey of literary approaches commonly applied in African-language criticism is conducted. This is followed by an analysis of a Tshivenda novel (i.e. ***A si ene***) from different literary angles to prove that every literary theory can help to unmask a particular meaning of a literary text which no any other literary theory can do. For example, the intrinsic literary approaches will, most certainly, unlock the meaning of a literary text differently from the way the extrinsic literary theories do because diverse literary approaches focus on different aspects or elements of a work of art. This research is an endorsement of the argument that through multiple-reading of a literary text, readers' understanding of the same literary text is broadened and deepened.

**Key words:** Literary criticism, literary approaches, intrinsic literary approaches, extrinsic literary approaches, eclectic literary approaches, literary text, African-language literature, African-language literary criticism, world-view, ideology and multiple-reading.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

This research has been inspired by the limitations imposed on the extent of meaning of African-language literary texts by the widespread biased application of either one or selected literary approaches, in African-language literary criticism. This research therefore intends to expose the challenges posed by the inclination towards one or selected literary approaches in the study of works of art. The research represents a bold move to advocate a change of focus from a single-sided approach in the field of African-language criticism to a multi-pronged literary approach in the study of African-language literary texts. This argument is also echoed and endorsed by the 17<sup>th</sup> century great philosopher, Descartes (1969:106), who argues that ‘the diversity of our opinions does not proceed from some men being more rational than others, but solely from the fact that our thoughts pass through diverse channels ...’ From Descartes’ statement, the conclusion can be drawn that there is an emphasis on acknowledging and embracing opinions of other people in order to make a sound judgement in the interpretation of any issue being analysed.

The call against a one-sided study of literature in terms of literary approaches emerges as a result of the assumption that different literary opinions, as advanced by various critics and scholars, are greatly useful in the explication of full and multiple meanings which are deeply embedded in any work of art. This research also attempts to highlight the important role played by the context or world-view of a work of art. This stems from the fact that the concept 'world-view' is taken to be a great player in the conception of any literary criticism. Context or world-view helps to explain the premise upon which a particular literary criticism is predicated.

This research, therefore, attempts to demonstrate that the field of African-language literary criticism can be greatly enhanced by means of a multiple-reading of a work of art. Thus a full understanding of a work of art cannot be realised by focusing on one or a few selected literary approaches but by making use of different literary

approaches.

This research is premised on the assumption that no literary idea, viewpoint or perception is absolute in the field of literary criticism. This argument emphasises the point that no literary theory is infallible. In other words, the thrust of this research centres on the argument that every literary theory has its strong and weak points. This research takes a stand against any form of rigidity and narrow-mindedness in the domain of literary criticism because such an attitude often works against progress in this field. This research argues for more openness and flexibility in the application of literary approaches in the evaluation of a work of art.

The research calls for literary critics to embrace different literary views or approaches in the field of literary criticism. From this research, an argument is advanced that some meanings of a literary text cannot be explicated by just using one literary theory. Therefore, there cannot be a full grasp of the meaning of a literary text being evaluated if other literary theories are not used. This is so because literary theories or approaches often focus on one aspect or meaning of a work of art. Accommodation of other literary theories or approaches in order to lay bare all other meanings of a literary text is thus permissible. In other words, full meaning and/ or multiplicity of meanings of a work of art can be arrived at by accommodating, embracing and applying diverse literary theories or approaches. Every literary theory has its good and bad points. The co-existence of divergent literary theories or approaches must be accommodated because this is vital for a multiple-reading of a work of art. This argument is also backed by Armstrong (1990:7) who states that 'every interpretive approach reveals something only by disguising something else, which a competing method with a different assumption might disclose.' This means that opposing literary theories or approaches focus on different aspects of a work of art and thus unearth and highlight different or multiple meanings that exist in a literary text. For example, the same literary text can be analysed from a structuralist point of view, or a Russian formalist point of view, or a Marxist materialist point of view or from a feminist point of view. The use of a different literary theory or approach in each case will often focus on a different aspect of a work of art and also unearth a different meaning, thus leading to a multiplicity of meanings of the same literary text. This argument further demonstrates that the use of different literary theories benefits the field of literary

criticism as it leads to a full and deeper understanding of a work of art.

Once more, to stress the significance of reading a work of art from diverse literary theories, one can say that structuralist literary theorists may not achieve what Marxist literary theorists can achieve when using Marxist literary theories, and vice versa. It is, therefore, vital to stress that every literary theory is important because it focuses on a particular aspect of a work of art which no other literary theory can do. In short, this research advocates openness and flexibility in the use of literary theories in the evaluation of African-language literature with the sole purpose of bringing about a deeper meaning of an African-language literary text.

## **1.2 The statement of the problem**

The main focus of this research is on the problem of an over-reliance of African-language literary critics on one or a few selected literary approaches in the evaluation of African-language literature and their exclusion or marginalisation of some literary approaches. This research tries to address the above problem by defining and describing literary criticism in general and African-language literary criticism in particular, identifying categories of literary approaches (i.e. intrinsic, extrinsic and eclectic literary approaches) that are used and those that are under-utilised or sidelined in the evaluation of African-language literature. The research also aims at identifying and debating the role and influence of ideology in the evaluation of African language-literature and the multiple-reading of a Tshivenḁa literary text (i.e. **A si ene**). This text has been particularly selected for the purpose of demonstrating that the accommodation and use of different literary approaches, and not the exclusion of some literary theories, will undoubtedly benefits African-language literary criticism.

The major problem highlighted in this research is that of the preference for certain literary theories over others. This problem leads to a serious lack in the field of African-language literary criticism because many other meanings in a literary text are left unearthed because some literary theories are neglected or under-utilised in the evaluation of African-language literature. The following are some of the research questions that arise from the problem unpacked in this research:

- Which literary approaches are predominantly used in African-language literary criticism?
- Which literary approaches are under-utilised in African-language literary criticism?
- What is the role of ideology in the choice of literary approaches in African-language literary criticism?
- What are the factors that determine the preference or under-utilisation or marginalisation of some literary approaches and their impact on African-language literary criticism?
- What are the advantages of using different literary approaches in African-language literary criticism?

The preference for certain literary approaches and the sidelining of others tend to stifle development in African-language literary criticism. Thus the preference and exclusion of some literary theories leave certain meanings of a literary text not unearthed since the preferred literary approaches may not be able to unearth other meanings which lie hidden in a work of art.

The thrust of this research is aimed at showing that openness and flexibility in the application of diverse literary approaches can bring about tremendous positive gains in the field of African-language literary criticism. Most importantly, an explication of the research problem shows the extent to which a multiplicity of meanings of a literary text can be unearthed by accommodating and using a variety of literary approaches in the evaluation of African-language literature. It can be argued that it is only through flexibility and openness to diverse literary approaches, as well as the use of different literary approaches in the evaluation of African-language literature, that more or different meanings and a deeper understanding of a literary text can be realised. In other words, the use of various literary approaches in the evaluation of African-language literature will bring about a broader and deeper understanding of a work of art.

### **1.3 Aim and objectives of the research**

The main aim of this research is to discuss the problem of preference and/ or marginalisation or under-utilisation of some literary approaches in the evaluation of African-language literature.

This research further seeks to demonstrate the extent to which inclusion and use of the less preferred literary approaches can promote and enhance the field of African-language literary criticism. The above-mentioned problem is also addressed through discussion and application of both preferred and marginalised literary approaches in African-language literary criticism. This exercise is done in line with Armstrong's (1990:7) argument that 'every interpretive approach reveals something only by disguising something else, which a competing method with different assumptions might disclose.' Armstrong's statement is important for the purpose of this research because his point of departure is an argument for openness and flexibility in the application of different literary approaches in the evaluation of African-language literature. His notion is seen as being absolutely necessary for the enriching of the field of African-language literary criticism through the promotion of a multiple-reading of a work of art. A multiple-reading approach undoubtedly leads to a broader and deeper understanding of a literary text, mainly because such an exercise unearths a multiplicity of meanings that lie hidden in a literary text.

In view of the above stated aim, this research aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To determine and highlight dominant literary approaches in African-language literary criticism
- To determine and highlight under-utilised literary approaches in African-language literary criticism
- To identify and discuss the influence of ideology in the choice and under-utilisation of certain literary approaches
- To identify and discuss factors that stifle the development of African-language literary criticism
- To demonstrate the advantage of openness and flexibility by accommodating

and using different literary approaches in African-language literary criticism.

#### 1.4 Significance of the research

The research is aimed at demonstrating that rigidity or conservatism by most African-language literary critics can stifle or retard progress in the evaluation of African-language literature. This is the case because African-language literary critics tend to concentrate on one or a few selected literary approaches in the evaluation of African-language literature. As a result of lack of openness, flexibility and tolerance of literary views by African-language literary critics, some literary approaches were preferred while others were deliberately marginalised or ignored. The significance of this research is that it reminds African-language literary critics to heed Armstrong's (1990:23-24) advice that 'any procedure of interpretation is a set of possibilities for understanding.'

The research is further designed to show that openness and the ability to embrace opposing and new literary ideas can benefit this field of study tremendously. If, for example, a number of literary approaches are used to interpret one particular literary text, this will lead to the discovery or 'unearthing' of many meanings of the same literary text. Once this happens, readers' understanding of that particular literary text will be broadened and deepened. In other words, flexibility, openness, tolerance and use of different literary approaches in the evaluation of African-language literature will help to discover 'multiple meanings' lying hidden in a work of art and deepen the reader's understanding of that particular work of art.

To highlight the significance of the multiple-reading of a literary text, different literary approaches will be used to analyse one Tshivenda literary text, namely, ***A si ene*** (a novel). Once more, the reason for this exercise is to demonstrate that an analysis of one and the same literary text from different literary angles brings about different meanings of the same literary text. More or diverse literary approaches focus on different aspects or elements of a work of art.

## **1.5 Rationale**

The rationale of this research is based on the assumption that no literary idea, viewpoint or perception is absolute in the field of literary criticism. This argument emphasises that no literary theory is infallible. Every literary theory has its strong and weak points. This research counters any form of rigidity and narrow-mindedness in the domain of literary criticism since such practice works against progress in this field. The research argues for more openness and flexibility in the application of literary approaches in the evaluation of a work of art. It calls for literary critics to embrace different literary views or approaches in the field of literary criticism.

In other words, a full meaning and/ or a multiplicity of meanings of a work of art can be arrived at by accommodating and embracing different literary theories or approaches. The co-existence of divergent literary theories or approaches is vital for a multiple-reading of a work of art. This argument is also backed by Armstrong (1990:23) who states that 'any procedure of interpretation is a set of possibilities for understanding ...' This means that different literary approaches focus on different aspects of a work of art. In this way different literary approaches will certainly unearth and highlight different or multiple meanings that exist in a literary text.

## **1.6 Definition and explanations of terms and concepts**

This research also entails definitions and explanations of operational concepts such as oral African literature, oral African literary criticism, African-language literature, African-language literary criticism/ African literary criticism and world-view as applied in their context in this research. This means that these concepts will be given a special meaning that may only apply in the context of this research.

### **1.6.1 Oral literature**

For the purpose of this research, the concept of oral African literature will be used to refer to those stories, poems, songs, dramatic performances, etc. that were passed from one generation to another by word of mouth. This will also include those that are now recorded in writing in order to preserve them, although they were originally oral

in nature.

To Gerard (1983:12-13), traditional African literature is oral art or oral literature. Meanwhile, according to Chinweizu et al. (1980:2), 'Pio Zirimu and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o prefer to use the term orature instead of traditional African literature.' They reserve the term literature for all those works of art that are written. The concept of orature which is preferred by Zirimu, Ngungi and d'Almeida seems to be a more reasonable choice. However, for the purpose of this research, the term oral African literature will be used instead of orature. The reason for using this term stems from the problem which is better explained in Irene d'Almeida's (1987:257) words as follows:

... the word 'traditional' is often used to describe things of the past. Yet, oral forms are still alive in contemporary Africa; they are still abundantly produced and are constantly modified and adapted to suit the demands of new contemporary situations and audiences.

The above argument by d'Almeida highlights the fact that when one speaks of traditional literature, it is immediately associated with that which is immutable and lacks dynamism. The reason for not using orature is that the latter fails to acknowledge the written mode of these oral literary forms in this era.

#### 1.6.2 Oral African literary criticism

Another term which is often used in this research which needs to be clarified is the preference of some African literary scholars to call it traditional African literary criticism. In this research, the term oral African literary criticism will be used. It may also be used interchangeably with the term oral African literary criticism. In cases where this term is not used, it will be referred to as criticism of oral African literature. The use of the word 'oral' in this instance is accounted for in the same way as the use of this word in **1.6.1**.

#### 1.6.3 African-language literature

The term African-language literature will be used in this research to refer to those modern works of art (i.e. poetry, prose and drama) that are written in African

languages spoken in South Africa. This has been done to distinguish them from those 'literatures' that may be African but written in English, Afrikaans or any language other than African languages spoken in South Africa.

#### 1.6.4 African-language literary criticism

In this thesis, evaluation of African language-literature will be used interchangeably with criticism of African-language literature or African-language literary criticism. In the context of this research, these phrases will be used to refer to the criticism of African literature written in African languages spoken in South Africa. This will not include criticism of African literature written in English, Afrikaans, French, or Portuguese, etc.

#### 1.6.5 World-view as a premise of literary criticism

The term world-view can be used interchangeably with terms such as context, background, milieu and paradigm. Wherever any of these three concepts are used in this research, such a word is used to refer to a world-view. However, what is important concerning the concept of world-view is to determine the role and influence of a world-view in the evaluation of a work of art. The following extract by Amuta (1989:6) paves way for the discussion of a world-view as a premise of literary criticism:

... human societies have an inherent specificity which necessitates that ideas for their understanding and engineering be made relevant to their immediate needs at specific moments. As a vital component of the critical enterprise, the interpretations of literary products of a given society can only command validity if they are rooted in theoretical paradigms that either organically derive from or are most directly relevant to the objective conditions of life in the society in question.

Amuta's assertion above shows that there can be no criticism without a base. The latter serves as a point of reference of any literary criticism. It serves to inform the criticism which is intended to be used in studying literature produced in that context. World-view is indispensable in determining the nature of criticism of any literature. Amuta (1989:9) further contends that 'the experiences which constitute the content of a work of literature are mediations of processes in the macro-society which we refer

to as context ...' Following on this argument by Amuta, one can argue that, since it is the situation in which people find themselves that will inform their literature, it is logical that even criticism of the literature that is produced in that particular situation will have to be informed by the world-view that shaped the literature which that criticism is intended to be used in studying it. Should this requirement not be fulfilled, the mode of criticism of a particular literature is bound to falter. Possibly it is not surprising to see many African literary texts often failing when evaluated in terms of literary criteria conceived on the basis of a foreign world-view.

## **1.7 Research method**

Qualitative research method will be the dominant tool used in this study. This research method is preferred mainly because, according to Mouton (1988:1), it points out the qualities of human actions by including the natural context of the persons being studied. It has also been selected because of its descriptive nature which enhances one's understanding of meanings and symbols underlying every human action. In other words, this research method is preferred for its descriptive and interpretive strength through reading, observing, asking and analysing which enables a conclusion to be drawn. Mouton (1988:7) further shows the relevance of qualitative research method by defining it as the 'generation of contextually valid descriptions and interpretations of human actions based on in-depth inside reconstructions of the life worlds of actors.'

Sengani (2008:10) cites Tucker's argument on the significance of the qualitative descriptive research method by stating that the researcher 'collects information within its natural environment which is able to reflect on conditions that exist, practices that prevail, beliefs or attitudes that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are being felt, or trends that are developing.' Indeed, from the data collected for this research, the researcher will be able to analyse and interpret situations, events and their effect on characters in the Tshivenda literary text that will be evaluated. This will be done precisely to unearth and explain different meanings attached to situations, events and the effects on characters in the same Tshivenda literary text that is being evaluated. In other words, the description, analysis and interpretation of a literary text through a qualitative research method will help to explain the deep meaning attached

to human behaviour or human actions as contained in the literary text under scrutiny.

The end result of this research will, to a greater extent, be reached with the help of both the survey and descriptive research methods. On the one hand, the survey technique will be used to get a general view of the literary approaches that dominated and those that were marginalised or under-utilised in the evaluation of African-language literature. This overview of the research that has already been covered in the criticism of African-language literature will help to determine the extent, nature and direction that research in the criticism of African-language literature has taken. To further facilitate a completely objective assessment of criticism of African-language literature, secondary sources such as critical essays, newspapers, papers and speeches delivered at conferences and seminars will also be referred to.

On the other hand, the descriptive research method will be used to define, analyse and interpret information collected from the primary sources such as books, articles, magazines and periodicals, dictionaries, encyclopaedias as well as masters' dissertations and doctoral theses on African-language literature and African-language literary criticism. The research will begin by providing definitions and explanations of the concepts that are central to this study. Concepts such as literary criticism, traditional African literature, African-language literature, ideology, censorship, etc., will be defined and discussed. Their significance and use in the context of this research will also be highlighted. This is necessary in order to put them in their proper perspective. This will also help to dispel the confusion that is often associated with the use of these concepts which come from divergent opinions.

A quantitative research method is also used in this research, although to a lesser extent compared to the qualitative research method. The quantitative research method will be applied mainly to do calculations to determine the percentages of the usage of intrinsic literary approaches as opposed to the use of extrinsic literary approaches in the evaluation of African-language literature.

The use of different research methods is necessary as this will make the necessary theoretical and applied information available for the building up of a strong argument for openness and flexibility in the application of literary approaches in the evaluation of African-language literature.

## **1.8 Data collection**

Qualitative research instruments such as interviews and survey technique will be used in gathering evidence needed to address the problem identified and briefly discussed in the section on the problem statement. These research techniques will be useful in eliciting information and the views of literary scholars and academic peers interested in this field of study with regard to the problem of African-language literary critics of not being open and flexible in order to accommodate and embrace literary ideas from marginalised or under-utilised literary approaches. The interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis (personally) and also over the telephone with literary critics and scholars. These interviews were done by means of using open-ended questions as indicated below:

### **Interview questions**

1. Which literary approaches are predominantly used in African-language literary criticism?
2. Which literary approaches are under-utilised in African-language literary criticism?
3. What is the role of ideology in the choice of literary approaches in African-language literary criticism?
4. What are the factors that determine the preference or under-utilisation or marginalisation of some literary approaches and their impact in African-language literary criticism?
5. What are the advantages of using different literary approaches in African-language literary criticism?

To determine the dominant category of literary approaches in the evaluation of African-language literature, a brief survey of the titles and tables of contents of dissertations and theses was conducted. This survey was done to determine whether it is the intrinsic literary approaches or extrinsic literary approaches that are dominant in the evaluation of African-language literature. In other words, this exercise was necessary as it helped to identify the category of literary approaches which was predominantly used in the evaluation of African-language literature. On the other hand, this survey also helps to highlight the category of literary approaches which is marginalised or under-utilised in the evaluation of African-language literature.

This survey is conducted by scrutinising **1035** titles. The indexes and content pages of honours, masters, doctoral dissertations and theses, written in South Africa between 1990 and 2008, on the evaluation of African-language literature, are examined. The survey focused on honours articles, masters' dissertations and doctoral theses. These titles and tables of contents are used as a sample to determine the number of titles and tables of contents that bear the characteristics of any of the categories of the intrinsic, extrinsic or eclectic literary approaches. In other words, the purpose of this survey is to determine which category of these literary approaches is widely or minimally used.

Of the **1035** titles, **711** were from the category of intrinsic literary approaches. The debate in these titles laid more emphasis on internal features of a literary text. Thus those titles and works of art were evaluated in terms of principles or rules as pronounced in the intrinsic literary approaches. In other words, such titles bear mainly the hallmarks of literary theories such as Structuralism, the Moral-philosophical approach and Russian Formalism, to mention a few.

From the remaining **324** titles, **278** titles were classified in terms of the category of extrinsic literary approaches. These are titles whose deliberations revolved around literary theories such as the Historical-biographical approach, Feminism and Marxism. These literary theories' points of view are premised on the role played by external factors, such as the writer, the reader or the context.

The remaining **46** titles constituted the category of the eclectic literary approaches. The discussion in these titles is informed not by only one literary approach but by literary theories from different categories. They draw from a diverse pool of literary approaches. This means that researchers, in this case, preferred not to stick to a particular category of literary approaches. They, instead, mixed theories that belonged to both extrinsic and intrinsic literary approaches.

The mixing of literary theories from both the intrinsic and extrinsic literary approaches yielded better results. In other words, allowing the use of concepts from literary camps that are generally known to be adversarial has enriched the criticism of African-language literature. This is so because each different category has helped to open up a dimension of meaning which the other category cannot discover.

The percentage representation of the three categories of literary approaches based on the titles of honours, masters' dissertations and doctoral theses surveyed, is indicated below.

#### **Intrinsic literary approaches**

$$\frac{711}{1035} \times \frac{100}{1} = 68.7\%$$

#### **Extrinsic literary approaches**

$$\frac{278}{1035} \times \frac{100}{1} = 26.9\%$$

#### **Eclectic literary approaches**

$$\frac{46}{1035} \times \frac{100}{1} = 4.4\%$$

**TOTAL: 100%**

From the above statistics, it is clear that the intrinsic literary approaches constituted the largest group, that is **68.7%**, followed by the extrinsic literary approaches, **26.9%** and lastly the eclectic literary approaches with a mere **4.4%**. The above figures and percentages demonstrate that criticism of African-language literature shows a slant towards the intrinsic literary approaches. An assumption can be safely made that most criticism of African-language literature has been done on the basis of the principles of the intrinsic literary approaches. In terms of this survey, Structuralism, Russian Formalism and the Moral-philosophical approach are predominantly used in the criticism of African-language literature.

It is possible to speculate on the reason why most research in the criticism of African-language literature was predicated more on the intrinsic literary approach than on extrinsic and the eclectic approaches. The dominant literary theories in the intrinsic approach category were Structuralism, Russian Formalism and later New Criticism. The first two seem to have won favour among critics who believed that objectivity in literary criticism can only be realised if literary evaluation is carried out on the basis of the internal features of a work of art. They further argued that the consideration of external factors in literary criticism will entail much subjectivity, thus cancelling out originality and objectivity. Such critics were also not in favour of applying literary theories outside the camp of the intrinsic school of thought because this would tarnish the image of the literary domain that has been untainted by the ideological leanings of the exponents of the extrinsic school of thought. The advocates of the intrinsic approach argue that allowing outside forces to have a bearing on the criticism of literary texts would be counter to the idea of respecting the 'literariness' of works of art. They hold that once this 'literariness' is lost, evaluation of a particular work of art will lose its originality and objectivity, thus becoming a subjective representation of social reality.

The advocates of extrinsic literary theories such as Marxism and Feminism found it difficult to make an impact because they were marginalised or under-utilised on the grounds that their principles or ideas challenged both the prevailing political and cultural power structures. To the advocates of the intrinsic literary theories, this school of thought was seen as shifting the focus from the literary domain to the political and cultural arena. The intrinsic literary approach was in favour because its

proponents espoused the ideology of the Western Bloc whereas the advocates of the extrinsic literary theories were seen to be punting the ideology of the Communist Eastern Bloc. In addition very few advocates of extrinsic literary approaches came from the Western Bloc.

The above survey clearly indicates that most literary critics and scholars of African-language literature have worked their way through the intricacies of literary theories that are intrinsic in nature. In the same vein they have failed the evaluation of African-language literature as a result of their disregard of those literary theories that are extrinsic in nature. Ahearn (1989:xii) sends a strong warning against those literary critics who play down the relevance of the extrinsic literary approaches by stating that: 'This is a great loss in general terms; we have much to gain from appreciating Marx's thought, interdisciplinary coherence, almost demonic incisiveness, ethical passion and explanatory power.'

Ahearn has chosen to address the negligence of Marxism in literary criticism. What is important in this research is the fact that Marxism, in this case, is part and parcel of the extrinsic literary approaches. His warning also applies not only to those who disregarded Marxism but also ignored or downplayed Feminism, psychoanalytical literary approaches and many others that placed emphasis on the role played by external factors in both literary production and literary criticism. From the above extract, it can be argued that the use of extrinsic literary approaches can bring about new and different perspectives in the criticism of African-language literature. The views propagated by the exponents of extrinsic literary approaches help to open up complex and rich areas of African-language literary appreciation. In other words, the use of the extrinsic literary approaches can unlock a text in a way that the intrinsic literary approaches cannot. This means that the application of the literary principles as laid down by the advocates of extrinsic literary approaches can help a reader to arrive at a new and different meaning.

All literary approaches have both strong and weak points as highlighted in the above discussion. On the one hand, the intrinsic literary approaches do not take external factors into account in the evaluation of a work of art, while on the other hand the extrinsic literary approaches lay much emphasis on external factors at the expense of

internal factors. The eclectic literary approach presents an alternative because it allows for the mixing of the literary conventions or rules from both the intrinsic and extrinsic literary approaches. The eclectic literary approach, however, poses a problem as a result of its flexibility. Its undefined or unrestricted nature makes it extremely difficult to determine the extent to which flexibility applies. An important assertion is that reading a literary text from diverse literary viewpoints will help to reveal the different dimensions of the meaning of the same literary work. Reading of literary texts can be enriched by the application of different literary approaches. This means that an evaluation of works of art from different literary perspectives will bring about better understanding of literary texts as each literary approach opens up a new dimension of a particular literary text's meaning.

The above discussion of some of the literary theories belonging to the three major categories of literary approaches helps to indicate that each category lays emphasis on what other categories tend to avoid or disregard. For example, Russian Formalism and Structuralism, which are representatives of the intrinsic literary approaches, concentrate on the internal features of a work of art. The proponents of literary theories which are intrinsic in nature do not take into account the influence of external factors on a work of art. In the case of the category of extrinsic literary theories, Marxist and feminist literary theories are the most prominent literary theories. Their advocates maintain that a work of art is what it is because of the external factors.

From the point of view of the advocates of the category of the eclectic literary theories, both internal and external factors play an important role in the evaluation of a work of art. They maintain that to come to a full and deeper understanding of a work of art, all factors need to be taken into consideration. However, the essence of the exposition of the different categories of literary theories is that each literary theory unlocks the meaning of a work of art in a unique manner. In other words, an analysis of a work of art from the structuralist point of view will, undoubtedly, lead to a different interpretation and meaning of the same literary text if analysed from the Marxist point of view. This also endorses the argument that different literary theories help to complement each other. Thus, different literary theories compensate for each other's weakness.

## 1.9 The storyline of *A si ene*

Maluṭa is a young Muvenda man who was finalising his preparations to marry his fiancée, Muhanelwa. While at Muhanelwa's place, Maluṭa saw one of the girls, that is, Adziambei, who had come to help Muhanelwa. She was extremely beautiful. Maluṭa then immediately fell in love with her. Maluṭa and Adziambei then agreed to elope together. The two fled to Gauteng. The two were very happy as they were very much in love and were now staying together. But their elopement shocked and disappointed many people back home.

The joy of the two did not last because Adziambei was treacherously snatched from Maluṭa by his colleague and friend, Fanyana. The latter had won a lot of money by betting on horses. He left his work and started a butchery business. Fanyana then went to where Adziambei was staying while Maluṭa was at work. Fanyana lied to Adziambei and told her that he had been sent by Maluṭa to fetch her. He said Maluṭa wanted to buy her new clothes for Fanyana's wedding which they were to attend. Adziambei trusted Fanyana as Maluṭa's friend. She left with him. She was surprised when she was told that she would no longer see Maluṭa because she was going to be Fanyana's wife.

After a fruitless search for Adziambei, Maluṭa went home and married Muhanelwa. Years passed. Maluṭa asked Muhanelwa to pay him a visit in Gauteng. Just when Muhanelwa was coming to visit Maluṭa, the latter met Adziambei. The two were overjoyed by their reunion such that Maluṭa even forgot that he had asked Muhanelwa to visit him. When Muhanelwa finally came to Gauteng to visit Maluṭa, the latter was so angry that he hired criminals to kill Muhanelwa. The criminals even brought him a heart which they said was Muhanelwa's. That was the end of Maluṭa's happiness. The incident affected him mentally. Thereafter, Maluṭa and Adziambei could no longer enjoy their relationship. As a result, Adziambei had to make a difficult decision. She then decided to send Maluṭa home to his parents, hoping that they would take him to traditional doctors for treatment. Maluṭa's mother had sent people to fetch Maluṭa from the train station since he could no longer walk on his own. To Maluṭa's shock, he found that Muhanelwa was one of the people who had come to

fetch him. This confused him because he believed that Muhanelwa was dead. As a result of the shock, Maluṭa dropped dead.

## **1.10 Scope of study and outline of chapters**

This research will discuss both the intrinsic and extrinsic literary approaches. The strengths and weaknesses of both literary approaches will also be debated. This will be done to show that no literary approach is foolproof. The research will also concentrate on the definition of operational concepts and the role context plays in the conception and evolution of literary criticism. This strategy will help to determine the factors or forces that come into play when theories of literature are conceived or formulated.

The research will also entail a survey of previous research done in the evaluation of African-language literature. This will be helpful in identifying and discussing the dominant and sidelined or under-utilised literary approaches in African-language literary criticism. The research will further focus on the discussion of the influence of ideology in the evaluation of African-language literature, thus attempting to highlight the reasons behind the over-use, on the one hand, and the under-utilisation of some literary approaches in the evaluation of African-language literature on the other hand.

The evaluation of a Tshivenda literary text (i.e. ***A si ene***) from both intrinsic and extrinsic points of view will be covered. The textual analysis of this Tshivenda literary text from both the intrinsic and extrinsic literary approaches is done in order to demonstrate the extent to which evaluation of African language-literature can be enriched and invigorated by drawing from a pool of diverse literary approaches. The research will be concluded by a discussion of findings and recommendations in relation to the research problem. This study will be structured as follows:

### **1.10.1 Chapter 1**

A statement of the problem, background, aim and objectives, research method and scope of this study form part of this chapter. Definitions and explanations of concepts

such as oral African literature, oral African criticism, African-language literature, African-language literary criticism and world-view are also briefly covered in this chapter.

### **1.10.2 Chapter 2**

In this chapter, a literature review is done to create a premise upon which this research will be based. This is achieved by debating the role and significance of literary criticism and world-views. A general survey of the intrinsic, extrinsic and eclectic literary approaches is also done. In the process, a rationale, as well as strengths and weaknesses of each of literary approach, is discussed. This chapter discusses both the literary approaches that are dominant and those that are marginalised or under-utilised in the evaluation of African-language literature.

### **1.10.3 Chapter 3**

The concepts of ideology, Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism will be defined and explained. The role and impact of these concepts on the evaluation of literary texts are discussed in this chapter. In other words, this chapter aims at determining and debating the role and influence of ideology in the evaluation of literary texts.

### **1.10.4 Chapter 4**

This chapter focuses on the application of some of the intrinsic literary approaches. The intrinsic literary approaches selected for application in this chapter are Russian Formalism and Structuralism. These two intrinsic literary approaches will be applied to analyse a Tshivenḡa novel, that is, **A si ene**. This exercise will demonstrate that an analysis of one and the same literary text using different literary approaches often yields different meanings. This further helps to indicate that drawing from a pool of diverse literary ideas can invigorate and enrich the criticism of African-language literature.

### **1.10.5 Chapter 5**

Extrinsic literary approaches, such as Marxist historical materialism, Marxist social theory of alienation, psychoanalysis and the feminist approach will be applied in the evaluation of the same Tshivenda literary text. This exercise will also demonstrate that an analysis of one and the same literary text (i.e. *A si ene*) from different literary viewpoints will, certainly, unearth more 'meanings' of the same literary text.

The purpose of this exercise is to prove that African-language literary criticism can benefit more if African-language literary critics and scholars can open up and embrace literary views which they do not espouse. Such an approach will provide African-language literary critics and scholars with more literary ideas and opinions to choose from in their evaluation of a work of art.

#### **1.10.6 Chapter 6**

A general conclusion of the work covered in this thesis will be a constituent part of this chapter. A summation of the arguments and views advanced in the preceding chapters will be presented. This chapter will show how the use of different literary approaches leads to different or multiple meanings of the same literary text. The argument in this chapter will help to endorse the point that openness and flexibility by African-language literary critics and scholars can benefit and enhance the study of African-language literature immensely.

A bibliography presenting all the works that have been consulted in the execution of this study will also form part of this chapter.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONTEXT AND DISCUSSION OF CATEGORIES OF LITERARY APPROACHES APPLIED IN AFRICAN-LANGUAGE LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Introduction

The existence of diverse literary approaches should not be seen as a threat to progress in African-language literary criticism. It must be noted that tension is sometimes necessary as it pushes advocates of contending different literary approaches to constantly revisit, sharpen and refine their literary viewpoints. If taken positively, this kind of tension can stimulate creativity in literary critics and scholars. As a result of this stimulation and creativity, opposing literary critics and scholars often conceive new and exciting literary ideas which can be used to consolidate the position of their literary viewpoints.

#### 2.2 Multiple-reading, multiple meanings and productive conflict in literary criticism

Conflict, differences and disagreements are inherent in human life. These are also reflected in the field of literary criticism. It is therefore not surprising to see literary critics and scholars espousing opposing views. This confirms the existence of different or dissenting views, thoughts, beliefs and perceptions among people. The same applies in the field of literary criticism. There are different literary approaches. The advocates of these different literary approaches will always claim that their literary school of thought is more valid and relevant than others.

It is precisely because of the above argument that this research attempts to correct the skewed thinking of the dogmatic and fixated literary critics and scholars. This research calls for openness, flexibility and accommodation of the role played by all literary approaches. The research further calls for a focus on the strong points of every literary approach. In other words, this research pushes for accommodation of productive engagement between contending literary approaches. It tries to create a space for contending literary critics to co-operate and co-exist. This call is premised

on Armstrong's (1990:7) argument that 'every interpretive approach reveals something ..., which a competing method with a different assumption might disclose.' His statement shows that no literary theory is infallible since all literary theories have their strengths and weaknesses. Allowing different literary approaches to co-exist will help to compensate for their deficiencies. It is important to note that the endless variety of literary principles broadens the scope of literary interpretation.

Variety in literary principles brings about different readings of the same literary text because literary critics with opposing literary viewpoints on literature will always want to demonstrate the relevance and validity of their literary viewpoints. This creates more options for literary critics. The most vital and critical issue is that a multiple-reading of literary texts will help to bring out their multiple meanings. This, in turn, will lead to a deeper and broader understanding of the meaning in a literary text.

An attempt to shun literary views of the opposing literary critics and scholars does not benefit the field of literary studies at all. It only further impoverishes this field of study, and as a result, very little progress has been made in the field of African-language literary criticism. Literary views conceived and advocated by different literary critics and scholars help to provide more options in terms of literary criteria that can be used in the evaluation of African-language literature. Literary critics and scholars from different literary camps need to debate and canvass their literary views freely. Such a practice yields more tolerance of literary views from the opposing literary camp. But, most importantly, it leaves a space for the convergence of diverse literary ideas which can be adopted and used.

A synthesis of divergent literary viewpoints can be attained with a merging of the salient points of the contending literary theories. This assertion calls for democracy to prevail also in the domain of literary criticism. Divergent literary views must be allowed to co-exist. This is necessary as evidenced, once again, by Armstrong's (1990:7) argument that 'every interpretive approach reveals something only by disguising something else, which a competing method with different assumptions might disclose.' As the proponents of the opposing literary views defend their standpoints, they also reveal the strengths and weaknesses of their literary positions as well as those of their literary adversaries. For example, the advocates of Marxist

literary theories will, in their defence of the basic tenets of their standpoint, highlight the strong points of their literary theories. Their argument will also, unconsciously, reveal the strong points of the Structural approach which they confess to abhor for its disregard of the influence of the external factors in literary production and criticism. Armstrong (1990:7) further endorses the need for tolerance of opposing literary views by stating that 'every ... standpoint has its own dialect of blindness and insight - a ratio of disguise and disclosure which stems from its presuppositions.' Armstrong's argument proves the point that no literary theory is infallible. Every literary theory has its own strong and weak points. What a Marxist literary critics can achieve, the structuralist literary critics may not achieve and vice versa. Every literary theory is important because it singles out a particular area of human experience as its area of specialisation which other literary theories cannot do.

While stressing the need for tolerance of different literary views, Armstrong warns against wholesale borrowing of ideas from different interpretive methods. To this effect, Armstrong (1990:9) contends that a literary critic who 'borrows freely from many different methods runs the risk of introducing self-contradictions into his or her basic operating assumptions'. Armstrong (1990:9) holds that indiscriminate amalgamation of different literary strategies may result in what is called 'a weak and watered down criticism.' He states his belief that powerful literary approaches owe their depth of insight to the radical one-sidedness of their beliefs. This assertion allows the observation to be made that diverse literary postulations from literary critics and scholars as well as advocates of opposing and polarised literary camps bring about what can be termed 'productive conflict' that helps to highlight the many underlying meanings of a literary text. The conflict is seen as being 'productive' because it enables literary critics from opposing camps to prove the meaning that they claim their literary approach can unearth.

Hereunder, follows a discussion of concepts such as literary criticism, world-view, intrinsic, extrinsic and eclectic literary approaches. This exercise will help to clarify the context, meaning or significance and relevance of these concepts in the field of African-language literary criticism.

### **2.3 What is literary criticism?**

Literature and criticism are inseparable. They are symbiotically related. Criticism has existed even before the written word, for people have always been critical of their own and other people's actions, utterances and ideas. The statement by Reeves (1956:1) that 'criticism is as inevitable as breathing' serves to endorse the indispensability of criticism.

For literature to be accepted and enjoyed, it has to satisfy certain requirements which are used for assessing the quality of any work of art. The statement made by Bressler (1994:3), that 'without the work of art, the activity of criticism cannot exist,' proves that the existence of literary criticism is tied up with that of literature. The preceding argument further highlights the inevitable reciprocity of the relationship between literary criticism and literature. Neither of the two can be successful without the other. An attempt to break their connectedness can lead to barrenness in the field of literary studies.

To understand what literary criticism is requires that some attention be paid to the role, function or purpose of this concept. The immensity of an attempt to unravel the meaning of the concept is compounded by the widely divergent opinions emanating from different points of emphasis in the various definitions of this concept. Some definitions focus on vague and general views about the role of literary criticism. They place much emphasis on the role of literary criticism as being that of trying to deepen readers' understanding by making a literary text more accessible and meaningful. This is the view that holds that a reader's understanding of a literary text is widened and deepened. A further opinion maintains that the determination of the quality of literary text is the main objective of literary criticism. This is the view that emphasises that literary criticism should be concerned mainly with the assessment of artistic excellence of a literary text. Another view is that literary criticism should help in determining whether or not a literary text has a bearing on human existence. The latter group emphasises that literary criticism should be able to show how a literary text reflects on the realities or situations in which people, or consumers of that literature find themselves. In other words, the purpose of literary criticism is to determine how relevant literature is in the society wherein it is produced.

An attempt will be made to attend to all the categories of views stated above. Firstly, the general view of the role of literary criticism will be addressed. Stevens and Stewart (1987:11) fall in the first category because they hold the view that '... criticism is meant for the classification and interpretation of works of art.'

This quotation shows that the role of literary criticism is to classify works of art and also to indicate what those works of art intend to achieve. It is further argued that the task of literary critics is to attempt to study, investigate and determine the goal of a particular work of art. It must be admitted that the view expounded by Stevens and Stewart is not that detailed in that it provides only an adequate explanation of the term literary criticism, especially for beginners in this field. It is only with much substantiation that one is able to extract or trace its meaning. It does, however, help one to realise that literary criticism helps to account for the nature and function of literature. The classification of works of art explains the nature of a particular work of art, while the determination of the intended goal of a work of art will inevitably explain the function and meaning of a work of art.

Wellek and Warren (1982:39) share the opinion of Stevens and Stewart regarding the role of literary criticism. They also maintain that literary criticism has to be seen as 'the study and interpretation of literature.' Their difference with Stevens and Stewart is due to their use of the word 'study' instead of 'classification.' However, the use of different words does not necessarily imply a difference in meaning insofar as their explanation of the concept literary criticism is concerned. When one classifies works of art according to different genres, one is actually engaged in a study of such works of art. From this one can, therefore, conclude that both Wellek and Warren, on the one hand, and Stevens and Stewart, on the other, hold the view that literary criticism is a field of study concerned with the study of the nature and function of works of art.

Gray (1984:57) offers a broad but less ambiguous view of literary criticism by defining it as '... the interpretation, analysis ... and ... judgment of works of art.' Although Gray's opinion is just as broad as that advanced by Wellek and Warren, it sheds more light on the role of literary criticism. The use of words such as 'analysis' and 'judgment' suggests his move to another level of the concept under discussion. His level suggests that the role of literary criticism also involves a close and critical

reading of a work of art and also that it represents literary critics' attempts to determine the aesthetic value of a particular work of art.

The above argument indicates that the study and interpretation of works of art do not take place in a vacuum. The study and interpretation of works of art is made possible by following certain terms of reference. Literary criticism provides literary critics and scholars with terms of reference for the purpose of analysing a work of art. The above assertion demonstrates that literary critics need some concepts or terms of reference in order to make a successful study of works of art. Literary criticism can, therefore, be viewed as an exercise making reasoned judgements upon literary works on the basis of clear and definite literary criteria. This statement actually demonstrates that the study of works of art should be done by applying certain terms of reference. In short, the above argument posits that for any study and interpretation of a work of art to be successful, certain terms of reference or concepts must be applied. This argument is also endorsed by Bressler (1994:3) who cites Matthew Arnold's opinion that literary criticism '... concerns itself with formulation of aesthetic and methodological principles on the basis of which the critic can evaluate a text.'

Bressler's statement suggests that for a literary critic to be able to evaluate a work of art, certain procedures need to be followed. This statement further moves the discussion of the concept of literary criticism from a vague and general realm to a level where one can, in no uncertain terms, indicate ways and means of analysing a literary text. What Bressler and Matthew Arnold indicate is that an analysis of a literary text based on generalisation can hardly yield valid and objective results. There must be a clearly defined set of rules that can be applied in analysing a literary text.

The above discussion focuses on the notion that while the main purpose of literary criticism is the study, analysis and interpretation of a work of art, this has to be done in accordance with certain literary rules. This argument will be illustrated in chapters 4 and 5 where literary rules of both intrinsic and extrinsic literary approaches will be discussed and applied to evaluate a Tshivenda novel (i.e. ***A si ene***). These literary theories will illustrate how effectively a work of art can be studied or analysed by using different sets of literary criteria.

Although this section is, broadly, concerned with shedding light on what literary criticism is, it also sets out to define and discuss the meaning and role of literary criticism in terms of the specificity of meaning. Put differently, the focus here will be directed at those definitions that hold that literary criticism is concerned with making a literary text more meaningful. This assertion stems from the argument that a literary text, as it is, is not that meaningful. There are so many 'meanings' that lie hidden in a literary text. Such 'meanings' can only be identified and communicated by means of a critical evaluation of a particular literary text. In other words, for a literary text to be more meaningful or understandable to the reader, a rigorous and critical reading in terms of certain critical models is required.

According to Eagleton (1976:35), the role of literary criticism is to make 'silences and gaps in a text' speak. This statement suggests that a writer does not include everything when he/she writes a book, but he/she leaves some information to be filled in by readers. 'Silences and gaps' which Eagleton discusses refer to the information that is left out by the writer. Such gaps and silences render the literary text incomplete, thus obscuring its meaning. By filling in 'gaps' and making 'silences' speak, the critic is actually unearthing the deeper meaning of the literary text. If one reads a work of art casually, one's understanding of a particular literary text is bound to be lacking in depth. On the other hand, if one's reading is coupled with reviews, comments or any other critical material, the understanding of that literary text will undoubtedly deepen considerably. Such literary criticism helps to enhance the meaning of a literary text.

Besley joins Eagleton in arguing that the role of literary criticism is that of explaining and filling in the gaps and silences left by the writer. Besley (1980:136) also espouses Eagleton's notion in postulating that the task of literary criticism is 'to establish the unspoken in the text.' Besley has opted to use the word 'unspoken' instead of the 'gaps and silences' used by Eagleton. The views expressed by Eagleton and Besley reveal their agreement that a literary text will normally not reveal all its 'meanings.' It is, therefore, the duty of a critic to unearth and expose those underlying/ hidden 'meanings' of a literary text. One can rightly conclude that the role of literary criticism is to reveal the meaning of a work of art that lies beneath the words of the writer. This exercise enables the literary critic to construct meaning out

of and also beyond what the words of a writer can provide in their literal sense. In other words, literary criticism is a way of explaining in theoretical terms what one is reading about.

The above argument, in line with Bennet's (1990:211) assertion that literary criticism 'serves to unlock the text,' reinforces the opinion expressed by critics such as Eagleton, Bressler and Besley that literary criticism renders a literary text more understandable, intelligible and meaningful.

Ngara introduces another interesting aspect into the debate about literary criticism. This is evident in his (Ngara, 1990:4) assertion that literary criticism should be seen as '... judgment of effective communication ...' Ngara views literary criticism as nothing but an extension of an artist's task in trying to make communication between the reader and the writer possible and intelligible. For the communication between the reader and the writer to be possible and successful, the critic has to make every detail or part of the text 'speak' articulately.

Although stated vaguely, Schipper appears to share the same sentiment expressed by Ngara that literary criticism is necessary for the furtherance of the task of an artist in communicating his/her message. Schipper (1989:155) contends that literary criticism is 'part of literary research in the larger framework of communication.' Of importance is Schipper's use of the word 'communication.' One can conclude that Schipper takes literary criticism to be a continuation of a communication process that takes place between the reader and writer. For this communication process to yield the desired result, the writer's message must be clearly explained for the reader to be able to make sense of it. In other words, criticism of a work of art should be seen as an attempt by the literary critic to make literary texts more meaningful. Literary criticism casts away 'repression' of some information by the writer, thus making it easier for the reader to have a much greater share in the writer's message.

Reeves advances an argument that helps to account fully for the opinions expressed by the literary critics cited above. The main function of a literary critic, Reeves (1956:13) argues, is simply 'to explain and illuminate, for the critic shows to readers intelligible and meaningful something in a work of art that readers have not seen.'

The statement by Reeves aligns with Eagleton and Besley's argument in particular that the task of literary criticism is to make 'gaps, silences and absences' left by the writer speak. In other words, a casual or literal reading of a literary text will not result in the explication of the deeper meaning of that literary text. For a complete grasp of the meaning of that literary text, the reading act should be both critical and rigorous. For example, one's reading of any literary text can be tremendously improved, with its meaning becoming more clarified, when the reading is done critically and is also coupled with the reading of critical comments by other literary critics.

Another aspect that merits attention in this research concerns the quality of a work of art. Critics and scholars who lay much emphasis on this aspect maintain that it is the quality of a work of art which indicates how the meaning of the literary text has been rendered understandable. As far as the function of literary criticism is concerned for a message of any work of art to be more meaningful and understandable, it depends, to a larger extent, on the way the writer presents his message. Brett is one of the literary critics who tend to place much emphasis on the assessment of the quality of a work as the primary objective in literary criticism. This is illustrated by Brett's (1965:63) statement that 'criticism has to do with the assessment of the quality of work of art.'

On this premise then, it is the task of the literary critic to determine the degree of excellence in a work of art. This has, of course, to be done according to certain accepted literary criteria. Any work of art that displays a high degree of excellence will, most certainly, be appreciated by most, if not all, critical readers. Ngara's statement (1990:4) that the role of literary criticism is that of 'commenting on the value of a work of art' also bolsters the argument that the task of literary critics is to unearth the beauty or lack of beauty in a work of art. To this effect, Reeves (1956:8-9) says that 'critics illuminate ... the beauty of a work of art.'

Bennet (1990:194) also argues that literary criticism 'as practice of interpretation must highlight the overall relevance of a work of art in life.' Another contribution in this regard is made by Ngara. According to Ngara (1990:4), literary criticism is 'judgment of effective communication and exploration of the soundness of the artist's assumptions about the world.' As the writer tries to communicate his/ her ideas to the

readers, he/ she will undoubtedly also reveal his/ her perception of reality. By so doing, the literary critic will be highlighting the way in which a literary text succeeds in relating to issues in real life. In other words, the success of a work of art depends also on the extent to which the writer manages realistically to reflect on real human conditions. A good work of art will be that which, on examination, is found to have succeeded in encapsulating human essence. In other words, literary criticism enhances the ability of literature to relate to the world at large.

Literary critics render the communication process between the writer and the reader successful because they uncover and illuminate the hidden meaning in a literary text, thus enhancing a reader's understanding and appreciation of a work of art. The active participation induced by a critical reading act actually brings about a deeper understanding and appreciation of the total meaning of a literary piece. In line with the above is the argument that literary criticism implies an effective and intense participation of the reader in the creative act. Irele (1981:32) further argues that 'the most worthy and enduring appreciation of the writer's work is that which partakes in the imaginative process.' The argument by Irele illustrates the point that valuable appreciation is that which engages a reader in a constructive participation in the reading process. This helps the reader to extract even that meaning that lies hidden in the literary text caused by the writer's use of imagery or his/her style of presentation. It is through active participation that the literary critic can make, what Irele (1981:29) calls, 'sharing of insights' possible. The above argument postulates that it is through a rigorous critical reading that understanding and appreciation of a particular work of art can be deepened or enhanced.

To conclude this section on the various views of literary criticism held by literary critics, the latter's role should be seen as that of helping readers to engage in a more meaningful reading and appreciation of works of art. Such an exercise renders literary texts more accessible to readers, thus facilitating readers' understanding of such works of art. Literary critics are also concerned with the promotion and enriching of literary tradition as well as enabling readers to understand and appreciate themselves, their fellow beings and their world. Any endeavour in literary criticism will be futile if, in its mission, any of the above stated roles is omitted.

## 2.4 World-view as a premise of literary criticism

Literature is written by people, for people and about their life in their own society. The conditions of the context or society in which these people find themselves have a great influence on their lives. Context or environment will have a bearing on society's literature and will also extend to the literary rules or criteria used for the evaluation of literature. The term world-view can be used interchangeably with terms such as context, background and milieu. However, of importance is the focus on this term in determining its role and influence on a work of art. The following extract by Amuta (1989:6) paves the way for the discussion of a world-view as a premise of literary criticism:

... the interpretations of literary products of a given society ... are rooted in theoretical paradigms that either organically derive from or are most directly relevant to the objective conditions of life in the society in question.

Amuta's statement points to the notion that context or world-view is important in determining the nature of criticism of any literature. This means that every situation or context will shape or have a bearing on people's literature. In other words, both the literature and literary criticism produced in a particular situation will, to a greater extent, be influenced or informed by their world-view or environment.

Bishop, instead of using the concept world-view, prefers to use the term 'African reality' which he borrowed from ESKIA Mphahlele who is one of the ardent advocates of the use of world-view as a literary criterion. Bishop (1988:80) sees African reality as '... the actuality and content upon which African literature is based.' The view advanced by Bishop on African reality, which he shares with many other African literary critics and scholars, shows that the context in which literature is conceived will also influence literary criteria and standards according to which that literature will be judged or evaluated. One can further argue that for any literary critic to gain access into an African literary text, the method of study used by that literary critic will have to have been conceived within the context of African reality. If not, it will have to be adapted to its new milieu. This is necessary because every work of art is infused with nuances of its context or background. Another quotation, by Mphahlele (1966:6) also stresses the significance of world-view in literature and literary criticism:

If a writer wants to use the subject of a folktale or one out of the supernatural world, he has to relate it to our world of reality. He must do it because he wants to throw some light on a situation in real life.

Radical literary critics maintain that literature should be predicated on the actual background or context of the literature. For them, African literature should be informed by the situation in which it is produced because it is essentially meant for its reading public. Its' characters and their personalities must suit their context and time.

Any literature that is not predicated on its context may be dictated to by advocates of literary principles that may be foreign. Literature that is not premised on its context may be stifled by an indiscriminate imposition of foreign critical models by those who claim to be working hard for the development of the criticism of African literature. The above argument is an admission of the fact that there has been little attention paid to the criticism of African literature. In this case, there is a call for a rigorous re-consideration of the criticism of African literature. This call is necessitated by the belief that only literary critics who are familiar with the African world-view can be in a position to contribute towards the re-invigoration and development of criticism of African literature. In other words, those who are familiar with the African reality can master the African literature and be its' best interpreters.

The above argument should be understood in the context that African literature has always been subjected to evaluation on the basis of foreign critical models which were never refined or adjusted to suit the milieu that characterise the African world-view.

Another important contribution to the discussion of the relevance of a world-view in literary criticism is made by Mushiete, as cited by Bishop (1988:84), as follows:

The libraries are full of wise 'approaches' to the morals, the African ethnicity, and travel stories abound, but there exist few works describing in realistic manner and sentiment the conditions of our daily life.

The above statement is a stark revelation of the bitterness that stems from the dissatisfaction of some African writers and literary critics with the way in which studies of African ways of life have been conducted. In other words, this outcry by some

African writers and literary critics serves to register a lack of confidence of African people in studies carried out by 'non-Africans' regarding Africans and their situations. Bishop's argument shows African literary critics' displeasure at those Western literary critics and scholars who impose literary theories that have been originally conceived to evaluate Western literature.

Bishop's argument confirms that for one to evaluate any literature successfully, one must be a member of a society that produces the literature that is being analysed. If not, one is expected to have a deep knowledge of the ways of life of those people whose literature is being analysed. Literary critics who lack knowledge of the background of the literature they wish to evaluate are bound to come up with 'lame' criticism because the 'trial' to which the literature they are subjecting will not be a fair one. It is the breadth and depth of one's knowledge of a world-view upon which a particular literature is based that will determine the success of one's critical endeavour. To further back up his argument, Bishop (1988:86) has the following to say:

...the literary critic, like the writer ... should operate from a position of strength, from a base of what is known; and, given the fact that modern African criticism was even younger than modern African literature, what more logical base to build from than the "African reality" with which he was already familiar?

After citing various opinions proposed by a number of scholars and critics, the following assertion by Bishop (1988:86) aptly sums up the significance of a world-view in determining or influencing the nature of the criticism of literature that springs from a particular context: 'criticism is as tied up to reality as is literature - no more, no less.' The foregoing statement endorses the view that any literary criticism that is not fashioned or modelled on a world-view that informs the literature which it is meant to study, will fail to bring about a valid and objective evaluation of the literature in question. However, a strong warning should be sounded against generalisation that criticism of any literature can best be done by members of a society whose literature is being studied. It must be emphasised that anyone with a sound knowledge of the world-view upon which a particular literature is premised will be able to conceive critical models that will enable one to do justice to that particular literature.

Emenyonu shares the same sentiment with Amuta, Bishop, Achebe, and Mphahlele. He maintains that world-view plays an important role in the evaluation of any work of art. Emenyonu (1987:182) claims that literary critics and scholars with a thorough knowledge of African world-view will have a realistic base upon which to engage in logical and conceptual enquiries about African literature. This argument suggests that a breakthrough in the criticism of African literature can be realised only if it is able to determine the extent to which African literature validly expresses the African reality or experience. In other words, such criticism must be able to show African literature as reflecting on the realities of African people. Disregarding the relevance of a world-view in the criticism of any literature can lead to the questioning of the credibility and integrity of a work of art as a valid expression of people's experiences. Indeed, any literary critic who fails to take cognisance of a world-view or context is bound to blunder as his/her critical models may turn out to be too remote from the conventions of the world-view that informed the literature he/she is studying.

Gerard (1983:35) makes the same call as other literary critics that criticism should be determined by a world-view that informs the literature that is being analysed. His stance is illustrated by his castigation of both European and African literary critics who always find fault with characterisation in African literary texts. He charges such critics with disregard of the tradition on which African works of art are based. Such critics often apply Western literary criteria indiscriminately when evaluating African literary texts. If such literary critics could be objective and take tradition into account, they would be able to pick up the peculiarity of characterisation in African literature. Literary critics should be careful when applying Western literary criteria so as to avoid making sweeping statements. The realities that characterise a world-view upon which a work of art is based should dictate the terms of reference to be applied when evaluating a particular literature.

The disgruntlement of African literary critics with the Western literary approach to the study of African literature is also expressed by Izevbaye (1975:3) who couches his bitterness as follows:

... the call for African critical 'concepts', 'standards' or 'criteria' is not a rejection of established modes of literary study like structuralism, neo-Aristotelianism and the like, but a rejection of certain entrenched

modes of thinking which perpetuate the stock attitudes for Africa

In the above quotation, Izevbaye is decrying the indiscriminate application of Western literary criteria to the study of African literary texts. Such literary criteria tend to fail because they are informed by a different world-view. Their ineffectiveness in accounting for the peculiarities of African literary texts angers Izevbaye to the extent that he calls for the study of African literature on its own terms which are based on the African world-view.

From the foregoing argument, one can infer that any literary criticism that is predicated on a wrong premise does disservice to the imaginative writing it intends to evaluate. Disregard of a world-view in literary criticism results in criticism failing to draw artistic truths from a work of art, thus robbing it of its literary merit. Irele (1981:33) also stresses the significance and indispensability of context in influencing the conception of literary approaches, as follows:

... the most original among them (i.e. African writers) do so with conscious purpose of presenting an African experience, and the best among them reflect in their works a specific mode of imagination which derives from the African background .... The work of criticism, of interpreting modern African literature, must be brought to recognise this fact.

Here Irele reiterates that any literary criticism that is anchored on a false premise will lead to a wrong interpretation of works of art. In view of this, criticism that is pertinent to the African world and experience will lead to the establishment of a relevant African literary tradition. This statement reveals Irele's displeasure with the criticism of African literature in terms of foreign literary standards. This can be understood by considering the fact that every literature is conceived within a particular cultural context. The practice of evaluating such literature has also to be informed by the cultural context which shaped that particular literature.

Irele's displeasure stems from the fact that in applying Western literary standards, literary critics make no effort to consider the milieu that shaped the literature they are analysing. Critical standards of the Western literary tradition cannot uncritically be applied to the study of African literature without any adjustment. They need to be adapted to their new situation. Indiscriminate application of Western standards will,

undoubtedly, destroy the development of African literary tradition. In the light of the preceding argument, it has emerged that world-view plays an important role in the evolution of critical models. It is the world-view which encapsulates conceptions, attitudes, emphases, tastes and preferences that constitute the basis on which to build literary criticism.

Killam (1976:303) also shares the views expressed above by stating that 'literature takes place within a cultural setting, and no meaningful criticism is possible without the existence of a community of values shared by the writer and the critic.' He further endorses the argument that context plays an important role in the formulation of critical standards. From the above quotation, one can conclude that a critic will carry out his/her task successfully if he/she understands the cultural background of the writer whose work of art the literary critic in question wishes to evaluate. If not, the literary critic will fail in formulating or adjusting his/her critical models to suit the background of the work of art. The following statement by Finnegan (1970:48) illustrates her view that criticism of African literature must be done in terms of the dictates of the context of African literature:

In Africa, as elsewhere, literature is practised in a society. It is obvious that any analysis of African literature must take account of the social and historical context ....

Any analysis of African-language literature that fails to take into consideration the role of context will inevitably elicit controversies or contradictions. This means that such literary criticism will be found lacking because such evaluation would be carried out by literary critics who are not acquainted with the world-view of the people whose literature is being evaluated. If not, one is expected to have a deep knowledge of the ways of life of those people whose literature is being analysed. Otherwise, one's commentary on that literature will not be fair. In other words, fair and objective literary criticism depends on the literary critic's knowledge of the experiences of the people whose work of art is to be analysed. Literary critics who lack knowledge of the background of the literature they want to evaluate are bound to come up with lame or unfair criticism because the 'trial' to which such literature is being subjected to has no relevant base or premise. It is the breadth and depth of one's knowledge of a world-view upon which a particular literature is based that will determine the success of

one's critical endeavour.

Finnegan contends that a world-view does pose a serious problem in the criticism of African literature. An African world-view is not as uniform as it is alleged. Finnegan (1970:48) expresses her sentiment by stating that '... the culture and social forms of African societies were far from uniform.' The existence of different cultures and social forms in Africa creates problems when a theory of the study of literature in this continent has to be formulated. Different cultures will offer different perceptions of reality which have a bearing on the nature of any literary criticism. On the other hand, Iyasere (1975:20 and 21) makes a scathing attack on those who put much emphasis on the indispensability of a world-view in literary criticism as merely trying to ask for leniency in the criticism of African literature. Iyasere (1975:21) further charges such calls as 'apologetic defence of mediocre works with a vehement display of hostility towards anyone - and especially towards the Western critic - who dares to see faults in contemporary novelists.'

In the above extract, Iyasere warns against any attempt by some African literary critics to exclude non-African literary critics from the critical exercise on the basis of world-view. Iyasere (1975:21) sees an over-emphasis of the importance of a world-view in literary criticism as 'subjective reactionary tendencies of those trying to express the hostile attitude they bear towards the Western critics.' Such a reactionary tendency, justified or not, stifles development of criticism of African literature by 'closing-off' those Western critics who may discover and/or highlight some issues that an African literary critic may fail to pick up as a result of his/her subjective stance.

What Amuta, Finnegan, Irele and other African literary critics and scholars advocate is that even those literary critics who are not members of a society whose literature is being analysed, can still provide vital and insightful criticism of African literature as long as they have a sound knowledge of a world-view upon which the literature they are studying is based and also that they remain objective in their approach.

It is clear from the above extract that literary critics that are not familiar with the background of the literature they intend to analyse, are likely to make blunders as their evaluation will not be suitable to the context of the literature. Amuta, Finnegan,

Irele and other African literary critics and scholars' argument shows the extent to which Western critics should go before they can be seen to be doing justice to an African literary text. People's perception of reality provides a context for their literature. It is their world-view that adds colour to a work of art. For a literary critic to study such literature successfully, he/she needs to be familiar with those people's social reality. A literary critic can only be in a position to make valid critical comments on an African literary text if he/she has acquired profound knowledge of African cultural traditions, their existence, and nature as well as the heritage of the African oral tradition.

A literary critic who has no sound knowledge of a cultural background of a work of art he/she is examining is bound to come up with damaging and uninformed comments. Such a literary critic will not be acquainted with forces that come into play during the production or creation of a particular work of art. The literary critic in question will also not be able to engage in a constructive and informed criticism. Iyasere (1975:23) maintains that such critics are 'hired to depress art.' Iyasere (1975:24) further castigates literary critics who lack knowledge of the cultural background of the literature they are analysing. Such literary critics tend to engage in 'gratuitous paternalistic criticism and employ their own cultural idiosyncrasies in evaluating literature of other nations.'

While acknowledging the indispensability of a world-view, Amuta warns against the undefined and unrestricted role of a world-view in literary criticism. Amuta (1989:38) expresses his opinion as follows:

In a bid to project the so-called African world-view as a coherent philosophical proposition, every attempt is made to submerge the ethnic heterogeneity of the continent and put forward a set of beliefs, customs, taboos and practices as typically and uniformly as African.

In the above extract, Amuta expresses the danger of an overzealous allegiance to one's roots. Such a stance may cause very serious problems in the criticism of any literature. This problem may further be compounded by geographical, religious and cultural differences that characterise African nations. These differences often make it difficult to formulate a single literary theory that can be applied in all African literatures.

Amuta is not alone in his opposition to the so-called unrestricted proclamation of a world-view as a must in literary criticism. Finnegan also maintains that a world-view does pose serious problems in the criticism of African literature since an African world-view is not as uniform as it is alleged. Finnegan (1970:48) expresses her sentiment in this matter by stating that ‘...the culture and social forms of African societies were far from uniform.’

From the above statement by Finnegan, it is clear that the existence of different cultures and social forms in Africa does create problems when a theory for the study of literatures in this continent has to be formulated. Different cultures will offer different perceptions of reality which have a bearing on the nature of any literary criticism. It is not surprising to see scathing attacks on those who put much emphasis on the indispensability of a world-view in criticism. This is viewed as merely as an attempt to ask for leniency in the criticism of African-language literature. In other words, such a stance is seen as being reactionary and a display of hostility even to valid criticism of a work of art. This means that there are some African literary critics who would use the world-view as an excuse to avoid having their work of art being subjected to a rigorous literary evaluation by those deemed to be foreign literary critics.

The above charges are not necessarily opposed to the use of a world-view as a literary criterion. The problem with the use of world-view may be intended to deny those who are not Africans an opportunity to objectively evaluate African works of art. Over-emphasizing world-view as a literary criterion constitutes the subjective reactionary tendencies of those trying to express the hostile attitude they bear towards non-African literary critics. Such a reactionary tendency, justified or not, stifles development of criticism of African literature by 'closing-off' non-African literary critics who may discover and/or highlight some issues that an African literary critic may fail to pick up due to his/her subjective stance.

What Amuta, Finnegan, Irele and many others are actually saying is that even those literary critics who are not members of a society whose literature is being analysed, can still provide vital and insightful criticism of African literature as long as they have a sound world-view and also that they remain objective in their approach. An

understanding of the world-view that shaped a work of art is vital because the literary critic will be able to understand the social-cultural forces that played a role when a particular work of art was created. This will also help the literary critic to avoid being biased against the work of art being evaluated, and assist the literary critic from offering unsavoury criticism. What is important is to ensure that literary critics do not impose their own cultural dictates when evaluating literature of other nations.

## **2.5 Some reflections on the categories of literary approaches in the evaluation of African-language literature**

It is important to identify and discuss the three major categories of literary approaches, namely, intrinsic, extrinsic and eclectic. Certainly, this exercise will shed more light on both the strong and weak points of literary approaches belonging to any of these categories.

### **2.5.1 Intrinsic literary approaches and the evaluation of African language-literature**

The definition of the word intrinsic, as provided in the “World Book Dictionary”, Volume 1 (1994:1108), is as follows:

“From within. Belonging to a thing by its very nature, inherent, innate, ingrained. Originating or being inside the part on which it acts”.

The above quotation creates an impression that, in terms of intrinsic literary approaches, literary texts are to be evaluated more successfully by taking cognisance of their internal features. In other words, anything that is not part of a work of art that is being evaluated does not play a role. Exponents of this school of thought argue that external factors such as a writer, a reader, history, etc., cannot be taken into account when critically assessing a work of art.

The most important phrases in the above definition are 'situated within and belonging to the thing itself.' These phrases express the idea that only those aspects that are part and parcel of a work of art are considered when evaluating it. This also means that advocates of intrinsic literary approaches disregard the role played by factors that 'stand outside' the literary text. Their argument is based on the fact that such

factors are not part of a work of art. This, however, should not be taken to mean that the advocates of this school of thought do not appreciate the significance of such factors in literary production. To them, consideration of external factors will result in a subjective assessment of literary works. To the advocates of this school of thought, consideration of external factors in literary evaluation renders the discipline unscientific.

Ryan and Van Zyl (1982:17) reveal their dislike of external factors in literary assessment. According to them, the study of literature can be scientific only if emphasis is laid on those conventions or factors which distinguish literary discourse from other forms of discourse. They further maintain that such a 'scientific bent' will give the study of literature a methodological distinctiveness that shows its independence from other areas of study.

Literary critics who advocate the use of intrinsic literary approaches argue that the study of literary works is much more valuable than studying the life of a writer and the environment in which a writer produces a work of art. To add strength to the preceding argument, Wellek and Warren (1956:139) contend that intrinsic literary approaches tend to 'lay much emphasis on the works of art themselves rather than on the conditioning circumstances.' Wellek and Warren's contention leads to the conclusion that a literary work is a product of a writer's efforts and the writer's environment. The advocates of intrinsic approaches maintain that external factors such as a writer and his/her environment do not have to be given much prominence in the literary assessment of a particular work of art.

The advocates of intrinsic literary approaches downplay extrinsic factors, despite the important role played by the writer and his/ her environment in the creation or conception of literature. The focus on the literary work itself is further endorsed by Wellek and Warren (1956:139 and 140) who argue that 'the study of literature should, first and foremost, concentrate on the actual works of art themselves.' From Wellek and Warren's argument, it is clear that literary critics belonging to this school of thought are vigorously opposed to the idea of incorporating external factors in the literary evaluation of any work of art. They maintain that a study of a work of art is the centre of their interest, and not the writer of a work of art or the environment that

shaped it.

Visser (1982:22) shares the same opinion with the above exponents of the intrinsic approach by arguing that 'literary development is viewed as a succession of transformations of literary forms induced by the operation of laws internal to literature.' The phrase 'internal to literature' also shows that only those factors that are found within a literary text are to be considered when it is being evaluated. Visser (1982:22) corroborates this preceding argument by stating that 'we studied literary evolution insofar as it bore a distinctive character and only to the extent that it stood alone, quite independent of other aspects of culture.' Visser's argument highlights the fact that literary critics who show an inclination towards the intrinsic literary approach acknowledge the fact that besides the internal features they stress, there are also other factors that play an important role in literary production. However, literary critics who align themselves with the intrinsic literary approaches maintain that the significance of the external factors in literary criticism is outweighed far more by those that emphasise the need for the consideration of the internal features of work of art.

This campaign on behalf of intrinsic literary approaches in literary criticism is carried on by Gray (1984:199) who contends that creative writing or literature is 'conceived as an activity governed solely by its own codes and convention, and these have no reference to any reality beyond or outside the system.' Literary critics hold the view that any scientific evaluation of a literary text will have to be informed by or done on the basis of its internal features. They contend that the use of external factors will result in unscientific and subjective literary criticism.

A discussion of some of the literary approaches that are intrinsic in nature follows. These will include, among others, Russian Formalism and Structuralism.

#### *2.5.1.1 Russian Formalism as an intrinsic literary approach*

According to Swanepoel (1990:10), Russian Formalism came into being as a reaction by some literary critics to 'biographical and moralistic interpretations of previous generations.' This statement thus implies that, before Russian Formalism, literary criticism was much influenced by the author and the reader. In other words, external

forces, such as the reader and the writer, were the most important determinants of the meaning of a literary text. The emergence of Russian Formalism ushered in a new era in literary criticism. The literary critics who subscribed to the Russian Formalist approach showed the desire to see literature being autonomous from outside influences. This generation of literary critics vehemently differed with the pronouncements of the romantic and moral-philosophical critics because they felt that such literary approaches were not sufficiently scientific. They aimed at redefining the bases of literary criticism differently from their literary predecessors. They stressed that literary critics should focus their attention on the literary text and not on external factors as their predecessors had done. The disregard of the role of external factors in literary criticism by Russian formalists is also reiterated by Visser (1982:16-17) when she says that the formalists chose to ignore the role of 'moral, biographical, ideological and historical factors in literary studies.'

The Russian formalists maintain that literature should be a discipline on its own which is governed and evaluated in terms of its own literary criteria. Identifying and using different features and/or conventions that are different from those used in other disciplines will render the literary practice unique, autonomous and, most importantly, scientific. The literary critics of this era aimed at exploring what is specifically literary in the text. According to Selden (1985:6), the Russian formalists objected to the idea of literature reflecting on the realities as they maintained that 'human content' (i.e. emotions, ideas and reality) possessed no literary value, but merely provided a context for the functioning of literary devices. Although the Russian formalists acknowledged the importance and influence of external factors, they still downplayed the relevance of external factors in literary criticism. They go on to argue that the consideration of the internal features in the evaluation of any literary text help to explain scientifically how aesthetic effects are produced by literary devices.

The Russian formalists maintain that literary criticism should exclude social, political and philosophical aspects. In support of this, Gray (1984:90) argued that Russian Formalism must be seen as a literary theory which places much emphasis on 'form, style and technique in art excluding other considerations, such as its social, political or philosophical aspects.' The foregoing argument by Gray further endorses the point raised earlier on by the exponents of this school of thought that a work of art can only

be evaluated in terms of its formal devices. Swanepoel (1990:12) attempts to specify those literary devices that are seen as formal features when he argues that these literary devices are 'repetition, parallelism, linkage and alliteration.' Other techniques and conventions that the Russian formalists used to distinguish works of art from other forms of literature included, among others, 'rhyme, point of view, characters, time, and plot.'

Fokkema and Ibsch (1978:15 and 17) hold the view that the list of literary devices that the Russian formalists selected for use in the examination of a work of art is not complete if it does not include features such as imagery and setting. According to Gray (1984:90), literary devices that Russian formalists relied on in their evaluation of works of art, include among others, 'metre ... flashback, foreshadowing and defamiliarisation.' Thus the arguments advanced by Gray, Swanepoel and Fokkema and Ibsch assert that repetition, parallelism, linkage, alliteration, rhyme, metre, point of view, flashback, foreshadowing, and defamiliarisation are important literary devices to be used in evaluation of works of art. Russian formalists mainly use these literary criteria in assessing the literary value of a work of art.

The Russian formalists, in their study of literature, harp on the fact that literary criticism has to be scientifically conducted in order to make literary practice as literary and objective as possible. According to Fokkema and Ibsch (1978:13), what really proves that they do not emphasise the significance of the external factors in literary criticism is their assertion that 'certain elements or factors should be abstracted from the literary text and studied independently from the text and its context.' This statement reveals that their focus falls on that which is found within the literary text and not outside the literary text. The above argument is further supported by Bressler (1994:33) who says that the Russian formalists espouse '... the text and text alone.' In other words, the Russian formalists concern themselves primarily with an examination of a work of art itself and not its historical or biographical elements.

From the above argument, it is evident that the Russian formalists are not interested in the influence of external factors because they maintain that their task is to produce a theory of literature concerned with the writer's technical prowess, craft and skill. They strongly contend, as stated by Selden (1985:7), that literature is 'the sum total

of all stylistic devices employed in it.' The advocates of this literary approach hold the view that literary criticism is a scientific study of works of art with an emphasis on those properties of the text that are considered literary or artistic. According to Fokkema and Ibsch (1978:15), Russian formalists are more interested in advocating the identification and application of 'new devices for the arrangement and processing of verbal material.' They hold that in order to engage in a rigorous, systematic and scientific study only compositional or structural features have to receive a special attention. A view widely held by the Russian formalists is that it is such literary features that will reveal in no uncertain terms the distinctiveness of literature from other disciplines.

Of all the literary devices advanced by the Russian formalists, the one that informs any scientific study of a work of art is the defamiliarisation technique. The use of this feature really makes the Russian formalist theory a unique literary frame of reference. The Russian formalists make a shift, if not a complete break, from the literary approach marked by a high degree of moral, biographical, ideological and historical bent by claiming that it is the 'literariness' which makes a given work a work of art or literature. Gray (1984:90) also shares the view that it is the 'literariness' of a given work that renders it literary. He argues that it is literary language that distinguishes a work of art from other discourses. Literary critics belonging to this school of thought maintain that literature is made unique mainly because of the literary device of defamiliarisation.

According to Visser (1982:17), defamiliarisation occurs when 'familiar acts and objects are taken out of their ordinary context or by describing them as if they were seen for the first time.' For this process to take place, writers use language in a special way. Literature achieves its distinctiveness by deviating from and distorting everyday language. Selden (1985:9) argues that a writer achieves defamiliarisation by exercising a controlled 'violence upon practical language.' Adherents of the Russian formalist school of thought hold that for a given work to be aesthetic its language has to be deformed or distorted. They view this process as making language unfamiliar or strange.

According to Ryan and Van Zyl (1982:17), imagery is the essential literary criterion that helps to bring about defamiliarisation. They hold that imagery is the necessary tool with which that which is familiar is made unfamiliar. In this instance, writers use everyday language differently in order to produce aesthetic effects. Some literary critics use the concept 'estrangement' because they argue that using some of the literary devices cited above helps to make everyday language strange. In other words, simple and ordinary language that speakers are used to is turned into metaphorical language that is intended to intensify the aesthetic effect of a work of art. According to Fokkema and Ibsch (1982:17), estrangement happens when 'an object is transferred from the sphere of its usual perception to that of a new perception, which results in a particular semantic shift.' In the case of literature, ordinary language is made strange by making it poetic or by means of a specific reconstruction of the language.

It must be emphasized that the literary device that is essential in bringing about estrangement in literature is imagery. It is the best literary tool with which literary artists can make the familiar unfamiliar or strange. The use of imagery brings about poetic language which is different from the everyday language or language used in other discourses. It is this defamiliarised language that brings about the 'literariness' of a work of art. Defamiliarisation helps to distinguish a work of art from other disciplines in the sense that language used in a work of art is artistic. The use of literary devices, especially imagery, helps in making literary works unique. This happens because words, expressions and other literary devices often used in the everyday language are made unfamiliar.

For Swanepoel (1990:10), such defamiliarisation is done in order to 'renew their (i.e. words, expressions and literary devices) sound and meaning for aesthetic communicative purposes.' Unlike other disciplines, the rationale of this school of thought is that much emphasis should be placed on the special use of language. For the language in literature to be special artists need to use poetic devices. Thus there is a tendency for the Russian formalists and their disciples to emphasize the use of poetic devices for their work to be artistic.. As a result, poetic language constitutes an important area of study by critics who subscribe to the Russian formalist school of thought. The Russian formalists brought about such a breakthrough in literary

practice that they are given credit for being the first to construct a systematic conceptual literary framework for the study of works of art.

The lack of interest in the influence or role of external factors in literature open the Russian formalists to a barrage of criticism by those who do not subscribe to this literary approach. These literary critics hold the view that literature should be open to the influences of other disciplines. They see this as a weak point of this school of thought. The opponents of the Russian formalists argue that Russian formalism does not want to acknowledge the inherent link between literature and other disciplines. The Russian formalists are further attacked for refusal that life is a totality of different aspects, of which literature is just another part.

According to Selden (1985:11), Russian formalists ignore or do not foresee 'the possible political uses of literature since their concern is for pure technical aspects.' The Russian formalists are thus revealed as being against the idea that literature is a natural representation of reality. The Russian formalists' position created ample opportunity for its' opponents to find ammunition to use against its application in the study of works of art. Swanepoel aptly sums up the situation that provided ammunition to the opponents of Russian Formalism. According to Swanepoel, (1990:11) Russian formalism started receiving attacks in the land of its origin, Russia, because of 'its' playing down the link between literature and society.' This statement shows that the Russian formalists chose to ignore the role of literature in reflecting on the social reality. Their disregard of the importance of historical and social dimensions in literature signalled their demise as a literary force.

According to Ryan and Van Zyl (1982:17-18), the generation of literary critics who were not in favour of Russian Formalism offered the following as their reasons for shooting down the Russian formalist approach:

What the Formalists were concerned with was not the light that fictional texts shed on the state of affairs in the life-world, or the ideas or world-views expressed by novels and short stories, but rather those features and properties which disclose the literary status of narrative texts.

The above quotation shows that the critics of Russian Formalism are much more concerned about its lack of relating literature to social reality. These critics hold that literature is about ideas, actions and experiences of the people in real-life situations. In other words, they do not see literature as a discipline that cannot reflect on the people, their experiences and their environment. They see literature as a vehicle through which ideas, actions and experiences of people in a particular area are captured, communicated and stored.

Visser (1982:16) shares the same opinion as highlighted above by arguing that Russian Formalism fell into disfavour with the socialists and realists as Trotsky contended that it was only 'necessary for descriptive purposes but dangerously narrow and limited relative to the need to examine literature in the broader contexts of history and society.' In other words, other literary critics railed against Russian Formalism for its failure to relate literature to real life. Russian Formalism did more harm than good by ignoring or disregarding the significance of the historical and social dimensions of literature. One can conclude that Russian Formalism lost its glitter because its advocates disregarded the inherent link between literature and society. Its proponents received scathing attacks from those literary critics who saw the adherents of this school of thought as being biased and only interested in purely technical or structural features of a literary text.

Of importance in the discussion of Russian Formalism, is the fact that its emphasis on the internal or structural elements of a work of art serves to endorse the argument that this approach is intrinsic in nature. This means that it does not take cognisance of the role played by external factors such as the writer, the reader and/or the context in which the literary text is produced.

Russian Formalism originally moved away from romantic, moral-philosophical and historical-biographical literary approaches because such premises were seen to be 'corrupting' the literary practice. To the Russian formalists, such approaches used as a basis for the interpretation of a work of art during the era of the historical-biographical, moral-philosophical and romantic era resulted in very subjective literary criticism. Such literary criticism was seen as not being scientific because its results were much influenced, if not informed, by the personal ideas and emotions of the

critic. The Russian formalists saw a need for a more systematic and objective literary theory in the interpretation of literary texts.

#### *2.5.1.2 Structuralism as an intrinsic literary approach*

The demise of Russian Formalism ushered in a new way of evaluating literature, namely, Structuralism. It is worth noting that this school of thought was extended to include the study of prose as well. The structuralists maintain that their literary theory offers a scientific view of how meaning is achieved in literary works. Bressler (1994:60) argues that, just like the Russian formalists, the structuralists hold the view that 'literature needs no outside referent but its own rule-governed but socially constrained system.' Within this statement, it is clear that its advocates maintain that a scientific study of literary works can be realised by concentrating on what de Saussure, as cited by Bressler (1994:63), calls literary work's 'own internally structured and highly systematised rules.' The exponents of the structuralist school of thought carried on with the campaign of the Russian formalists by emphasising that literary practice should focus on the internal features of literary works. These adherents of this approach negate the idea that literature is a medium in which the author and the reader share emotions, ideas and truth. In support of this argument, Bressler (1994:63) claims that the structuralists maintain that '...author's intentions can no longer be equated with the text's overall meaning, for meaning is determined by the system that governs the writer, not by an individual author's own quirks.' The structuralists hold the view that the meaning of a literary work can be expressed only through the shared relationship of the text's component parts. They further argued that meaning can be found by analysing the system of rules that comprise literature itself.

The rationale of the structuralist literary theory is that a work of art must be seen as a whole made up of parts that need to co-exist harmoniously in order for the whole to function effectively. To support the statement, Bressler (1994:63) sees Structuralism as 'a method of investigation with the aim to discover how all the parts fit together and function.' In other words, the structuralists view literature as an entity made up of a number of elements. Each of these elements has an important role to play. Without any one of the component parts the whole cannot function effectively. Each and

every element must play its part for the effective functioning of the entity. In other words, a role that is played by one part cannot be fulfilled by any other part other than that one. The balance is maintained only if all the component parts play their role. The so-called balance or stability can be maintained only if the component parts of the whole manifest a harmonious relationship.

The argument advanced by the advocates of the structuralist school of thought shows their emphasis on the whole and its structure. They appear to be more concerned with the composition of the whole and the nature of its composition. In other words, their literary practice centres on the entity, all that makes up an entity and the relationship of the component elements of the entity. This focus of the structuralists reveals their disregard of the influence that external factors bear on a work of art. Visser expresses the opinion that elements that make up an entity play an important role in as far as the functioning of that entity is concerned. The following extract communicates Visser's (1982:53) opinion:

Structural inquiry lays much emphasis on the totalities of the parts brought about by their harmonious co-existence.

Visser points out that a work of art consists of a number of elements each of which has a role to play in order to contribute to the overall meaning of a particular work of art. This argument endorses the opinion expressed by the advocates of the structuralist approach that elements that make up a literary work complement each other. This complementary function or relationship that obtains among these elements serves to make the meaning of a work of art complete. Any lack of harmony will result in a particular work of art failing to satisfy the requirements as set out in creative writing. To support the preceding argument, Bressler (1994:63) states that Structuralism must be seen as 'a method of investigation with the aim to discover how all the parts fit together and function.' In other words, Bressler is still in support of the argument that for a literary work of art to be meaningful, its various components must manifest a harmonious relationship.

From a structuralist perspective, internal features of a literary work must display harmonious and stable relationship for it to be regarded as a good work of art. Gray (1984:198) endorses the point about the significance of harmonious relationship of

elements by arguing that this literary theory 'examines aspects of literature ... as integrated structures or systems in which parts have no real existence on their own, but only derive meaning and significance from their place within the system.' The argument by Gray can be unpacked and interpreted as meaning that each element within a system contributes towards the communication of clear meaning. In other words, no meaning of a work of art can be complete if its component parts do not enjoy a complementary relationship with each other.

The above argument which is based on Gray's alignment with the Structuralist approach helps to illustrate the inseparability of the component parts of a work of art because every component part in a work of art has a vital role to play. In other words, each and every part of a literary work, having to play a unique role, contributes towards the overall meaning of a particular work of art. This, in a way, reveals the complementary role of all the component parts of a work of art. In an attempt to endorse the inseparability or the 'integratedness' of these component parts,' Gray (1984:199) argues that these component parts are 'organised or arranged in such a way that they complement each other and they are integrated for the ultimate aim of building a coherent entity.'

Visser's argument helps to shed more light on the significance of the harmonious co-existence of the component parts of a work of art. She (1982:62-63) holds that all elements of a work of art 'yield a different function which is necessary for a comprehensive analysis of a literary work.' A good illustration of the harmonious relationship of these component parts is the observance of the role played by each component part. All conventional literary features of a work of art, such as plot, character, theme, setting, language and style, etc., play an important role in the act of rendering a literary text more meaningful. These literary devices supplement each other as they individually shed more light on the meaning of a literary text. They all contribute towards the overall meaning of a literary text. For example, if characters in a literary work of art are not well developed, this will impact negatively on other elements such as conflict, theme, plot, setting, etc.

In the case of Roman Jakobson who talks of the addresser, message, addressee and the context, the meaning of a work of art will be affected if there is a problem with one

of these elements. If the context is not well handled, this may affect the message to be conveyed. Equilibrium has to be maintained in order for the literary work to be meaningful. If there is a problem with one element in a work of art, the meaning of that particular literary text will be affected. In terms of the structuralist school of thought, literary appreciation has to deal with the investigation of the relations between the component parts of a whole. Exponents of this literary approach are interested in mutual relationships between parts of a whole and how these parts combine to produce an artistic and meaningful literary text. Any lack that may exist with any one element will undoubtedly disorganise the equilibrium. The destabilisation of the equilibrium will negatively affect the overall development of a particular work of art. This further illustrates the point that it is the combination of all the different conventional literary devices that makes a literary work intelligible or meaningful.

It must be pointed out that the structuralists identified almost the same literary devices as the Russian formalists. But, the difference between the Russian formalists and the structuralists is that the latter choose not to concentrate on the literary studies of poetic texts. This entailed the scaling down of the use of poetic devices such as rhyme, rhythm, parallelism, alliteration, metre, etc. Instead the structuralists extended literary studies to include narrative and dramatic texts. Unlike the Russian formalists, the structuralists focused on literary devices such as plot, character, setting, conflict, point of view, flashback, foreshadowing, imagery, etc. The Russian formalists emphasised the 'literariness' of a work of art while the structuralists laid much emphasis on its structure.

Like other literary theories, Structuralism is also fallible. Literary critics who have qualms with this approach base their opposition on the fact that it concentrates only on the internal features of a literary text. Its proponents contend that anything outside a literary text should not be allowed to influence the deciphering of meaning. The disregard of the role played by external factors in literary criticism by the structuralists is evident in the opinion cited by Martin Gray. The structuralists (1984:199), argues Gray, maintain that literature 'is an activity governed solely by its own codes and conventions, and these have no reference to any reality beyond or outside the system.'

As stated earlier on, the structuralists do not recognise the significance of external factors such as the writer, reader or context. Their flat refusal to acknowledge the role played by any of the above cited external factors can be traced in the argument advanced by Gray (1984:199) that 'the PERSONA projected by the writer is merely a literary construction, and reading itself is merely an impersonal "making sense" of the literary conventions within the system.' This assertion reinforces the structuralists' attempt to place a limit on the capacity or capability of literature to draw from or reflect on real life situations. For the structuralists, the writer, reader or the context or any other external factor cannot be allowed to inform any literary text. Allowing this to happen will leave the work of art to be pervaded with subjectivity.

Bressler also adds his voice to that of those who are bent on exposing the pitfalls of the Russian formalists' approach. According to Bressler (1994:63), literature 'needs no outside referent but its own rule-governed, but socially constrained system'. Bressler's statement, once more, reveals the structuralists' disregard of the role of external influences on a work of art. He argues further (1994:63) that literary work 'can no longer be considered to represent a mystical or magical relationship between the author and the reader, the place where author and reader share emotions, ideas, and truth.' Thus Bressler is highlighting the structuralists' preoccupation with the relationship of the internal features at the expense of the external factors. In other words, structuralists refuse to acknowledge the fact that taking into account the role played by external factors will bring another dimension of the meaning of a work of art.

Another assault on Structuralism emanates from Peck and Coyle (1984:166) who state that Structuralism '... appears to stand outside the values and beliefs of society ...' The above quotation attacks the Structuralists' view that there is no reality beyond the literary text. Peck and Coyle (1984:167) further argue that the structuralists postulate that 'reality is too complex for a literary critic or reader to make sense of.' Postulations by the structuralists place limits on what literature can achieve or handle. They suggest that reality lies beyond the reach of literature. They contend further that there is always a gap between literature and reality. Literary critics from other schools of thought launch a scathing attack on the structuralists for operating from their assumption that experience is baffling and literary texts cannot make

coherent sense of it. Peck and Coyle (1984:168) contend that, by this premise, the structuralists are taken to be negating, if not limiting, the possibility or capability of a literary text to conceptualise life experiences.

Visser also attacks Structuralism by discussing why it became a diminished force in literary circles. According to Visser (1982:63), disintegration of Structuralism as a force in the literary domain is attributed to its ideological neutrality. Literary critics opposed to the structuralist literary approach call for a more socially and politically involved literary methodology. It is apparent that Structuralism's lack of social and political commitment attracted severe attacks on the theory's central assumptions. Following the failure by the Structuralists to consider the relevance of social and political influence on literary reading of any text, there was a shift to other areas of literary inquiry as the call for new and more dynamic methodologies gained momentum. The dwindling importance of the structuralist approach is succinctly summarised by Visser (1982:63) as follows:

Within the Structuralist camp there were defections, purges and regrouping.

In the light of the above statement, it is possible to assume that no literary theory, whose exponents are engaged in shooting each other down, will be able to sustain itself. Energy and ideas are wasted by castigating each other instead of invigorating positions. The disagreements that occurred within the structuralist camp paved the way for other emerging literary approaches. The exponents of these new literary approaches found space to call for the conception of new and dynamic literary methodologies.

#### 2.5.2 Extrinsic literary approaches and the evaluation of African-language literature

To understand the rationale of the literary approaches that belong to this school of thought, it is important to trace or determine how the meaning of the concept 'extrinsic' influences the basis upon which this school of thought operates. Fowler and Fowler (1991:415) define extrinsic as 'exterior; external pertaining to an object in its external relations. Lying outside the object under consideration.' Onions' definition of the concept sheds more light on its meaning. According to Onions (1933:518),

extrinsic means 'not contained or included within ... originating or acting from outside ...' The two definitions cited above go to the heart of this literary approach which stresses disregards the role of the external factors in the production of a creative work or literary criticism. In other words, the extrinsic literary theorists, unlike the literary critics who espouse the intrinsic school of thought, maintain that the influence of external factors such as the writer, reader and the context in which a work of art is produced or evaluated plays an important role.

The literary practice adopted by these advocates accepted and further propagated the idea that external factors inform and influence the production of a work of art and also help when that work of art is being evaluated. These critics maintain that background information regarding the writer, reader and/or the history/context shed light on literary criticism. Most of the adherents of this school of thought can be identified by their avid allegiance to Marxist, feminist, psychoanalytical and biographical literary theories, etc., just to name a few. Proponents of the extrinsic literary approaches argue that literary criticism has to concern itself with the study of a literary work on the basis of its setting, its environment and its other external causes. They advocate the literary interpretation of a work of art on the basis of its social context and antecedents. From a point of view of the extrinsic literary approaches, proper knowledge of the conditions under which a work of art is produced helps in the study of that particular work of art.

According to Wellek and Warren (1982:74), the proponents of school of hold the view that 'there exists a relationship between a work of art and its context.' They assume that illumination on literature follows from knowledge of the conditions in which a work of art is produced. To use Wellek and Warren's (1982:74) words, the extrinsic literary approaches are also known as 'cause-governed methods of study of literature.' They contend that this is the case because literary critics are inclined towards the study of the causal relationship between a work of art and its setting and antecedents. The advocates of this school of thought argue that it is the synthesis of all factors that helps to explain literature. Their argument leads to the conclusion that no breakthrough in literary criticism can be achieved without taking into account the role played by the external factors.

For the purpose of this research, a brief outline of literary theories that are extrinsic in nature will be limited to the biographical, Marxist, feminist and psychoanalytical literary approaches. The purpose of this exercise is to attempt to lay bare the essential characteristics of the extrinsic literary approaches.

#### *2.5.2.1 The historical biographical literary approach*

This approach recognises the significance of the writer in literary production. A writer is seen as a creator of a work of art. This approach is extrinsic in nature because a writer is not part of the text. The exponents of this approach accept that a writer, who is an external factor, has a role to play in literary production. One cannot successfully study a work of art without taking into account the role of the writer who has produced a work of art. Biographical literary critics maintain that literary work can be explained in terms of the personality and life of the writer. This also implies that the overall meaning of a work of art can be arrived at by also knowing and understanding the life of the writer. A work of art can help literary critics discover much about a writer's life, character or history. The symbiotic relationship between a writer and his/her work of art is aptly captured by Wellek and Warren (1982:82):

We think of biography as affording materials for a systematic study of the psychology of the poet and of the poetic processes .... It explains and illuminates the actual product of poetry.

According to the above quotation, the knowledge of a writer's life can shed more light in the evaluation of that writer's work of art. This further endorses the point that there is a person behind every work of art. A literary piece is a documentation of a writer's experiences, feelings, fears, dreams, etc. It can also help to highlight the tradition in which he/she wrote and the influences by which he/she was shaped.. Wellek and Warren (1982:82) sum up the symbiotic relationship between a writer and a work of art by arguing that literature is nothing but 'fragments of confession.' This statement suggests that, by merely reading a book, one is in a position to understand the conditions under which a book was written and the factors that influenced the writer to produce such a work of art.

While the ideals pronounced in the domain of the historical biographical approach reveal change and transformation, there are some trappings that offer a sour taste for those literary critics who strongly punt for objectivity in literary criticism. Critics outside the biographical approach argue that acknowledgement of the influence of the writer or the writer's situation in literary production and criticism will leave room for subjectivity to creep into either the literary production or literary criticism. They further maintain that if this is allowed to take place, there will be an adverse impact on the literary value of works of art. Advocates of the historical biographical approach contend that such an exercise will lead to what the Russian formalists call a loss of literariness. Once such a stage is reached, the critics who are sceptical about this methodology believe that literature will become a vehicle for expression of one's propagandistic postulations. Once this happens, a literary text will finally lose its 'literariness' or artistic value.

#### *2.5.2.2 Marxist literary approach*

The following statement serves as an indication of the platform used by those who wished to expose the weakness of the literary theories that dealt exclusively with the importance of internal features in literary criticism:

No internal criteria can guarantee the essential 'literariness' of a text.  
(Easthope, 1995:12)

The above quotation shows that Marxists anchored their argument on the fact that no one can claim complete authority over one's literary evaluation by simply basing it on the investigation of the internal features of a literary text.

Although the works of the father of the Marxist movement, that is Karl Marx, place much emphasis on disciplines such as history, economics and politics, arts and culture also received his attention. Marx believed that arts and culture are greatly influenced by the taste of the dominant class. As a result, the Marxists contend that arts and culture can serve as an expression of the thoughts, interests and ideals of the ruling class. To the Marxists, literature is not an innocent discipline – they view it as being informed or premised on the situation or conditions in which it is produced. Hence their vehement contention, as argued by Gray (1984:119), that 'arts should be

an expression of social realities.' Marxists see a connection between arts and social, cultural, economic and political factors. The statement, as advanced by Posel (1982:131), that literature should be seen as 'an expression or aesthetic articulation of human reactions to the world' also reveals the inevitable link between literature and the context which gives rise to it. Marxists hold that literature serves as a record of people's experiences or their reactions to the challenges they face in real life.

From a Marxist point of view, literature should be used to serve society in its social, cultural, economic and political endeavours. Swanepoel (1990:52) cites Lukas' argument that 'characters, situations and events are created in literature to portray society in its totality.' This statement serves as a confirmation of the Marxists' contention that literature should reflect social realities. In other words, literature is taken as nothing but a representation of experiences of people in real life. The postulation by Posel (1982:135) that 'literature is a typical representation of social reality,' further throws weight behind the Marxist view of literature as a reflection of real life. Easthope (1995:13) agrees to this argument by stating that 'art works become the object of a form of human experience and in accordance with that, art counts as an expression of human life.' This can further be seen as a suggestion that literature serves as a window through which one can peep and have a glimpse of the totality of any given society. In other words, merely reading a literary text can reveal much about society itself.

For the Marxists, literature can serve as an instrument to understand the social, cultural, economic and political situation of a particular society. Posel (1982:137) endorses this argument by stating that 'an analysis of literature must be situated in its socio-economic context.' This well-pronounced significance of literature as espoused by the Marxists is further advanced by Goldman, as cited by Swanepoel. The latter (1990:53) refers to Goldman's postulation that 'the goal of literary theory was to find the ties between the text and its social context in the world-view that underlies the literary meaning.' This argument also suggests that, among other issues, evaluation of literary texts should also include or take into account the role played by social, cultural, economic and political factors. Swanepoel (1990:57) further endorses this argument by advancing the Marxists' view that literature should be 'seen as a product of social experience and awareness.' This statement highlights the inevitable

relationship between literature and social reality.

Amuta is an African literary critic who does not hesitate to argue for the relevance of Marxism in literary studies. Amuta's (1989:26) strong allegiance to the Marxist school of thought can be easily traced in his call for literary critics to begin to 'perceive the meaning of literature while simultaneously acknowledging society as an objective reality and the source of literary experience.'

Amuta's above statement is, once more, a call for consideration of all those external factors which the intrinsic literary approaches have disregarded. His fervent commitment and belief in the importance of Marxism in literary studies is also evident in his contention that literary criticism must be 'predicated on a theoretical outlook that couples cultural theory back to social reality.' Amuta's argument further endorses the assertion that literature is greatly influenced, if not informed, by a variety of factors. This further reinforces the argument that without society there can be no literature. Gordimer (1994:115) also throws her weight behind the argument, stating that 'society shapes people's consciousness and that, social and economic conditions directly influence people's beliefs and values.'

Bressler advanced a well-defined criterion applicable to Marxist literary criticism. According to him (1994:116), a critic must 'place a work in its historical setting, paying attention to the author's life, the time period in which the work was written, and the cultural milieu of both the text and the author ....' Bressler's statement emphasises the Marxists' emphasis on the role played by external factors in literary criticism. From a Marxist point of view, a literary critic is forced to investigate the forces or factors at work at the time when a text is written or being analysed. In other words, a literary critic should not only concentrate on features within the literary text as required by the structuralists.

Bressler (1994:117) further maintains that Marxism 'expands the traditional historical approach to literary analysis by dealing with sociological issues that concern not only the characters in a work of fiction but also the authors and readers. This links, Marx believed, nature and society and shows how literature reflects society and reveals truths concerning our social interactions.' This statement leads to the observation that

the disregard of external factors in literary criticism leads to a distorted, if not incomplete, literary interpretation of a text. One cannot claim to have arrived at a complete meaning of a literary text if it excludes the role played by external factors. To support their argument about the significance of external factors, Marxists, as argued by Bressler (1994:121), posit that an analysis of a text must deal with more than '... style, plot, characterisation and ... figures of speech ...' The above strand of Marxist literary thought illustrates the point that its emergence came as a result of its desire to prove that the literary evaluation of texts would not be complete as long as the role played by external factors is not seen to be of vital importance.

Marxism, like other literary theories, also has its glaring weaknesses. The wholesale propagation of the attention required to be paid to the role played by external factors both in literary production and literary criticism left Marxist critics open to fierce attacks by their opponents. The latter felt that the Marxists were so imbued with the idea of the role played by external factors that they forget that the role played by internal features is no less significant. The argument made against the Marxists is that the latter were so carried away with their thoughts, assumptions and views that they forgot to conceive clear-cut literary criteria.

Posel (1982:132) highlights the flaw in the Marxist literary approach by arguing that most critics felt that the Marxists' attempts to 'base assessment of literary texts on historical materialist principles were insufficient to generate a complete literary theory.' Hence, the critics of the Marxist approach regard it as a deterministic and reductionist theory. They hold this view because the Marxists see literature as being passively dependent on an economic base. The Marxists project literature as being reactionary and tied to a fixed set of productive relations which impose varying constraints on it. Posel (1982:142) expresses the opinion of those opposed to this approach that Marxism is a theory that just 'lapses into simplistic casual accounts.'

A further problem is the Marxist emphasis on the role played by the author and the reader. This appears to negate the originality and objectivity in literature that was espoused by the Russian formalists and the structuralists. Acknowledgment of the importance of the author and the reader renders literary criticism subjective. The meaning of the literary text will, to a larger extent, be influenced by the author or the

reader. Once subjectivity is allowed to creep into the evaluation of literary texts, validity of literary criticism is doomed. This ultimately results in literary criticism being subjective and unscientific.

Swanepoel also addresses the weakness of the Marxist approach. He (1990:56) maintains that its weakness is due to 'its inability to realise its economic objectives and to rid the world of the hegemony of absolute empowerment.' Swanepoel's statement leads to the assertion that the failure of Marxism in economics, history and politics means that Marxists could not achieve their objectives in arts and literature although they also invested much in this domain.

Despite the criticism levelled against the Marxist approach, advocates of this approach have made an immense contribution in the domain of creative writing and literary criticism. The Marxist approach, like other theories, continues to bring to light other meanings of a literary text.

#### *2.5.2.3 Feminist literary approach*

In general terms, feminism emerged to question and challenge the marginalisation of women. Its aim was to end domination of women by men. However, from a literary point of view, feminism counters the marginalisation of women in creative writing. It also opposes misrepresentation of women in the creative writing. Feminism has been conceived to highlight and explore ways and means of ending the oppressive experiences of women. It is clear that the underlying principle of the feminist approach is to expose and bring to an end the oppression of women in all spheres of life, including marginalisation and misrepresentation of women in literature.

Peck and Coyle (1993:170) maintain that feminism is concerned with both the representation of women in literature and with changing women's position in society; thus freeing them from oppressive cultural constraints. The feminists' mission is to call for women's dignity, respect and equality in all spheres of life and advocate an objective and unbiased representation or depiction of women in literature. Most women in literary texts are portrayed as evil or weak characters, e.g. witches, killers or cheats. Feminists vow to challenge and put an end to this negative representation

of women. Feminists' agenda is to expose and eradicate the subjugation of women and the disregard of their positive role in life. The feminists aim at formulating strategies with which to deal with the subjugation of women. In other words, the feminists' agenda also includes fighting against and eliminating stereotypes about women in literature.

Selden (1985:134) contends that the mission of the feminists is to fight against the sexist ideology that oppresses and relegates women to the periphery of the society. Feminists have set for themselves the task of challenging and breaking down all traditional power structures that use an endocentric culture to undermine and marginalise women. Feminists advocate an end to the stereotyping of women as being weak or failures in life. Feminists maintain that these stereotypes about women also abound in literature. They believe that if these stereotypes will consequently bring to an end the misrepresentation of women in literature.

Like the Marxists, feminists have done very little to lay down clear-cut rules according to which feminists' endeavours against women's oppression will be implemented. The critics of this approach hold that its application in the evaluation of a literary text is based on generalisations rather than on well-defined literary criteria. Nevertheless, the application of the feminist approach to the evaluation of literature has led to a substantial contribution and progress in creative writing. Today, there is no doubt that women play an important role in society. This recognition of the role of women in society is attributed to the impact made by the feminist movement and the application of the feminist approach in showing positive contribution that can be made by women.

Likewise, in a patriarchal society, a work of art is also structured along the social context determined not to temper with the status quo of male domination. As a result, works of art are often written to conform and consolidate norms and conventions that perpetuate male domination and female subservient or submissive role. It is not surprising to find female characters that are always feminine, extremely evil, submissive or impossibly good or saintly like the virgin Mary syndrome. More of this will be shown when the feminist literary approach will be discussed and applied in Chapter 5.

#### *2.5.2.4 Psychoanalytical approach*

The psychoanalytical approach traces human personality in the form of human actions, words or thoughts in a work of art. It also tries to highlight the causes and the psychological impact of human behaviour and the effect of human alienation. Bressler (1994:92) holds that literary psychoanalysts view a work of art as an 'external expression of the author's unconscious mind.' They maintain that human behaviour is a reflection of the state of an individual's mind. Everything that an individual does is a representation of the state of his/her mind. They hold the view that one can know much about that person's personality and state of mind from a person's action, words and thoughts. They maintain that a work of art reveals the writer's state of mind because it is a reflection of what happens or what is going on in the mind of the writer.

The weakness of this approach is that it tends to ignore the fact that there could be other factors that may have a bearing on human behaviour other than biological determinants.

#### 2.5.3 Eclectic literary approaches

These have to do with the use of a variety of approaches in the literary evaluation enterprise. Proponents of the eclectic approach argue that no single literary theory alone can sufficiently help one read and decipher all the 'meanings' of a work of art. In other words, eclectic approaches came about as an admission of inherent weaknesses in all literary approaches. To unpack this point, one can evaluate the same literary text using Marxism, Russian Formalism, Structuralism and Feminism, but this will lead to 'multiple meanings' of the same literary text. The reason for this is that each literary theory lays emphasis on different aspects of a work of art. The use of different literary theories in analysing a literary text will lead to different and unique meanings of the same text. For the purpose of this section, reference to postmodernist literary theory will be made.

### *2.5.3.1 Postmodernist literary approach and multiple-reading of a literary text*

This literary approach is essentially non-adversarial in the sense that it is, in Maltby's (1991:3) words, 'an ideal ground for a multidisciplinary approach.' The above statement shows that postmodernism allows for the use of various concepts from a wide range of disciplines in analysing a literary text. The approach leads to innovation and transgression of formal literary conventions as postulated by the literary theories that paved the way for postmodernism.

According to Featherstone (1988:203), postmodernism calls for '...a stylistic promiscuity favouring eclecticism and the mixing of the codes.' This statement illustrates the postmodernists' opposition to the formation of literary camps as they maintain that such an exercise does not benefit the field of literary criticism. The emergence and establishment of opposing camps do not allow for the mixing of concepts from opposing viewpoints. As a result, counter-accusations emerged that poaching of concepts from opposing camps is taking place. This tension does not do literary criticism any good as the whole fracas deteriorates into mudslinging rather than contributing positively in creative writing.

Postmodernism renounces any claim to an absolute perspective on reality. Most of the advocates of previous literary theories have strongly claimed that their literary ideas were the best in unlocking the text. They did not acknowledge inherent faults in their concepts. Postmodernists contend that there is no literary theory that is an autonomous self-determining entity. Maltby (1991:5) argues that postmodernists also acknowledge the 'provisionality' of their approach. In other words, they accept that change in literary domain can allow another mode of literary approach.

According to Maltby (1991:6), postmodernism calls for a pluralist conception of reality. It refines readers and critics' sensitivity to differences. It lays emphasis on the need for the acknowledgment of existence of differences. Maltby's standpoint raises a very important issue, that is, the acknowledgment of differences. Acknowledgment enables critics to realise that their theories are not absolute. Once this is done, literary critics will acknowledge the limitation of their theories and also see the need to borrow from their opponents to make up for limitations in their theories. Such an

exercise will serve to enrich literary criticism. Maltby (1991:7) further argues that postmodernists advocate for 'radical democratic politics in literary domain to identify multiple sites of antagonism.' The postmodernist literary theorists and critics respect the autonomy of diverse literary opinions and appeal for plurality in literary studies. This means that, postmodernist literary theorists and critics believe that the field of literary criticism can benefit more from mixing literary criteria.

This statement suggests that postmodernists maintain that different literary opinions should not be seen as a battlefield for literary critics. This openness is necessary as it makes up for the weakness of individual literary theories. The postmodernists argue that the pooling of concepts from different disciplines and literary approaches is necessary as it helps to plug the gaps that may be left by sticking to one literary approach. Borrowing concepts from other literary theories is important as this helps to make up for the inadequacies of other literary theories.

The call for 'opening up' to new ideas in the criticism of African-language literature constitutes the main thrust of this research. The emphasis of this study is posited on the rationale that drawing from a pool of diverse literary ideas can invigorate and enrich the evaluation of African-language literature. Moreover, the need for literary critics and scholars to embrace even those literary theories they do not espouse will benefit the literary practice immensely. This offers space for literary critics and scholars to accept other literary ideas and opinions needed for the evaluation of a work of art. This exercise, undoubtedly, illustrates the point that each literary theory is capable of discovering or 'unearthing' a meaning of a work of art which no other literary theory can arrive at. However, the problem with postmodernism is that it allows for the mixing and borrowing of concepts or codes from a variety of disciplines so that it is extremely difficult to determine a cut-off point in terms of what should be included or excluded.

Maltby (1991:4) also identifies the same problem of postmodernism by arguing that 'so many issues are now discussed in its name that it is almost impossible to determine the boundaries of the concept.' It is not easy to determine the extent to which postmodernist literary concepts can be used in literary studies as it allows for many divergent opinions to be used in discovering the multiple meanings of a literary

text.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The above discussion has helped to highlight the fact that every literary approach has both its strong and weak points. It is important to note that intrinsic approaches do not take external factors into account in the evaluation of a work of art, while extrinsic approaches lay much emphasis on external factors at the expense of internal factors. The eclectic approach is the only one that allows for the mixing of literary criteria from both literary camps when analysing a work of art.

Analysing a work of art from different literary viewpoints helps to reveal the different dimensions of the meaning of the same work of art, thus helping to broaden and deepen readers' understanding. In other words, evaluation of a work of art from different literary angles enhances one's understanding of a work of art.

The above discussion stresses that both internal and external factors play an important role in the evaluation of a work of art. For the reader to come to a full and deeper understanding of a work of art, all factors (internal and external) need to be taken into consideration. However, the essence of the use of the different categories of literary theories is that each literary theory unlocks and unearths a different and unique meaning of the same work of art. This argument endorses the point that a multiple-reading of a work of art through the use of different literary approaches yields different and unique meanings. Thus different literary theories complement each other and make up for each other's weaknesses. But, most importantly, such an exercise provides the reader with more meanings and a much deeper understanding of a particular work of art.

## CHAPTER 3

### IDEOLOGY IN AFRICAN LITERARY CRITICISM

#### 3.1 Introduction

The discussion in this chapter revolves around the concept of 'ideology' in relation to literature and literary criticism. This discussion constitutes an attempt to determine and locate the criticism of African-language literature in different ideological camps. In other words, this is an attempt to determine the extent to which ideology impacts on the criticism of African-language literature. The discussion in this chapter will also highlight the acknowledgement of the role of ideology in influencing African literary critical practice in general. This will further help to illustrate the extent to which ideology pervades all facets of human literary experience. Literary production as well as literary criticism cannot escape the influence of the ideology of the period during which the literary production and literary criticism take place.

In this chapter an assertion is made that ideology is responsible for determining those literary theories which should be used more than others. In turn a conclusion is drawn that giving prominence to some selected literary theories and marginalising others does not help the cause of African-language literary criticism. Marginalisation of other literary theories stifles the development of African-language literary criticism. Of prominent importance in this chapter is the argument both for the exploration and accommodation of literary views advocated by literary critics from different literary schools of thought and also the creation of more space for marginalised literary theories in the field of African-language literary criticism.

#### 3.2 Ideology defined

The term 'ideology', in its broad sense, has to do with ideas and beliefs that govern human existence and also influence people's decisions, attitudes and behaviour. Williams (1977:55) defines ideology as 'a system of beliefs characteristic of a particular class or group.' Both arguments advanced by de Tracy and Williams in their endeavour to define the concept ideology tend to create a problem. The concern

with their positions is that they tend to confine the term to an abstract level at the expense of man's social relationships. Once this happens, the material social processes that characterise human existence are relegated to the background. In other words, a concentration on the abstract level causes ignorance or negligence of other aspects of human existence. Ideas have to be nothing but a reflection of what occurs or has already occurred in the material social process.

A much broader view takes 'ideology' as referring to those values, thoughts, ideas or practices that are projected as universal and common sense notions. They are often naturalised and used to legitimise prevailing human conditions. Ideology is seen as the conception of the world that is implicit in art and in all manifestations of individual and collective life. These manifestations can be discerned in all the practical activities of social life and background. They are taken for granted by people. Thus one can conclude that ideology is revealed in the manner in which people perceive the world. Their perceptions, aspirations, dislikes, preferences, etc., will always combine to be part of their ideological orientation. However, Mannheim (1936:49-50) contends that ideology is concerned with the opinions, statements, propositions, assumptions and systems of ideas as well as the characteristics and composition of the total structure of the mind of a particular group or class of people at a particular epoch.

The argument is also supported by Selepe (1993:73) who views ideology as 'a system of ideas or beliefs which characterise the existence of a particular society within a particular historical epoch.' This view of ideology is further echoed by Mphahlele (1970:10) who argues that ideology is 'a body of doctrine or a set of principles of a social movement, institution, class or large group.' In other words, aspirations, assumptions, preferences, and opinions of people are consolidated into a set of ideological principles that govern the lives of people belonging to particular groups. Through these ideological principles, people will identify with the group whose goals they sympathise with and share. These principles enable a group of people to feel a sense of belonging and commitment under a particular banner. Ideology also lends focus to the aspirations of a group as it represents a system of beliefs held by the group. In line with this, Straaten (1987:5) maintains that ideology is a system of beliefs which confers a shared identity on members of a society by locating them as characters in a story or actors in a drama. The argument about

ideology advanced by Ngara puts it in no uncertain terms and also helps to explain some of the definitions already cited above. Ngara (1990:11) maintains that ideology 'influences people's beliefs and conception of reality. It is the way in which people comprehend and interpret reality.' Thus one can conclude that ideology influences what works of art should entail and the manner in which works of art can be assessed. In other words, a work of art cannot be produced or created in a vacuum. A work of art and the manner in which its assessment should be carried out are anchored on a certain ideological premise.

The above references to ideology enable one to trace one central thread that runs through all the definitions - that is, ideology as a representation of beliefs, ideas, preferences, aspirations, fears, opinions, expectations, and interests of people in a particular period. Every sphere of human life is governed or shaped, if not influenced, by beliefs, aspirations, expectations, ideas, and interests which serve as a point of reference for the manner in which people have to conduct themselves politically, socially, economically and religiously. In other words, anything that happens either in economic, political, literary or religious sphere will have to conform to the rules, conditions, standards, interests and expectations as set out in the prevailing ideological environment. It follows that all spheres of human existence are governed or conditioned by a particular mode of ideology. This always happens in, for example, history, philosophy, economics, politics, literature, etc.

The above different disciplines will bear features of the ideology of the time. This kind of scenario is the best way of spreading the sphere of influence of a particular ideology. This extension of an ideological influence in a given time and place is necessary as it helps to condition or shape people's perception of things around them. Once beliefs, thoughts or expectations pronounced in a particular mode of ideology take firm hold on people's consciousness, people begin to act and think in a generally expected manner. People will begin to behave and think in conformity with the pronouncements of the prevailing ideology. Put differently, as a result of the influence of ideology of the time, people tend to do, think and see things in terms of the prevailing set of ideological pronouncements. Ngara (1990:11) endorses the above argument by aptly commenting that 'our conception of religion, politics, morality, art and science is deeply influenced by our ideology ... what we see and

believe largely depends on our ideology, being the medium through which we comprehend and interpret reality.' The preceding statement confirms that the way people think, do or see things is largely shaped or dependent on a particular ideology.

Althusser also holds the same view that ideology serves as the anchor on which every aspect of human life is hinged. Althusser (1972:32) sees ideology as 'a system of ideas which dominate the mind of a man or a social group.' In view of Althusser's definition of the term, one can posit that human beings will always ensure that those ideas and/ or beliefs that dominate their mind are reflected in all spheres of their lives, be they political, economic, literary, cultural, historical and religious. As a result of the influence of the prevailing ideology people will act, think and see things in accordance with current generally held beliefs. Put simply, actions or behaviour and/or perception of reality will always be determined or conditioned by the prevailing ideological beliefs.

### **3.3 The role and place of ideology in literary criticism**

The statement by Mphahlele (1970:9) that '... modern literature is heavily influenced by ideology' creates an impression that any literary work will bear some ideological elements of the time. It, therefore, stands to reason that literary theories applied in the assessment of modern literary works will also display some ideological leanings. Both works of art and literary theories often manifest different ideological standpoints. The overriding impression created by Mphahlele's assumption is that ideology has a fundamental and pervasive influence on all aspects of society, literature included. In support of Mphahlele's view, Gugelberger (1986:84) argues that 'ideology is not something we can escape so easily. It is inherent and internal to all our thoughts and actions. It reveals itself in the form of work and deed.' The statement of Gugelberger is a continuation of the argument that ideology manifests itself in all aspects of human existence. No aspect of human life can escape the influence or impact of ideology. Mphahlele's view on the pervasive nature of ideology is also supported by Stern (1992:13) who acknowledges the role of ideology in literary studies by contending that the interpretation of literature is also ideological. The above argument leads one to understand that literary criticism is not immune from the

influence of a particular ideology. Consequently, literary critics evaluate a work of art with a particular ideological slant. The following statement by Amuta (1989:14) attests to this argument:

The class position of a critic, his self-perception in and mode of insertion into the prevailing class formations of his society influence and even determine the ideological colouring of his critical products.

In the above extract, Amuta is expressing the view that a close study of any literary work will, in most cases, reveal the ideological biases of that particular work of art or critic. Amuta's argument also seems to suggest that the literary critic, the writer and the text are greatly influenced by certain ideological tendencies. The impression thus created by this assumption is that every literary critic, writer or a work of art will always reveal some ideological bias. Critical canons and theoretical positions are determined by ideological pronouncements of the time. Following on this notion, one can argue that all literary traditions are informed by ideological tendencies that are prevalent in a particular era.

The political scenario in most African countries made it very easy for all spheres of human life to be permeated by ideological influences. Engaged in liberation struggles, the African people felt that their struggle was not only waged for political and economic emancipation, but also for their deliverance from Eurocentric cultural imperialism. In order to achieve the objectives of the struggle, African people had to mobilise even arts and literature. Cultural and literary activities were resorted to for the sake of the advancement of the struggle. In this way, literary production and literary criticism constituted other sites of struggle. While writers used their works of art to ward off cultural imperialism, literary critics also used their writing to expose and oppose evidence contained in some of works of art that promoted cultural imperialism. Ideology pervades every sphere of life, including literature and arts. Thus ideology surely plays a significant role in the conception of literary movements or literary approaches. What happens politically and economically in the broader society will also have a bearing on other spheres of life, such as cultural and literary domains.

Blunt also shares the same view, raised above, that ideology influences every sphere of human life. The following extract attests to his assertion that ideology even pervades literature and other arts:

Works of art are produced by artists, artists are men, men live in society and are, in a large measure, formed by the society in which they live (Blunt, 1937:105)

One can argue, following Blunt, that every artist is influenced by the situation in which he/she finds himself/herself. This further suggests that even what is produced or created by an artist cannot escape the influence of the situation in which it was produced or created. A work of art, as the product of an artist, will be greatly influenced or shaped by the conditions under which it was produced or created. What happens to the product of a literary artist also happens to the work produced or created by a literary critic. The conditions or circumstances that influence or shape works of art will also have a bearing on literary criticism produced under the same conditions. To further show the extent to which people are shaped by the conditions under which they find themselves, Blunt (1937:105) maintains that '... artists have always put into their works, either explicitly or implicitly, something of their attitude towards life.' Attitude is one of the many elements that constitute one's ideology or world-view. Thus literary artists often reveal their ideological beliefs in their works. In other words, when writers write, they always, consciously or unconsciously, make some statement about their situation that exposes their ideological leanings. A work of art often reflects a writer's outlook or attitude towards life. This outlook or attitude may be cultural, political or religious in nature.

Blunt, although referring to what happened to the artists during the medieval period, touches on a point demonstrating that the prevailing ideology of the time was traceable in arts. To this effect, Blunt (1937:109) states that:

... he (painter/artist) was told not only what subject to paint but also what figures were to be included, how they were to be placed, what kind of dress they were to wear and what attributes they were to carry.

The above extract illustrates the point that if one is not dictated to by the prevailing situation, one is then dictated to by the exponents of a particular dominant ideology

on how to approach a work of art. For example, during the medieval period, art had to conform with the ideology of the church. The content of a work of art had to give voice to the prevailing ideology of the church. Blunt's claim further helps to reveal that any artist who cuts himself/herself off from the ideology of his/her time is automatically excluded from the possibility of taking part in the most important movement of his/her time. Such a person is, therefore, forced to some sort of escape or alternative solution to find some consolation in his/her art. Garvin (1982:11) indicates the inevitability of ideological influence on literary production and literary criticism by positing that 'a work of art is produced as the artefact of a particular era and ideology.' This statement proves that critics attempt to understand a work of art while at the same time remaining aware that they are subject to ideological claims and pressure of their time.

### **3.4 Ideology as a premise of literary criticism**

According to Amuta (1989:56), ideology is 'implicit in the very nature of literature ... and it determines circumstances and socio-historical conditions which ultimately pervade literature.' This suggests that any condition that characterises human existence is shaped or determined by the prevailing ideology of the time. This further leads to the argument that world-view or the manner in which people perceive the world around them is mainly dependent on their current ideological beliefs. It is possible, then, to assume that a particular ideology produces a particular kind of world-view. The latter, in turn, influences every aspect of human existence exposed to that particular world-view. World-view will shape or inform any kind of literary criticism that forms part of its sphere of influence. The connection between ideology and world-view is eloquently expressed in Amuta's (1989:14) definition of ideology as 'a relatively formed and articulated system of meanings, values, and beliefs of a kind that can be abstracted as a "world-view" or a class outlook.' Amuta's definition endorses the argument that ideology is the main determinant of people's way of perceiving things in their environment. In other words people's behaviour, thinking patterns, political and religious beliefs are informed or shaped by the prevailing ideology. The way people see the world around them is determined by the ideology they have internalised because it is that prevailing ideology that encapsulates their conceptions of the world around them.

### **3.5 Categories of ideology in African literary criticism**

Ideology is a very broad concept that may be viewed and defined in different ways. However, in this study, ideology will be classified and examined in two categories only, namely, the dominant ideology and the subversive ideology. This research focuses on the argument that a work of art produced is the result of these two sets of ideological forces, namely, the dominant and subversive ideological forces.

#### **3.5.1 The dominant ideology in African literary criticism**

According to Ngara (1990:11), dominant ideology refers to the beliefs, assumptions and set of values that inform the thought and actions of a people in a particular era. Such an ideology is evident in the beliefs, assumptions and values of the ruling class which is often further reflected in education, economy, politics, arts and the culture of the country. Artists and literary critics undertake their various tasks under the heavy influence of the prevailing and dominant ideology. They produce/ create and also evaluate works of art on the basis of the dictates of the prevailing dominant ideology. Artists and literary critics are expected to undertake their literary preoccupations in terms of the rules, expectations and values of the proponents of the dominant ideology. In other words, a work of art and critical literature will reveal a confirmation of the beliefs, assumptions and values of the dominant ideology. Put another way, a writer or a literary critic will perform his/her literary task from the standpoint of the dominant ideology.

A dominant ideology is seen as representing those conventions, attitudes, thoughts, opinions and assumptions which are taken as common sense and also contribute to sustaining existing power relations. It constitutes the ruling class's views, beliefs, interests, and thoughts that take prominence in the different spheres of human life in a society. It is those interests, thoughts, attitudes or opinions of the dominant group that shape human life of the time. The ruling class will ensure that their status quo is not interfered with by using direct and indirect mechanisms to propagate their thoughts, perceptions or opinions that justify the prevailing situation. All social structures within society will be arranged in accordance with the ideological conventions and preferences of the dominant group. The dominant ideology is

encapsulated in conventions, perceptions, opinions, attitudes and assumptions that are implicit and often taken for granted. These are not matters that people are consciously aware of. They are rarely explicitly formulated, examined or questioned. To disseminate the pronouncements of the dominant ideology, its advocates merge them with what is generally termed 'common-sense background' and other forms of social action. The proponents of the dominant ideology structure everything in society in such a way that their ideological preferences affect the meanings of linguistic expressions, conventional practices of speaking, as well as thinking and all other situations or spheres of human life.

The fact that ideology can be used as a weapon of defence and can propagate the set of values, interests, opinions, perceptions or view of the dominant group is also confirmed by Stern (1992:17) who maintains that ideology is 'used as a means toward the attaining, stabilizing and maintenance of political power in the world. The Westerners also wanted to extend the power to the literary domain.' Ideology pervades all spheres of human life, and the Westerners realised that their political power will not be complete if they did not extend their political influence, even to the literary domain. They ensured that their ideological standpoint affected and changed every aspect of human life under their sphere of influence. Stern (1992:17) further confirms the argument about the efforts of the dominant group to entrench its ideological standpoint. He contends that the conventions of the dominant ideology are 'imposed as a system of intellectual bondage on a literary work or on a man's imagination ...'

The ruling class uses ideology to sustain its position and legitimise a particular human situation in society. In other words, ideology can be used to coerce people to consent to the prevailing social order as set up by the advocates of the dominant ideology. In this case, ideology becomes a weapon of defence of the threatened power or position of the dominant group. It is used to protect and advance the interests of the proponents of the dominant ideology. This argument is also corroborated by Cronin (1987:12) who holds that ideology must be seen as 'a set of ideas with practical influence, shaped by specific social interest.' Cronin's statement further illustrates the point that the dominant ideology protects the interest of the dominant group. His argument further shows that ideology is used to mask the

interests of the ruling class. These interests are intended to influence people into believing something is a reality. The proponents of the dominant ideology will use their ideas and values to influence and mould society to fit their ideological preferences and pronouncements.

The comment, by Gugelberger, on the role of the dominant ideology, seems to support the argument that ideology permeates and influences every aspect of society. Gugelberger (1986:83) remarks that the dominant ideology 'comprises the dominant ideas, philosophical, artistic, moral, legal and religious ...' His statement further serves to endorse the fact that the dominant ideology represents the prevailing attitudes, perceptions, opinions, thoughts and values of the dominant group which are taken for granted or taken to be natural. People feel obliged to believe that they have to live in accordance with the dominant ideological preferences and pronouncements which are manifest in the different social formations. In other words, politics, economy, history, culture and arts in any society will tend to reveal traces of the influences of the dominant ideology.

In terms of culture, literature and arts, these domains cannot escape the influence of the dominant ideology. In Africa the ideology that dominated the lives of African people was the colonial ideology. Thoughts and values of the colonial masters were propagated at the expense of African thought and values. Initially, the colonial ideology undermined African thought and values which were expressed in African oral traditions, and later on in modern African-language literature. The following extract illustrates the fact that the dominant colonial ideology propagated values that disregarded anything that was African:

..., colonial forces ..., not only imposed a new cultural self on the African, but also undermined his own indigenous culture (Egudu, 1978:6).

Following on Egudu's statement, it is possible to trace how African culture was systematically undermined. An analysis of the above quotation reveals that every effort was made to relegate African thought and values to the background. In this way, the African people were encouraged to revere Western thought and values at the expense of African thought and values. African literary critics also argue that

criticism of African literature generally fails because this criticism is not premised on African literary paradigms. They further contend that the failure of the criticism of African literature is brought about by disregard for African culture.

Early missionaries and anthropologists labelled Africa as a Dark Continent inhabited by primitive and savage people. As a result of this attitude, folktales, praise poems, legends, myths, riddles, dramatic performances and many other literary forms were ignored. This, however, should not be taken to mean that early missionaries and anthropologists did not contribute meaningfully to the development of African languages and literature. African languages and literature are highly indebted to the efforts and studies of the early missionaries and anthropologists. What is referred to in this thesis is the ideology that was propagated by some of the missionaries, anthropologists and colonial rulers. The dominant ideology furthered its aims by discouraging African people from engaging in their traditional activities which were regarded as being barbaric and evil. The following extract attests to this argument:

She stopped because her husband forbade her to do so.  
'We are not heathens,' he said. 'Stories like those are not for the people of the Church.'  
And Hanna had stopped telling her children folk-stories. She was loyal to her husband and her new faith (Achebe, 1960:57- 58).

Here we see an African husband discouraging his wife from teaching their children African folk-stories. Both have converted to the new religion (Christianity). In order to prove that they have truly become Christians, African people had to forsake their own African practices. To further demonstrate their obedience and commitment to their newly acquired religion, African people had to try as much as possible to dissociate themselves from anything that had to do with African cultural practices. While African culture was undergoing a massive process of marginalisation, traditional African literature did not escape unscathed. The above quotation by Chinua Achebe, from his novel **No Longer at Ease**, demonstrates the efforts which were made to undermine African oral literature. It must be borne in mind that literature and its criticism are inseparable. They are symbiotically related. If people's natural arts and culture are removed and replaced by foreign ones, the mode of assessing them will also suffer in the process. The rejection of African culture also impacted negatively on African literary forms and their criticism. In other words, disregard of oral African

literature also led to the disregard of any serious study of its criticism. While research of folklore in the United States started around 1800, serious research of African folklore and its criticism commenced around the 1960s.

The disregard of African culture and arts constituted another endeavour to propagate only those practices that would not negate the pronouncement of the dominant ideology (colonial Christian ideology). African practices of the time were viewed as a contravention of the principles of the Christian religion and the political system of the colonial rulers. In support of the promotion of the dominant ideology, literary criticism had also to conform to the paradigms of the colonial dominant ideology. Assessment of literary forms was also heavily influenced and it had to be carried out in terms of the literary approaches that were not in opposition to the dominant ideology. This practice spilled over even to the period of modern African creative writing. Assessment of modern African literary texts began to experience a shift in terms of literary approaches that were applied in their evaluation. More emphasis was laid on those literary approaches that did not undermine the conventions of the dominant ideology.

Most research into African literature and its criticism shows a slant towards literary approaches that are at ease with the dominant ideology. There was very little progress in the direction of those literary approaches that were seen as being hostile to the pronouncements of the dominant ideology. Such literary approaches were marginalised and African scholars who wanted to use them in their research were also discouraged. The issue that concerns the marginalisation of some literary theories and the preference of some theories over others is also discussed in **Chapter 2.**

Censorship was also another form of repression that was used to undermine African culture and arts. Authorities used censorship to clear the way for the propagation of the dominant ideology, even in creative writing.

It should be noted that, insofar as the dominant ideology is concerned, everything humanly possible was done to direct research in African literature and its criticism to the literary approaches that did not rock the establishment. For example, in the South

African situation, most research in African-language literature and its criticism has been done in terms of literary theories such as Structuralism and Russian Formalism. Very little has been done in terms of the Marxist and feminist literary theories. Marxist literary theories have been avoided because of their perceived revolutionary nature, and feminist literary approaches were ignored because they tend to question and challenge the status quo of the traditional phallogocentric society.

To close the argument on the dominant ideology, an observation can be made that oral African criticism was ignored. Paying attention to it would not have helped further the cause of the dominant ideology. Meanwhile some contemporary literary theories were marginalised in the assessment of modern African-language literature for almost the same reason. Marginalisation did not help much in promoting the assessment of African- language literature.

### 3.5.2 The subversive ideology in African literary criticism

The word subversive suggests an opposition to the existing and dominant ideology. Subversive ideology emerges in direct reaction to the dominant ideology. This type of ideology runs counter to the dominant ideology. Subversive ideology is brought about by attempts to deny the legitimacy of the prevailing dominant ideology. In other words, the tenets of the subversive ideology directly oppose those of the dominant ideology.

In the context of this thesis, subversive ideology is opposed to the marginalisation and disregard of African-language literature and its criticism. Such an ideology propagates the consideration of the adoption and practice of African thought and values. Its advocates contend that African thought and values are valid and need to be respected. African practices should not be subjugated to foreign cultural models. The proponents of subversive ideology believe that statements like the following (Leshoai, 1981:241) misrepresent African culture and mislead people about its validity:

The Black man had no culture, religion, civilisation, educational system, politics, organized economy ...

The above statement represents the unwarranted and unfounded undermining of African beliefs and values. It further highlights a systematic and scathing attack on the vibrant cultural identity of African people. Subversive ideology serves as an affirmation of African thought and values and counters the powerful and influential pronouncements of the dominant ideology.

Subversive ideology does not entertain the myth that European culture is superior to African culture. It propagates the idea that African culture and everything that has to do with it are also of high standing. According to Blaut (1992:53), subversive ideology supports the argument that 'Europeans were neither brighter nor bolder nor better than non-Europeans, or more modern or more progressive, or more rational' as is alleged by those who subscribe to the Eurocentric school of thought. The proponents of the subversive ideology state that African culture, just like European culture, can also significantly influence the conception of literary approaches that can be applied in the evaluation of African literary texts. In other words, subscribers to the Afrocentric school of thought maintain that African culture has a role in influencing and informing the course of African literary criticism.

Unlike the dominant ideology that propagates the application of literary theories that affirm the precepts of the dominant ideology, subversive ideology calls for the implementation of marginalised literary theories. The advocates of the subversive ideology argue for the consideration of the literary theories that are ignored in the study of African-language literature and its criticism.

The statement below by Mutloatse also illustrates the rebellious nature of the artists and literary critics who subscribe to the pronouncements of the subversive ideology. He (1980:5) argues that:

We will have to donder (beat) conventional literature: old-fashioned critic and reader alike. We are going to pee, spit and shit on literary convention before we are through; we are going to kick and pull and push and drag literature into the form we prefer. We are going to experiment and probe and not give a damn what the critics have to say.

Literary critics such as Mutloatse maintain that African literature and its criticism are not taking the direction they should be. They feel that African literature and its criticism have been derailed. They are being steered into the wrong direction because their premise is not informed by the African context. Their premise is foreign because it is not informed by African thought, ideas and value systems. In the above quotation, Mutloatse unashamedly claims that literary critics who are concerned with the re-direction of the criticism of African literature should not hesitate to take corrective measures. These literary critics show a commitment in proclaiming the genuineness of African literature and its criticism. The above extract further shows the literary critics' bitterness and concern over the way in which African literature has been evaluated. Subscribers to the subversive ideology see their role as refuting the influence of the dominant ideology with regard to the way in which African literary criticism should be conducted.

The following extract further shows the proposed disregard for the influence of the dominant ideology in African literary criticism:

We are not going to be told how to re-live our feelings, pains and our aspirations by anybody who speaks from his own rickety culture  
(Mutloatse, 1980:5)

Mutloatse pours out his scorn for anybody who tries to prescribe what African literature should entail. The same vicious attack is applied to those who attempt to propagate the use of literary conventions based on foreign culture. This attack on any form of foreign-based literary conventions should not be taken to mean a total disregard of the importance of those literary conventions in the evaluation of African literature. What it constitutes is a reaction against the total disregard of the role African culture can play in influencing African literary criticism. Subversive literary critics wage war against the pronouncements of the dominant ideology which denied the human attributes and cultural activities of the marginalised people. Proponents of the subversive ideology take it upon themselves to rescue and reclaim the place and role of African culture in the domains of literary creation and literary criticism. Subscribers to the subversive ideology should vehemently oppose the assumptions of the dominant ideology as stated by Keita:

Before conquering, dominating and subjugating a people, the ruler asserts the superiority of his culture and civilisation and proclaims its civilising mission to those he has declared arbitrarily and unilaterally to be barbarian, savage, uncultured and without civilisation. (Keita, 1973:21)

People who were members of a cultural group that was subjugated were despised so much so that their cultural practices were marginalised. Anything that had to do with their culture was disregarded. They were expected to assimilate the cultural practices of their conquerors. In view of the fact that this thesis is about African-language literature and its criticism, one can assume that the disregard of African culture also brought about the disregard of the role of African culture in literary creation and literary criticism. As already indicated, the dominant ideology prescribed a slant towards the literary theories that would not undermine the status quo as proclaimed by the Western-oriented critics. The role of those literary critics who subscribe to the subversive ideology is strongly stated in the following quotation:

It has become today our historical duty to re-establish ourselves in a field such as culture because we are emerging from a long period of eclipse during which our intrinsic possession of the most elementary attributes of man, notably his creativity, was denied. (Keita, 1973:10-11)

In view of the above statement, it is not surprising that very little attempts were made to allow African culture to inform the conception of literary theories used in the evaluation of African literature in general, and African-language literature in particular. This incapacity – the failure to base the conception of literary approaches on African cultural milieu – also stunted the growth of genuine African literary criticism. The advocates of the dominant ideology and their disciples did not do much to recognise the significance of African culture because of the wholesale attack on African culture as seen in Keita's statement (1973:11) that 'Africa is accused of being without history and without culture ...'

The above quotation illustrates why little effort was made to consider the role of African culture in the conception of literary theories. Literary critics who subscribe to the subversive ideology are, firstly, trying to create space for the role that African culture can play in the conception of literary theories. They do this by emphasising

the significance of African culture in both the production of literature and its criticism. Their claim is further endorsed by the assertion made by Amuta (1989:7):

... literary criticism must be predicated on a theoretical outlook that couples cultural theory back to social practice.

Amuta uses the above statement to reiterate the point that culture informs or influences the creation of works of art as well as their evaluation. This further emphasises the need for the integration of culture and literature as well as literary criticism.

Literary critics and scholars who subscribe to the subversive ideology want to end the process that continues to stifle progress in African literary criticism. Such critics maintain that culture is an inexhaustible source of literature and arts. They take culture as generating and feeding literature and arts. Writers and literary theorists draw inspiration from the culture which has served as the source of works of art. According to Keita (1973:26), African people must use 'their cultural values ..., in order to fight more successfully against imperialism ...' Thus one can see that literary critics who subscribe to the subversive ideology place much emphasis on the significance of culture in literary criticism. Literary criticism must not disregard the importance of the source of the literature it purports to evaluate. In other words, the advocates of the subversive ideology are trying to show that literary criticism should be in line with the dictates as laid down by its source, which is culture. Culture will inform and determine the nature of the literary criticism that will be used in assessing literature. This argument illustrates the attempt to refute pronouncements of the dominant ideology which propagates the use of literary theories not hostile to the status quo.

In the context of this thesis, subscribers to the subversive ideology call, firstly, for the 'grounding' of conception of any literary theory on the culture that informs the literature. The exponents of this ideology hold that for any literary theory to effectively help in the interpretation of a work of art, it must have been informed by the same cultural milieu which shaped the work of art. They argue that if a work of art and the literary theory used do not share any cultural origins or characteristics, the evaluation of that particular work of art will not be fair. Otherwise such a literary work will be

expected to 'submit' itself to the literary conventions which emanate from foreign cultural milieu. Secondly, the advocates of subversive ideology also accept the fact that some literary theories will be foreign. But, in such a situation, it is suggested that such literary theories will need to be adapted or adjusted in order to align them with the dictates of the cultural milieu of the literature. The argument about the need for the adaptation or adjustment of literary theories in the assessment of a work of art is also corroborated by Bishop in his doctoral thesis. Bishop (1970:9-10) cites the opinion expressed by Nancy Schmidt:

By trying to apply Western standards to literature which is not wholly within Western tradition, judgements become inconsistent and criticism becomes naive or wholly incorrect .... Until more is learned about aesthetic standards and the histories of both oral and written literature in non-Western societies, there can be no basis for a valid cross-cultural literary criticism, which must consider literature primarily in the context of the culture in which it is created and secondarily in terms of the critic's own culture.

The above extract represents an attempt by Bishop and other literary critics to argue for the consideration of the cultural background of any work of art before subjecting it to evaluation on the basis of foreign literary theory. Bishop maintains that, should foreign literary theories be applied without making an attempt to adjust or adapt them to the cultural milieu of the literary text to be evaluated, there are bound to be flaws. What is of concern to Bishop is that such a practice will disadvantage the literary text which is being assessed in terms of foreign literary theory. With reference to African literature, Bishop's standpoint should be seen as an argument for calling for the literary theory to be aligned with the cultural milieu which informed African literary text that is being evaluated.

Bishop maintains that any assessment of African literary texts which shuns the African cultural dimension inherent in all African literary texts is bound to fail dismally. This argument indicates the importance of discovering and understanding the cultural context of a work of art and also stresses the necessity to let theory be informed or influenced by the cultural context of the literary text which is being evaluated. Of interest to literary critics and scholars is the fact that Bishop and many others are not advocating that foreign literary theories should not be applied in the criticism of African literary texts. They argue that these literary theories will not do justice to the

African literary text if they are not adjusted or adapted to the milieu from which an African literary text originated.

The proponents of subversive ideology are merely offering an invitation to other literary critics and scholars to take part in the re-mapping of the borders of literary theories. They wish to show that the effectiveness of each literary theory can be limited if a foreign world-view is applied to a literary text. For it to skip the cultural borders it needs to be modified in terms of the cultural background of the literary text it seeks to evaluate. Advocates of the subversive ideology offer a perspective that emphasises the need for literary critics to shift to the centre by moving away from their polarised and entrenched positions. This shift to the centre by literary critics from both camps represents a compromise on both sides. Their meeting will help to enrich the literary pool from which critics of African literature have to draw. There appears to be a need for the reconstruction or modification of literary approaches in the evaluation of African literary texts. Literary critics maintain that this can also be achieved by opposing the peripheral status and exclusion of the African cultural premise in African literary criticism. A further important observation is that subversive ideology, in the context of this thesis, calls for the need to bring those literary theories that have been relegated to the background to the centre stage of literary criticism. Therefore, the emphasis is not only on the need for the modification of literary approaches, but also for the consideration and recognition of the effectiveness of the marginalised literary theories.

The proponents of subversive ideology are opposed to the peripheral status of other literary theories. For example, **Chapter 2** of this thesis points to a slant towards dominant literary theories such as Structuralism and Russian Formalism in most of the research conducted in African-language literature. In direct response to such a situation, exponents of the subversive ideology call for more attention to be paid to marginalised literary theories such as Marxism and Feminism. Moreover, the scale of research in African-language literature based on these literary theories is very low compared to that of the structuralist and Russian Formalist approaches.

### **3.6 Eurocentrism and Afrocentricism: Ideological polarisation in African literary criticism**

African literary criticism has always found itself to be the subject of an ongoing debate about the presence of Eurocentric tendencies on the one hand and the need for it to incorporate Afrocentric tendencies, on the other hand. The scholars who advocate Afrocentrism see their effort as an intervention to counter the continued analysis of African literary texts on the basis of literary theories that are purely and rigidly Eurocentric in nature. They call for a shift from a rigidly Eurocentric-based criticism of African literature to a more Afrocentric-based criticism. This illustrates the effort by African literary critics and scholars to call for an infusion of African cultural dimension in the analysis of African literary texts.

Generally speaking, Eurocentrism refers to the perception of things from a European point of view. This viewpoint is grounded on the European cultural context. In other words, European culture is seen as a basis upon which the perception of things is anchored. The world is viewed from the point of view of European culture. European culture becomes the major determining factor in the shaping of people's perceptions of the world around them. Life based on European culture has led to conflicting views between Europeans and other nations about the way in which life or the world should be viewed.

The fervent belief and support of Eurocentrism was achieved by means of colonial expansion. Europeans travelled the world spreading their political, economic, cultural and religious beliefs. Other nations were made to adopt the new European ways of life. European economic, cultural, religious and political systems became a dominant force that shaped the lives of the conquered people. The attempt by Europeans to dominate the world by spreading their political, economic, cultural and religious spheres of influence is echoed in the following extract:

Europeans are more progressive, venturesome, achievement-oriented, and modern than Africans and Asians ... and superior technology as well as a more advanced economy, went forth to explore and conquer the world (Blaut, 1992:28).

The quotation suggests that European nations did everything possible to extend their sphere of influence to other nations. They set out to conquer the world and bring the conquered nations under their rule. It follows that the conquered nations were expected to adopt the new political, religious and cultural system that came with their conquerors. Other nations were not seen as being progressive or modern. The assumption that other nations were backward is more supported by the following statement made by Blaut (1992:7):

Outside Europe, cultural progress is not to be expected: the norm is stagnation, 'traditionalism' ...  
Europe is seen as a source of inventiveness, rationality, innovativeness, and virtue whereas others are uncivilised, backward and savage.  
Europe invents, others imitate; Europe advances, others follow or they are led.

The above extract illustrates the point that Eurocentrism led to the belief that only people from Europe are progressive and civilised and that human existence in general can be defined in terms of European culture. This created the view that European economic, religious, cultural and political systems were efficient and superior to those of other nations. Hence, other people were expected to imitate and follow the Europeans.

In connecting and relating the above argument about Eurocentrism to the debate about literary criticism, it is quite clear that Eurocentric-based literary critics and scholars see no problem in the application of Eurocentric-based literary approaches to literary texts that are not of European origin. In this case, literary texts are expected to fit or be forced to fit into Eurocentric-based literary theories. Literary texts, even though foreign to the literary approaches being used to analyse them, were expected to satisfy the literary conventions of the Eurocentric literary approaches.

Afrocentrism emerged as a direct response to the pronouncements of Eurocentrism. In terms of Afrocentrism, African people's perceptions are to be shaped by what obtains in Africa. In other words, African people's ways of life and perceptions of things have to be determined or influenced by the realities of the African world-view.

The advocates of Afrocentrism hold that literary approaches which are to be used in evaluating African literary texts have to be greatly influenced by Afrocentric-based realities.

Afrocentric literary critics and scholars question the validity and effectiveness of Western literary theories in assessing African works of art. The objection raised against Western literary tools is grounded on the assumption that Western literary theories are informed and premised on foreign cultural milieu. The objection to the wholesale application of Western literary theories is also based on the argument that the disregard of African cultural nuances on the production of African literary texts and its conception of literary criticism could have far reaching implications for the domain of African literary criticism.

The disregard of the role played by African culture in the conception and application of literary theories stirred unprecedented ideological bickering in the field of African literary criticism. The advocates of the Afrocentric-based approach are vigorously opposed to the 'low valuation' placed on African-language literature and African-language literary criticism by foreigners. The Afrocentric-based literary critics and scholars attribute the disregard and low valuation of African-language literature and African-language literary criticism to Western literary critics and scholars. The latter are charged with the biased, unfair and negative appraisal of African-language literature. The resentment of the dominant influence of Eurocentrism in most literary approaches, by the Afrocentric-based literary scholars, also emerges in Attwell's (1984:79) statement that '... a number of critical readership or interpretive communities have made their various appropriations of African literature, in ways which do not speak to us.' This suggests that evaluations of African literature on the basis of pure and rigid Eurocentric literary approaches does very little to unpack the literary meaning of the African literary text. In the light of the statements made Attwell, the advocates of the Afrocentric literary approach display their determination to assert the culture and values of the African people. They hope, too, that recognition of the significance of African culture could also impact positively on the research by African literary critics.

The cultural and ideological conflict between the Eurocentric-based literary critics and the Afrocentric-based literary critics led Swanepoel (1986:35) to assume that the concern of the Afrocentric subscribers 'roots in the fact that 'imported' themes may cause one to disregard or even deny specific cultural features which may be woven into at least some creative writing in various literatures.' This quotation illustrates the point that the indiscriminate application of Western literary theories to African literary texts does not do justice to African literary texts. It further demonstrates that it is the cultural gap between the Eurocentric-based literary critics and the African literary text that renders them unqualified to 'critique' African literary texts objectively.

Afrocentric-based literary critics are vehemently opposed to the patronising attitude harboured by some of the Eurocentric literary critics towards African culture. In reaction to this attitude, Izevbaye (1982:2) argues that the Afrocentric literary critics have come to 'realise the need to defend African literary works in an effort to stem the tide of Eurocentric domination by opposing the wholesale application of Western literary tools on African literature.. The fight against Eurocentric domination in African literary criticism is also entertained by Chinweizu et al. (1985:147) who argue that the 'imposition of Western literary tools on African literary text leads to servitude on the part of the African literature and its writers.' This statement illustrates the line of thinking that radical advocates of Afrocentrism propagate. Gordimer (1980:45) calls it 'a move away from ties with England and Europe.' In other words, this suggests an attempt by African literary critics and scholars to get rid of Eurocentric influences in African literary tradition. In the words of Gordimer (1980:47), Afrocentrism must be seen as an 'opposition ... to the values of the imported culture.' Gordimer's words are indicative of concerted effort by radical African literary critics and scholars to rid African literary criticism of Eurocentric domination. According to Gordimer (1980:46), Afrocentric-based literary critics and scholars are simply asking for the cultural and literary re-conquest of African literary criticism from the grasp of those literary critics who profess allegiance to Eurocentric literary approaches.

Despite the concerted effort by the Afrocentric school of thought, one important issue remains clear: the raging debate between the Eurocentric-based and Afrocentric-based literary critics and scholars does not lead to any significant contribution to the development of African literary criticism. Scholars from both camps expend much of

their critical and literary energy on defending their cultural ideological positions. Very little effort is used to design or conceive relevant literary theories. Hence the argument that much time was wasted on what Amuta (1989:3) sees as a quarrel that only 'gravitated around the vague quest of whether to use "Western" or "African" aesthetic criteria.'

Jeyifo is sceptical of the opinion that African literary critics are the only ones who can justly and objectively evaluate African literature because of their inside knowledge of African culture. He (1990:35) cites Lindfors who contends that 'no single tribe of critics can claim monopoly of clear vision: every individual has his blind spots, and some critics - African as well as Western - will be much blinder than others.' The argument made by Lindfors shows that even African literary critics can themselves fail to justly and objectively evaluate African literature even though they are well-versed in African culture. Knowledge of African culture does not necessarily give African literary critics an edge over Eurocentric-based literary critics.

Gordimer also seems uncomfortable with the issue of the place and role of Afrocentrism in literary criticism. She feels that Eurocentric-based literary approaches have made an immense contribution to African literary criticism. Gordimer's (1980:48) sentiments about the need for literary approaches to be Afrocentric-based are reiterated when she calls the Afrocentric debate a 'heart-in-the-right-place propaganda and literary cheap jacket.' Thus Gordimer sees the effort by the advocates of the Afrocentric school of thought as mere literary propaganda. She maintains that Eurocentric-based literary approaches have, despite ill-feeling about their relevance to the evaluation of African literature, succeeded in analysing African literature.

Although the point raised by Lindfors and Gordimer is understandable, it does not negate the argument that African literary critics will be able to make a more informed and valid evaluation of African literary text than their European counterparts. The following extract by Jahn (1971:45) supports the course of action advocated by followers of the Afrocentric school of thought:

I believe that our particular cultures harbour in them sufficient vitality, sufficient power of regeneration in order to adapt themselves (once objective conditions that have been created for them can be modified) to the conditions of the modern world and can bring to all problems, whatever they may be, political, social, economical, cultural, valid and original solutions ...

The above statement demonstrates the point that literary approaches can always be modified or adapted to suit the cultural background of the literary text. It is clear that Jahn and many other scholars assume that Afrocentrism provides a way which enables literary critics to discover truly African ideas. Afrocentric-based literary critics and scholars call for African art-forms and their criticism to be related to or to be informed by the African experience, thoughts and values. They assume that African literature and its criticism can best be served by basing them on African indigenous culture.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

The debate in this chapter illustrates the role played by ideology in the conception and application of literary theories in assessing literary texts. The discussion also shows the extent to which ideology divided critics into Afrocentric- and Eurocentric-based camps. This chapter also demonstrates that giving prominence to selected literary theories and relegating others to the periphery does not help the course of African literary criticism. In other words, the marginalisation of other literary theories has rather 'stunted' the development of African literary criticism. The most important notion in this chapter is the argument for an exploration of the African cultural dimension in African literary criticism and the creation of more space for marginalised literary theories in the field of African literary criticism.

## CHAPTER 4

### AN INTRINSIC-BASED MULTIPLE-READING OF AN AFRICAN- LANGUAGE LITERARY TEXT

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the application of some intrinsic literary approaches in the analysis of the same Tshivenda literary text (i.e. *A si ene*) that was analysed using the extrinsic literary approach in **Chapter 5**. This exercise will help to demonstrate that the intrinsic literary approaches also help readers to arrive at completely different meaning from those that may be arrived at by the application of the extrinsic literary approaches. The application of intrinsic literary approaches in the analysis of a Tshivenda literary text is intended to confirm the argument made in this thesis that extrinsic and intrinsic literary theories lead to different meanings of the same literary text. In this chapter, only two dominant intrinsic literary approaches, namely, the Russian formalist and structuralist approaches, will be applied. The application of these two literary approaches will help to highlight the fact that the two literary approaches (extrinsic and intrinsic) differ in their focus when applied to a literary text.

According to Barnhart and Barnhart (1994:1108), intrinsic literary theories focus on the internal features of a literary text. The intrinsic literary theories are only concerned with that element which is part of a work of art that is being evaluated. The proponents of the intrinsic literary theory only see those aspects that are part and parcel of a work of art as important in the critical assessment of a literary work. The emphasis or focus on a literary text is further endorsed by Wellek and Warren (1956:139 and 140) who argue that 'the study of literature should, first and foremost, concentrate on the actual works of art themselves.' This suggests that the influence of external factors on a work of art is not taken into account during the evaluation. The following is a brief discussion of two intrinsic literary approaches, namely, Russian Formalism and Structuralism.

## 4.2 Russian formalism as an intrinsic literary approach

The emergence of Russian Formalism ushered in a new era in literary criticism. External forces in this theory, such as the reader and the writer, are not regarded as important determinants of the meaning of a literary text. Literary critics who subscribe to the Russian formalist school of thought advocate autonomy of the literature from external influences. This generation of literary critics were opposed to the pronouncements of the romantic and moral-philosophical approaches because the letters were not deemed to be sufficiently scientific.

It has been extensively discussed in **Chapter 2** that, from a Russian formalist point of view, literature should be a discipline on its own and must have its own conventions. Russian formalists hold the view that identifying and using different features and/or conventions that are different from those used in other disciplines will render the literary practice unique, autonomous and, most importantly, scientific. The Russian formalists made a shift if not a complete break from the literary premise that was marked by a high degree of moral, biographical, ideological and historical information. They claimed that it is the 'literariness' which makes a given work a work of art or literature as attested to by Gray (1984:90) who also shares the same view when he states that it is the 'literariness' of a given work that renders it literary, argues that it is literary language that distinguishes a work of art from other discourses. Literary critics who belong to this school of thought maintain that what makes literature unique is mainly the literary device of defamiliarisation.

Although already stated in **Chapter 2**, it is important to mention again that, for Visser (1982:17), defamiliarisation occurs when 'familiar acts and objects are taken out of their ordinary context, or by describing them as if they were seen for the first time.' For this process to take place, writers use language in a special way. Literature achieves its distinctiveness by deviating from and distorting everyday language. Adherents of the Russian formalist school of thought hold that for a given work of art to be aesthetic its language has to be deformed or distorted. They view this process as making language unfamiliar or strange. According to Ryan and Van Zyl (1982:17), imagery is the essential literary criterion that helps to bring about defamiliarisation. They hold that imagery is the necessary tool with which that which is familiar can be

made unfamiliar. In this instance, writers use everyday language differently in order to produce aesthetic effects.

Some literary critics use the concept 'estrangement' instead of the term 'defamiliarisation.' They argue that using some of the literary devices available to the writer helps to make everyday language strange. Simple and ordinary language that speakers are used to is turned into metaphorical language intended to intensify the aesthetic effect of a work of art. According to Fokkema and Ibsch (1982:17), estrangement happens when 'an object is transferred from the sphere of its usual perception to that of a new perception, which results in a particular semantic shift.' In the case of literature, ordinary language is made strange by making it poetic or by means of a specific language construction. The literary device essential in bringing about estrangement in literature is imagery. It is the best literary tool with which writers can make the familiar unfamiliar or strange.

The use of imagery brings about poetic language which is different from everyday language or language used in other discourses. Defamiliarised language brings about the 'literariness' of a work of art. Defamiliarisation helps to distinguish a work of art from other disciplines in the sense that language used is artistic. The use of literary devices, especially imagery, helps in making literary work unique in comparison with other forms of discourse. This occurs because words, expressions and other literary devices often used in our everyday language are made to be unfamiliar. Swanepoel (1990:10) holds that such defamiliarisation is done in order to 'renew their (i.e. words, expressions and literary devices) sound and meaning for aesthetic communicative purposes.' Unlike other disciplines, the rationale of the Russian school is that much emphasis should be placed on the special use of language. For language in literature to be special, artists need to use poetic language. As a result, poetic language constitutes an important area of study by literary critics who subscribe to the Russian formalist school of thought. The following is an appraisal of the use of imagery as a defamiliarisation technique in a Tshivenda literary text (i.e. **A si ene**).

#### 4.2.1 Imagery as a defamiliarisation technique in ***A si ene***

Defamiliarisation happens when writers move away from the use of ordinary language. This is possible by using the artistic or poetic language. To render their language artistic, writers use literary devices which are loaded with powerful imagery. Writers raise their language use to the poetic language level so that they can powerfully give a full representation of their content matter. Defamiliarisation entails the use of imagery as part of language. Everyday language is eschewed. The defamiliarised language (i.e. figurative language) bears qualities which strongly appeal to the senses of the reader. In such a language, objects and qualities are used to make an impression on any five senses in order to create an image that is descriptive. This leads to what Abrams (1981:78) regards as ‘the creation of mental pictures by the use of poetic language.’ The writer uses artistic words to appeal to the senses and feelings of the reader.

In the words of Ryan (1963:53), poetic language, which is the defamiliarised language, ‘enables the reader to recreate a scene or character’s behaviour more vividly.’ It helps to heighten the emotional effect of any work of art. By defamiliarising language in a work of art, a writer is able to convey the sensory experience in an effective and powerful manner. By moving away from the use of everyday language, writers use figurative language to help readers to, according to Lenake (1980:125), ‘see, feel, taste and hear the world more acutely than we might otherwise.’ Figurative language is simply a way of powerfully appealing to the reader’s mind. Such language creates interesting pictures and sensations. It makes ideas more lively and vivid. To defamiliarise language or move away from the ordinary language in creative writing, figurative devices such as similes, personifications, metaphors, symbols, ideophones, hyperboles, proverbs and idioms are used.

##### *4.2.1.1 Defamiliarisation through the use of metaphors in ***A si ene****

Metaphors are used by writers to defamiliarise their language. Metaphors are extremely rich in imagery. Their use can enhance the quality of language and also help in rendering a vivid description of settings and behaviour of characters in a work of art. According to Cohen (1973:52), a metaphor is ‘a direct or indirect substitution of

one element for another.’ This means that the substituted element is described in terms of the features or characteristics of the substituting element. In other words, one has to associate the features or characteristics of one element with those of the other element. In the context of the defamiliarisation process, one element is made unfamiliar by being described in terms of the features or characteristics of the other element. The following sentence is a good example of a metaphor:

*Munna uyu ndi ntsa.*

This man is an antelope.

The above sentence equates two things, namely, man and antelope. The two are associated by means of their shared characteristics. Saying that the man is an antelope gives the man the characteristics of an antelope. The reader must infer or know the antelope’s characteristics so as to understand the description of the man in terms of the antelope. An antelope is known for its peaceful nature. The metaphor used above can mean that the man referred to is of peaceful nature. He may never quarrel with others. Such a man avoids conflict situations. However, the metaphor may be explained negatively by viewing the man as being weak or a coward. An antelope does not fight or defend itself when attacked by lions and tigers in the forest. What it does instead is to run very hard to save its dear life.

On the other hand, the metaphor can mean that he is a good athlete. An antelope may save its life by using its athletic abilities. An antelope, a fast running animal, is not physically strong. It resorts to speed to save its life whenever it is attacked. By virtue of being associated with an antelope, the man in question, like an antelope, runs very fast.

In the above metaphor, defamiliarisation has occurred. Imagery conveys to the reader the message that the man is a fast runner or a peaceful person. One could have simply said the man is peaceful or runs fast. But the use of the metaphor has rendered the language unfamiliar and more artistic. The use shifted the language out of its normal, usual or ordinary use. As a result of defamiliarisation, the reader is forced to see or think of the man in terms of the physical characteristics of an antelope. The writer’s successful use of metaphor changed ordinary language into

charged language. The metaphor, used as a defamiliarisation technique, showed a resemblance to objects essentially different. Thus the man has been delineated in an extraordinary way.

Below follows a discussion of some metaphors that have been used as defamiliarisation techniques in **A si ene**.

After the disappearance of Adziambei with Fanyana, Adziambei kept on trying to escape from Fanyana's home because she had actually been tricked by Fanyana into agreeing to go with him. Fanyana made her believe that he was sent by Maluṭa, her boyfriend, to come with her. On realising that she was not physically strong enough to fight Fanyana to escape, Adziambei decided to pretend to be in love with one of Fanyana's workers, Matshaya. This was a good chance for Matshaya since he always wanted to propose love to her, but he just did not know how to do it because she was the wife of his employer. Now that she had approached him, he resolved to do anything to get her. Matshaya utters the following metaphorical statement:

“Ndo vha ndi tshi mu tama, zwino ndo mu wana, ndi musadzi wanga.  
*Nda sa mu lwela **ndi musadzi!***”

“I have always wanted her to be my woman. Now I have found her. She is now my woman. *If I don't fight for her, then it means **I am a woman!***”

In African culture, women are believed to be physically weak. It is not surprising that Adziambei cannot fight Fanyana to stop him from forcefully taking her away from her boyfriend. Adziambei gave Matshaya a gun and some money so that he could kill Fanyana whom he had snatched and captured against her will. In the above quotation, the writer has used the metaphor - ***Nda sa mu lwela ndi musadzi*** – to mean that, if Matshaya failed to fight for Adziambei (a woman captured by Fanyana against her will), this would mean that Matshaya is as weak as a woman. The writer could have simply said he would be weak like a woman. But he instead used the unfamiliar language of the metaphor to show Matshaya's determination to prove that he was not weak and fearful. In short, the ordinary language is made rich through the process of defamiliarisation.

#### 4.2.1.2 Defamiliarisation through the use of personification devices in **A si ene**

Language used by the writer can also be enriched through personification. Using personification, the writer attributes human characteristics to a non-human being. In this case an inanimate object is spoken of as if it is human or as if it has emotion. Madima's (1984:3) use of the literary device of personification can be seen in the following extract:

*Shango xa hone xo no vha netisa, na u vhuya vha a zwi funa, vho lombela, hu tou xai masheleni a u vhuya e ndi bva vhubvo.*

He is tired of that country. He also wants to come back home. But it is just that the money says I am nowhere.

In the above extract, money is shown as being able to speak. The money has been given the attributes of a human being, namely, the ability to speak. Language, used in an unfamiliar way, makes use of an idiomatic expression. A simple message is conveyed that Vho Nembuḁa is a migrant worker who is in a foreign place (KwaZulu-Natal). He is further shown as no longer interested in staying there. But he cannot return to the province because he does not have money for transport. This message utilises the defamiliarisation device of personification.

Madima (1984:40) also defamiliarises his language by using personification in the following extract:

*"Makhuwani xo lala nga maanḁa, ri vhona vhone vhakhaḁa. Ro vherega ra xi i sia henengeo. A i tendi u vhuya Venḁa."*

"It is quiet in Johannesburg. We only see many Batswana women. It (money) refuses to come to Venḁa."

The writer shows money being refractory and doing what only can be done by a human being. Hence the money is said to be refusing to come to Venḁa. Thus language has been defamiliarised by the use of a powerful and, unusual figurative device, namely, personification device. The simple message that Vhavanḁa men who went to Johannesburg to work cannot bring home the money they had worked for is tellingly conveyed.

Madima illustrates the case that, because these Venḁa men spend all their hard earned money on Batswana women, having gone to work in the cities, they had no choice but to leave their wives back in Venḁa. Since their wives are far away in Venḁa, they then start relationships with Batswana women who were already working in the cities. To enjoy such relationships, Vhavenḁa men then have to use their money for the sexual favours they receive from these Batswana women. In the end, Vhavenḁa men spend all of their money on their Batswana women. This forces the Vhavenḁa men to go back to Venḁa without money. The implication is that families of Vhavenḁa men who were working in the cities suffered from the migrant labour system. This means that their families still did not benefit from the migrant labour system because the Vhavenḁa men still came back home without money.

Defamiliarisation is, once again, used by Madima (1984:51) in the following paragraph:

*“A tshi lavhelesa nga maḁo o ḁalaho miḁodzi a sokou vhona muthu wa munna a tshi ḁa khae nga u gidima. Ndi Maluḁa munna wawe! Adziambei a fhu fhela fhasi a sa ḁivhi uri u khou ita mini. Vha nambatelana vha sokou vusa tshililo vhoḁhe.”*

*“When she looked with her eyes filled with tears, she saw a man coming, running towards her. It was Maluḁa her husband. She jumped down from the tree. The two embraced each other and woke up a cry (cried together).*

Adziambei was about to commit suicide because she thought she would never see her boyfriend (Maluḁa) again. But just before she could hang herself, Maluḁa appeared. Adziambei stopped trying to commit suicide. They hugged, kissed and cried because they had found each other again. But taken literally, Madima said the two *‘woke up the cry.’* In the above quotation, a cry is being given human attributes, that of being able to sleep and wake up. Hence Maluḁa and his fiancée are waking it up. With this defamiliarisation technique, Madima is attempting to draw a picture of extra joy that Maluḁa and Adziambei experienced when they finally found each other after a long period of separation because of Adziambei’s abduction by Fanyana. The love between Maluḁa and Adziambei, after their reunion, was so great that they cried bitterly. However, the cry was not one of sadness. It was instead a cry because of

their extreme happiness after they found each other at the time they had given up hope of ever seeing each other again.

Another personification device is used by Madima (1984:55) in the following quotation:

*Adziambei a thoma u zwi vhona uri ndi hone o jiwa nga shango.*

Adziambei then realised that she has been eaten by the country.

The context of the above statement is that Adziambei has been abducted by Maluṭa's friend, Fanyana. She went with Fanyana because the latter had told her that he had been sent by Maluṭa to fetch her so that he could buy her new clothes for Fanyana's wedding. Since Fanyana was Maluṭa's best friend, she trusted him. She later realised that she had been duped because she never saw Maluṭa.

In the above extract, the writer once again employs personification, namely, the country is portrayed as a living thing that can eat a human being. Adziambei says that she has been 'eaten' by the country. In a conventional way, the writer could have simply said that Adziambei will never be able to go back home again. But the writer artistically makes use of the defamiliarisation strategy by portraying the country as being able to eat a person, that is, Adziambei. The personification device vividly conveys the message that Adziambei was so lost and her feelings of separation were so intense that it was as if she had been swallowed up by a country and would never be able to find her way back home.

If something is eaten, it never comes back. It is gone for good. Even if one can cut open the stomach of the person in search of what has been eaten, one will never find it. Adziambei's utterances in the above quotation also sketch a picture of a person who has lost hope like something that has been swallowed and can never return. The quotation strongly suggests that Adziambei had accepted and embraced her fate. Her statement further reveals the vastness of South Africa as well as limited knowledge of South Africa, especially by people from rural areas. Once removed from their immediate rural environment and placed in a new and strange urban environment, they feel so overwhelmed and lost that they can easily lose their sense

of direction.

In the preceding passages, the writer deliberately used defamiliarisation to infuse and load the language of his work of art with imagery. This has been done to enhance the literary value of the writer's work. Madima resorted to defamiliarisation in order to cloak his work with imagery and other idiomatic expressions and so render it effective. This process allows the writer the freedom to use ordinary language in an unfamiliar way to render it literary and poetically powerful. The writer appeals to and evokes the readers' emotions with regard to his message. The use of personification enabled the writer to effectively and successfully appeal to and evoke readers' emotions. Moreover, personification helped to adorn the writer's language with figurative and literary richness that lends it the power to convince and appeal to the reader.

#### 4.2.1.3 Defamiliarisation through the use of simile in **A si ene**

Similes are also literary devices that a writer can use to enhance the quality and effectiveness of his language and style. In order to appeal to the reader, Madima aptly uses similes to communicate his message by explaining or describing something in terms of the characteristics of the other, using 'as' or 'like'. Madima uses language unconventionally in this way. Look at Madima's (1984:2) use of similes to enhance the quality of his language and style:

*Adziambei ene o vha o naka, hu si na hu no pfi afho. **Maṭo awe a tshi nga ṅaledzi.***

Adziambei was really beautiful, and no one could doubt that. **Her eyes were like stars.**

Madima portrays Adziambei as an extremely beautiful young lady. Adziambei's beauty is conveyed through the use of a simile. A simile is used to liken Adziambei's eyes to the stars. The attributes of stars are transferred to Adziambei's eyes. Stars are celestial bodies that glitter and decorate the sky at night. Stars are a spectacle to watch, and a subject for countless writers. In this way, the beauty and spectacle of stars are conferred on Adziambei. The use of this simile creates a picture of an extraordinarily beautiful young woman. Here Madima has used ordinary language in

an unfamiliar way to explain Adziambei's beauty. There is no doubt that the depiction of Adziambei's beauty is bound to catch the attention of young men as finally happened with Maluṭa.

Madima (1984:52) further employs the defamiliarisation strategy by using simile in the following extract:

*Adziambei ene o vha o fhelela, o onda a sala a tshi nga luṭanga, muthu a si tsha vhuya a ri ndi ene.*

Adziambei had lost a lot of weight; she was as thin as a reed, one would not even recognise her.

Adziambei's fiancée, Maluṭa, was lying in hospital after they were attacked by township thugs on their way home. Maluṭa sustained serious injuries during the scuffle with the criminals. Adziambei thought that Maluṭa would not survive the ordeal. She thought he would die. The thought of Maluṭa dying worried her. Amid her worry over Maluṭa's state of health, Adziambei lost considerable weight. Madima uses a simile to describe Adziambei's physical state as a result of her concern for Maluṭa. The writer says she was as thin as a reed, a telling simile which shows the extent to which Adziambei had lost weight because of her concern about Maluṭa's health. The extreme loss of weight by Adziambei also highlights Adziambei's strong and everlasting love for Maluṭa. The state of health of Maluṭa preoccupied her mind to such an extent that she forgot to take care of herself. The writer has used an apt and sensitive simile in this defamiliarisation process to convey the message about Adziambei's fragile health.

Defamiliarisation can also be traced in the following extract by Madima (1984: 49):

*Adziambei ndi musi a tshi khou tsumbudzana na muriwe wavho. Ndi Masela. Ene o mu itani? U mu vetekanya he a sala khofheni hu tshi nga ndi **tsimu yo liṅwaho phulu dzi sa athu u Jera.***

Adziambei was wrestling with one of them. This was Masela. What a mess? She scratched his face and left it like the field that has been ploughed with wild bulls.

The above simile is used in an unusual and forceful sense to allude to the physical strength of Adziambei. The latter was with her fiancé, Maluṭa on their way home when they were attacked by criminals. The above extract tells of the fierce battle that Adziambei waged against one of the criminals. Her strength is likened to that of undomesticated bull. One can imagine how difficult it is to handle an undomesticated bull. Adziambei's fierce fight against Masela also tells of her determination and strength. She did so much damage to the face of the criminal that the writer chose to liken the damage to that made by a wild bull. This use of defamiliarised language helps to graphically reveal the bad state of Masela's face after being scratched by Adziambei during their.

The defamiliarisation strategy is further used by Madima (1984:51) in the following quotation:

*“Na nṅe-vho ndo vha na zwino, zwino ndi ḁo tou fela ḁakani sa khwali.”*

**I was also wrong. I will now die in the bush (forest) like a khwali (bird).**

After the attack of Adziambei and Maluṭa by the criminals, Adziambei thought Maluṭa had died. She then decided that she would no longer go home to avoid being blamed for Maluṭa's death. Actually, Adziambei, vowed to never go back home. She swore that, should she die, she would rather be buried away from home. To Adziambei, the prospect of dying away from home is like the situation of a bird which dies anywhere and does not receive proper burial as human beings do. This pains her, because like a bird that dies in the forest, she will never have a burial that is proper and fitting for a human being. She adjudged her situation so dire that she resolved not to go home because her affair had not been approved by her parents and also that Maluṭa has been killed. By not going home she was renouncing her right to proper burial befitting a person who has a family.

Madima has vividly resorted to the use of defamiliarisation to enrich his language and style. He deployed metaphors, personification and similes. Through these literary devices, Madima rendered his language unfamiliar. Loading it with rich and relevant

imagery, Madima writes simply but tellingly. His use of defamiliarisation offers literary and stylistic appeal to the reader.

### 4.3 Structuralism as an intrinsic literary approach

The proponents of the structuralist literary school of thought hold the view that a work of art can only be studied scientifically by concentrating on the internal structure of a particular work of art. They proposed highly systematised rules. They viewed literature as an activity governed solely by its own rules and not by anything beyond or outside the literary text.

Bressler's (1994: 63) viewed the structuralist literary approach as 'a method of investigation with the aim to discover how all the parts fit together and function.' In other words, a work of art must be seen as an entity made up of a number of elements. Balance is maintained if all the component parts play their role. This so-called balance or stability can be maintained only if the component parts of the whole manifest a harmonious relationship. This shows that the structuralists focused on the entity and all that makes up an entity.

According to Visser (1982:62-63), the component parts of a work of art may include, among others, conventional literary features such as plot, characters, theme, setting, conflict, etc. There has to be a balance and mutual relationship between parts of a whole and how these parts combine to become a meaningful text. If there is a lack in any of these elements, this may impact negatively on the overall meaning of a work of art. For the structuralists, it is of vital importance that there is a good combination of all conventional literary devices in order for a literary work to be intelligible or meaningful. Thus plot development must be such that it confirms setting, theme and character development.

For the purpose of literary analysis in this chapter, only character, conflict and setting will be evaluated in **A si ene**.

The structuralist approach lays emphasis on the importance of all structural elements of a work of art. A good literary piece must have well-developed characters, conflict,

setting, theme, plot, language and style. All of the above structural elements have to be well-developed and well-balanced. Of all these structural elements, a character is of paramount importance. This is the case, simply, because a work of art is written on and around characters. A work of art is written to highlight characters' situations, conflicts, goals, dreams, aspirations, fears, weaknesses, etc. Without characters there can be no story. This is confirmed by Wilbur (2001:175) who says that 'every story is a story about characters.' The reader can only be interested in the events recounted if they relate to or are about characters' ideas, thoughts, dreams, aspirations, goals and behaviour.

It is important to understand the importance of characterisation in any work of art. According to Msimang (1983:99), characterisation is: '... the sum total of technique employed by an artist in presenting characters in a literary work of art so that such characters are perceived by the audience/ reader as persons endowed with moral and dispositional as well as physical qualities.'

Characterisation is thus a vital part of a writer's craft. As events are created characters come to life. In Raselekoane's (1991:12) view, characterisation is the 'art of creating fictional people endowed with real human identity.' This extract, once more, raises the importance of characterisation, i.e. the infusion of fictional or imaginary beings into the writer's world. Wilbur (2001:176) also agrees with this argument by stating that a character is 'a fictional version of a person created by the writer's imagination.' Thus imaginary people created by the writer when relating his/her story, have to be seen to be like true and real people. Characters have to be credible and convincing as they live their life in the story of the writer. Mafela (1993:136) views characterisation as a 'representation of a person in a literary work.' To Mafela a character is, therefore, an artificial construction, that may be endowed with certain human attributes such as thinking, speaking and laughing, etc. It is clear from the above extracts that characters must be depicted by the writer in such a way that they do everything in the story as real people do in real life.

In support of this argument, for a work of art to have credibility, the writer must, to use Wilbur's (2001:178) words, 'create and build interesting and convincing characters, caught up in all the fears, problems, love, emotions and goals of life.' Mawela

(1994:25) sums up this argument aptly by stating that 'such characters are created in such a way that they may seem believable.' This will be observable in their life, behaviour, actions, and their speech. Such characters will have to be seen doing, saying and behaving like real people in real life. This will, according to Wilbur (2001:178) evolve and develop a powerful and credible story. Mawela's (1994) argument clearly defines characterisation when she says that:

... characterisation is about human behaviour portrayed by writers of narrative prose, drama and short story. Such mode of behaviour is portrayed through actions, dialogue between characters, comments of some characters about others, and the descriptions of the characters by the author.

Mawela's argument is that readers can know and understand characters, their thoughts, actions, feelings, hopes, aspirations and fears when characters comment about themselves and other characters. Characterisation is also revealed through characters' actions. In support of this, Johnson (1992:35) holds the view that a fictional character is delineated or created and put on the pages of a printed text on the basis of his physical appearance and his psychological character or behaviour.

For the purpose of this research, only three main characters will be studied from a structuralist point of view. They are Adziambei, Maluța and Muhanelwa. Everything that occurs in **A si ene** revolves around these three main characters.

#### 4.3.1 A structuralist reading of Adziambei's character in **A si ene**

The writer often tells his/ her story through imaginary people known as characters. The latter are depicted through their thoughts, utterances, actions and beliefs. The writer uses language to create vivid and credible people in his/ her story. Their thoughts, beliefs, actions and utterances words have to be in line with the plot and setting created by the writer. The character and behaviour of the people have to align with the environment or social background in which they are depicted. The structuralist approach enables one to analyse and understand the character of the people in a work of art. Adziambei comes across as an extremely clean and house-proud individual. The following quotation tells of Adziambei's cleanliness:

*Kha vhudele ha muṭani na hone Adziambei o vha a sa fhirwi. Nnḁu yawe yo vha i tshimangadzo. Makolo ayo a tshi tou kombodza. Nangei ngomu hayo u tshi u sa kanda zwavhuḁi wa tseremuwa, wa wa (Madima, 1984:2).*

When it came to cleanliness in the house, no one could compete with her. Her house was a wonder. Its decorations could make one blind. Inside the house, if one is not careful, one could slip and fall.

The above quotation depicts Adziambei as a very clean Muvenda woman. Her house was a model of cleanliness. People were also impressed with the way she decorated her house. Madima even exaggerates in order to express his appreciation of Adziambei's cleanliness. People walking in Adziambei's courtyard could fall if they did not walk carefully because of the absolute spotlessness of the house's floor. The same statement also draws a picture of Adziambei as a hardworking young woman.

Madima also shows us another side of Adziambei by describing her physical beauty as follows:

*Adziambei ene o vha o naka, hu si na hu no pfi afho. Maḁo awe a tshi nga ḁaledzi. (Madima, 1984:2)*

Adziambei was really beautiful, and no one could doubt that. Her eyes were like stars.

Adziambei is portrayed as an extremely beautiful young Muvenda woman. The reader is made to 'see' and appreciate Adziambei's physical beauty. Adziambei's beauty is portrayed in the above quotation by, for example, comparing her eyes to twinkling stars. As a result of the use of the above simile, the reader is undoubtedly moved by Adziambei's beauty. The use of 'stars' elicits a sparkling picture of a young Muvenda woman. Adziambei's beauty adds a further dimension to her character because she has already been depicted as a spotless character. It is not surprising to see, later on, Maluḁa abandoning preparations to marry his fiancée, Muhanelwa, after meeting Adziambei. Her beauty impels Maluḁa into violating moral and tribal rules when he decided to elope with Adziambei. Her beauty overwhelmed him and he could not bear to leave her behind.

The two quotations above painted a beautiful picture of Adziambei. She has been depicted as an extremely clean and beautiful young woman. But Adziambei also has a dark side as evidenced by the following extract:

*“Nna Adziambei ni tou vha riwana-ḡe a sa pfi vhahulwane vha tshi amba? Ḍuvha ḡiriwe na ḡiriwe phungo yaḡu i di nana i tshi ya. We ndi laye wo zwi wana: ni vhutsha, ne tshiambela tshine tsha nga tsha ḡana ḡa muloi!” ... Inwi na hune na ya, tshi ḡo vha tshiane! Na khotsi aḡu ndi vhuya ndi tshi vha vhudza; zwo anza.*

*“A si hone ndi tshi ḡo vhulawa vha wana ḡama; ...!” Ndi Adziambei ane a ralo a tshi vha kongomedza. (Madima, 1984:1)*

What type of child are you, Adziambei, who does not listen to elderly people? Everyday there is more rumour about you. If one tries to reprimand you, one will have it. You are stubborn and you talk badly and disrespectfully like a child of a child of a witch. Wherever you go, people will always talk about you. I will tell your father about this; it is just too much.

“I hope I will be killed so that you get meat to eat ... !” Adziambei said this while making derogatory gestures to her mother.

The reader is shocked to learn about this unexpected trait of the beautiful Adziambei. Readers are disappointed by the bad behaviour displayed by her after the previous positive depictions of her character. The same person who is said to be extremely beautiful and clean is also depicted as a stubborn and disrespectful person who talks back to elders. Adziambei’s mother is not happy about the rumours she had heard. As a parent she is worried about the scandal concerning Adziambei which is spreading like a wild fire. It is also disappointing and discouraging for readers to be let down in the light of their prior knowledge of her. Her rudeness and talking back to her mother come as surprising and distressing news to the readers who were initially impressed by Adziambei’s cleanliness and beauty.

Adziambei’s seemingly bad behaviour is repeated when her parents arrange for her to be married to a man they chose for her. This was common practice then. But Adziambei refused flatly to be forced to marry a man who has been chosen in a predetermined act. The following extract portrays Adziambei bravely confronting the elders and turning down their instruction to marry a man they have chosen for her:

*Zwoṭhe zwe vha amba ndo zwi pfa; fhedzi u fhelekedzwa ngei ha vhaḽa vhane vha pfi ndi vhone vhanna vhanga a thi a wani. ... Arali hu Dzingahe a thi yi. Na kale iḽali hu songo vhuya ha dzhena na mbiluni yanga.*

I have heard all what you have said. But I don't accept the instruction to be forced to marry the man you have chosen for me .... I am not going to Dzingahe. After all, I was never interested in that.

The elders had gathered to inform Adziambei that they were going to accompany her to the family of the man they had arranged for her to be married to. Adziambei bravely told them that she was not going to allow them to take her to a man she did not love. Adziambei's act was rare and surprising at the time because a child or a woman was never expected to defy the decision of the elders. This was seen as a sign of disrespect on the part of Adziambei. But Adziambei's act symbolises the attitude and behaviour of a modern woman who will not allow elderly people to dictate to her. Unlike many traditional and conservative women at the time, Adziambei shocked everyone by voicing her opposition to the elders' instruction to her to marry a man not chosen by her. Adziambei, like a modern woman, resolved not to allow elderly people to decide and seal her fate insofar as marriage was concerned. She decided to do what would please her and not her elders. She is depicted her as a brave modern woman who believes in deciding her own destiny.

From being depicted as a very stubborn young woman, the very same Adziambei is depicted glowingly in the next extract:

*Ipfi ḽawe! Vhone, matsina na u amba hu na vhunambi-vho. Ngei zwiimboni-ha zwo vha zwi zwinzani? Mabephani o vha a tshi ndo khilikhithi wa pfa ho ḽanganedzana... Mifhululu i tshi lila thungo dzoṭhe. (Madima, 1984: 2).*

What a voice! People, talking also is also artistic like in singing! When she was performing the Venda traditional dance called *bepha*, you will hear people ululating.

Here the writer depicts Adziambei positively as he comments on her singing talent. Adziambei is said to be so good in singing that even people in her community could feel this musical quality in her voice even when she talked. As a result, everyone in

her community recognised and praised Adziambei's immense talent in singing and dancing.

The saying that 'no man is infallible' applies to Adziambei. Although she was known and respected far and wide for her beauty, cleanliness, singing and dancing, she also had some attributes that stained her character:

*Mulingo movhi we u si lenge u q̄ela Adziambei ndi wa u t̄onga na u q̄ifuna. Vhar̄iwe vhathu o vha a sa vhuyi a amba navho. Vhe vha sokou amba nae a sa funi, o vha a tshi u vha fhindula, arali vhe vhathu-vhathu vha mbo q̄i tou q̄ifhumulela. O vha a tshi u sema muthu a sala a tshi nukha.” (Madima. 1984:2)*

Adziambei started developing a bad habit of bragging and being self-centred. She did not even speak to some people. Those who spoke to her against her will, she answered them in such a way that if they were wise, they would instead just keep quiet. She could swear a person very badly.

Contrary to what is expected of a young Muvenda women, Adziambei is shown as a person who is big-headed because of her pride. She is depicted as a bragging, disrespectful and self-centred young woman. Her character is further revealed as that of a person who 'classes' people, i.e. she looks down upon people. She often speaks rudely and disrespectfully to all those who differ with her.

The following extract helps to reveal Adziambei's character as different from the traditional Muvenda woman:

*Zwenezwo a tshi khou ralo a pfa Adziambei a tshi vhudzula zwavhuq̄i kha nq̄evhe..., Adziambei a hevhedza Maluṭa a ri, “Ni songo vhuya na vhilaela nga zwe nda ita ṅamusi. Nṅe a thi lwali, ndi itela inwi fhedzi. Ndo vhona ri tshi khou sokou ḷa mivhundu, ri tshi ya hu si na na nq̄ila ya aḷa mafhungo. Ri tshi swika afho mafhandeni inwi ni pambutshela ha haṅu. Matshelo ra sa t̄angana q̄uvha ḷi tshi kovhela afho mivhulani, ni dovhe ni q̄e nga tshenetshino tshifhinga. Ndi ni wane hone, no zwi pfa?” (Madima, 1984: 26-27).*

He then felt Adziambei gently blowing in his ear ... Adziambei whispered and said to Maluṭa, “Don't be worried about what I did to you today. I am not sick. I am just doing it for you. I realised that we will soon be going our separate ways at the crossroads without talking

about that news. If we do not meet at those trees tomorrow at sunset, you must come again at the same time. I must find you there, do you hear?"

Adziambei is not shown as a shy woman. She invents an excuse for her to be able to talk to Maluṭa since they were going to take their different ways. She wants to ensure that their unfinished business is attended to before they part ways since they might never find another opportunity to finalise their issue. She is depicted as a brave and modern woman who does not want to leave their issue incomplete.

In the above extracts, the writer has depicted Adziambei both positively and negatively. The writer has displayed Adziambei's both bad and good behaviour. On the one hand, Adziambei has been depicted as a bragging, disrespectful and selfish person. Counter to this view, she has also been depicted as a hardworking woman who is also extremely talented in singing and traditional dancing. Adziambei has been depicted as a round character with both bad and good character traits. She comes across as a natural and credible person. In other words, she has been depicted as a round character. This is a person whose character is unpredictable because it often changes depending on the individual's mood at the time.

#### 4.3.2 A structuralist reading of Maluṭa's character in *A si ene*

Maluṭa is one of the main characters in *A si ene*. He has been depicted in a number of ways in order to lay bare his character. For example, in the following extract, Maluṭa's character is depicted from the point of view of his name:

*Zwino hafhu na dzina ni tshi tou pfi Maluṭa, ri ḡo anḡana naa? Nḡe zwa u itwa Matshinyise a thi zwi funi. (Madima, 1984:20).*

By the way, your name is Maluṭa (i.e. the one who causes conflict), will there be harmony? I don't want to be seen as *Matshinyise* (i.e. the one who destroys other people's affairs).

Adziambei makes the above statement following Maluṭa's proposal of love to her. Adziambei realises that any affair between the two of them will certainly create tension between Adziambei and Muhanelwa as Maluṭa is already preparing to marry

Muhanelwa. The latter is also Adziambei's friend and they are also from the same village. Muhanelwa will certainly be angry if she discovers that her fiancé, Maluṭa, has initiated a love affair with her friend, Adziambei. In this way, Adziambei highlights the possibility of a conflict that is likely to happen because of Maluṭa's behaviour. It is indeed likely that Muhanelwa will be shattered if she finds out that her fiancé, Maluṭa, has just started an affair with her friend Adziambei who is also from the same village. In this instance Maluṭa is being depicted as a troublemaker, possibly causing a serious rift between two friends, namely, Adziambei and Muhanelwa. The move to propose love to Muhanelwa's friend depicts him as a dishonest and untrustworthy person. Starting another relationship with another woman while busy with preparations to marry Muhanelwa is a despicable act.

Maluṭa's dishonesty and untrustworthiness are further shown when he persuades Adziambei to elope with him to Gauteng. This also depicts him as person without focus and self-control. Otherwise he would not have stopped finalising the preparations to marry Muhanelwa.

*“Arali nangoho no khwaṭhisa ri tou mbo ḡi namela roṭhe... Muhanelwa ha nga dini ngauri u ḡo sala fhanu na mme anga. Nda zwi funa ndi mu fha murathu...” (Maluṭa, 1984:22)*

If you are serious, we leave together ... Muhanelwa will not be problematic because she will stay behind with my mother. If I like I will give her to my younger brother ...”

The above quotation depicts Maluṭa as a person who has lost focus completely. His preparations to marry Muhanelwa are sidelined. Instead of focusing all his energies on Muhanelwa, he diverts his attention to ensuring that Adziambei elopes with him to Gauteng. Maluṭa is depicted as a character without principles and self-control. The above statement reveals Maluṭa as an unreliable person who cannot stick to his decision to marry Muhanelwa.

The following extract depicts Maluṭa as an opportunist:

*“Muhanelwa ha nga dini ngauri u ḡo sala fhanu na mme anga. Nda zwi funa ndi mu fha murathu; tenda na ene o no ḡivha swuhana ḡine nga*

*tshiimo ri a eḡana.*” (Madima, 1984:22)

“Muhanelwa will not be problematic because she will stay behind with my mother. If I like I will give her to my younger brother; after all he is also a mature men like me.”

In the preceding paragraph, Maluḡa was depicted as a modern and assertive young Muvenda man who believes that he is the one to decide on what happens in his life and not just allow himself to be dictated to. Hence, his statement that he will marry the one who pleases him and that no one can impose anything on him. He is depicted as a young modern Muvenda man with a strong, indulgent self-belief as he does everything for his own satisfaction and fulfilment. He does not allow his life to be stifled by ‘outdated’ Tshivenḡa traditional practices.

#### 4.3.3 Structuralist reading of Muhanelwa’s character in **A si ene**

The following passage delineates Muhanelwa’s character as that of an amiable and peaceful young Muvenda woman:

*“Nḡe hafhu zwa u amba a thi zwi funi.”* (Madima, 1984:5)

“I don’t like quarrelling.”

Muhanelwa made this statement in response to an incident when other girls were teasing her by taking and recklessly using the bath soap bought for her by her fiancé, Maluḡa. Had this happened to someone else, probably, there could have been a fight or quarrel. But because Muhanelwa is not a fighting type, she ignored the other girls when they were teasing her and also violating her rights.

Muhanelwa is further depicted as a young Muvenda woman who observes Tshivenḡa traditional practices:

*“Ndi uri zwa u amba a vho ngo zwi ḡowela-vho lini.” Ndi Maemu a fhindulaho.*

“It is because she does not like talking,” Maemu answered.

The above statement was uttered by Muhanelwa's friend, Maemu. Maluṭa had been trying to persuade Muhanelwa to speak. This incident occurred when Maluṭa was visiting Muhanelwa's home to finalise his preparations to marry Muhanelwa. Many girls had come to spend the night with Muhanelwa and her fiancé. Muhanelwa never said a word even though Maluṭa tried to persuade her to talk. Muhanelwa was simply observing traditional Tshivenda practices which require her not to talk to him until he has done everything required in terms of the Tshivenda culture. She is only expected to sit there, keep quiet and cover her face with a towel. This practice ensures that the man does not find his future wife easy and cheap. Muhanelwa is depicted as person that cannot just be approached and talked by anyone.

In the following paragraph, Muhanelwa is depicted as a forgiving person:

*“Maluṭa a dovha a pfana nae nḡe ndo mu tamba, vhushaka ho fhela.”*

“Should Maluṭa have an affair with her again, I wash off my hands. They will be nothing anymore between us.”

This incident occurred after Maluṭa had 'dumped' Muhanelwa and eloped with Adziambei to Gauteng. Muhanelwa was extremely hurt when Maluṭa abandoned her for her friend, Adziambei. Despite the shame and hurt that Maluṭa subjected Muhanelwa to, the latter still had the courage to forgive and take back Maluṭa. She still agreed to marry Maluṭa even after he had rejected her for another woman.

The above quotations depict Muhanelwa as a quiet, peaceful, joyful, respectful, patient and forgiving young Muvenda woman who also strictly observes Venda traditional norms and practices. The writer has only focused on the depiction of Muhanelwa's positive attributes. In the case of Maluṭa and Adziambei, the writer delineated their personalities as those of round characters. They are depicted as people who are not perfect. They make mistakes and attempt to rectify their mistakes. Yet, in the case of Muhanelwa, only her positive behaviour is depicted. Thus her characterisation is flat. She is predictable as her behaviour hardly changes.

#### 4.3.4 A structuralist reading of setting in **A si ene**

It is critical and vitally important that a writer establishes the background and environment within which his/ her characters will live. To this effect, Davies (1977: 53) argues that when 'creating a character and plot, one of the major tasks for a novelist is to establish a place or series of places in which characters will perform actions.' This statement by Davies highlights the importance of the writer in creating a place where his/ her characters will live in his/her work of art. A work of art is about characters. These characters are people that the story is all about. Such people are delineated and located by the writer in a place suitable for their actions, behaviour and belief system. Davies (1977:104) further contends that it is critically important that any unfolding action should be relevant for a particular place and time.

Miller (1962:227-228) defines setting as 'a place or locale of the novel or as a scenery where events or actions of characters take place.' Miller's definition highlights the fact that characters and their actions in a work of art have to unfold and develop in a suitable place. Since a work of art is about people and their actions and lives, they are found in a particular place and they act in a manner that suits their place.

To Knott (1983:73), setting helps to describe the 'background of any ... place where ... people (characters) find themselves acting...' A setting can, therefore, be viewed as the surrounding or environment of the story. One can regard setting according to Mafela (1993:103) as, 'physical location, historical time and social circumstances where action occurs.' Characters must be seen to be living in a particular area and time. It is also important that their way of life has to fit the social circumstances of the place they live in. Johnson (1992:34) backs this argument by stating that a 'vivid, immediate and convincing setting can be described in terms of places, historical details, characters and environment.' This statement also serves to emphasise that the people that a writer depicts are found in a particular place and also have to be developed in a manner that suits the place in which they find themselves.

The following extract depicts a setting in which some of the events in **A si ene** take place:

*Khotsi awe na vhone o vha a sa vha ðivhi zwavhuḑi. Tshee vha ya makhuwani ñwaha uḑa we nzietchikume dza ḑa fhand Venḑa, a vha athu u vhuya, na mañwalo vho vha vha si tsha nwala.*

*Vho Nemuḑamba vho pfuluwa na mukhuwa wavho vha hangei Natala! ... Shango ḑa hone ḑone ḑo no vha netisa, na u vhuya vha a zwi funa, vho lombela, hu tou ḑai masheleni a u vhuya e ndi bva vhubvo. Khaladzi awe na ene o vha e makhuwani (Madima, 1984:3).*

She does not know her father well. Her father has never come back since he went to work in the cities long time ago. He no longer writes letters to his family.

Mr Nemuḑamba has relocated with his employer and he is now in Natal! ... He is now tired of that country, he wants to come back. It is just that he does not have money for transport.

Even her brother was also in the city (Johannesburg).

The above quotation draws a picture of Venḑa in the olden days. The reference to 'nzietchikume' and the use and reliance on letters for communication by people in the past locate the setting. The word 'nzietchikume' refers to grasshoppers. Grasshoppers once swarmed Venḑa and caused serious damage to crops. This incident happened many decades ago. The use of this word has become a figurative way of referring to a time many years ago. The term 'nzietchikume' indicates that an event happened a long time ago, that is, Muhanelwa's father left home as a migrant labourer many years ago. To highlight this, the writer exaggerates by equating this with the time when Venḑa was swarmed by grasshoppers. This further carries the message that Muhanelwa did not even know her father because he left home long time ago.

The writer also draws a picture of the old Venḑa by mentioning the use of letters. In the past, letters were used by migrant labourers or people who had left their homes in search for employment to communicate with their families. In the past people relied heavily on letters to stay in touch and communicate with their families back home. Unlike today where cellphones and e-mails are used to communicate with family members and friends, letters were essentially the only available means of communication between migrant workers and their families. This is the case because the migrant workers had no any other alternative as they stay away from their homes for very long periods. Since these migrant workers were not earning enough salaries to also afford to frequently visit their homes, letters became the only means of

keeping the migrant workers in urban areas in touch and informed about the developments back at home.

Madima also draws a picture of the dark period during which Blacks did not have freedom to move around in urban areas. The following quotation reveals the time during which severe restrictions were placed on Blacks by being required to have special permission to be in urban areas:

*Nangoho nga matshelo vhathu vha tshi dzhena mishumoni a vha u livha Germiston. Ngei hofisini ya dzibasa a bva na/lo bammbiri ja tshipentshela tsha u toḡa mushumo (Madima, 1984: 45).*

Indeed, when others were going to work, he (Maluḡa) went to Germiston. He was given a special permit to look for work from the pass office.

The type of entertainment referred to by Madima (1984:2) in the following extract helps to depict a rural Venḡa:

*Mabephani o vha a tshi ndo 'khilikhithi' wa pfa ho ḡanganedzana hu tshi, Uuuuu ... ! Mifhululu i tshi lila thungo dzoḡhe.*

Whenever she arrived when there is a traditional dance (bephani), one would hear people praising her. Shouts of praises could be heard from all the directions.

Here the writer speaks about Adziambei as an excellent dancer in the traditional dance known as 'bepha.' Once Adziambei starts dancing, people are so amused and entertained that they cannot stop showering her with praises. But what is of relevance is that the type of the dance Adziambei is said to have been performing only takes place in rural areas. With this dance the writer transports the reader to the rural Venḡa. The same dance also highlights another aspect of setting, namely, the time or period during which the characters lived. This type of dancing took place both in the rural areas and also old Venḡa. In urban areas today people engage in modern dancing. In short, the paragraph draws a picture of the old rural Venḡa when people engaged in traditional Tshivvenḡa dance called 'bepha.'

Madima also delineates the rural and 'long ago' Venḡa by talking about Adziambei's

talent and ability at home. In the following paragraph, Adziambei is depicted as a hardworking, multi-skilled and talented young Muvenda woman:

Kha vhudele ha muṭani na hone Adziambei o vha a sa fhirwi. Nṅu yawe yo vha i tshimangadzo. Makolo ayo a tshi tou kombodza. Nangei ngomu hayo u tshi u sa kanda zwavhuḽi wa tseremuwa, wa wa (Madima, 1984:2).

When it came to cleanliness in the house, no one could compete with her. Her house was a wonder. Its decorations could make one blind. Inside the house, if one is not careful, one could slip and fall.

In the above quotation, Adziambei's skill and home-making talent are clearly highlighted. Adziambei is said to be excellent in decorating the house. People looked and wondered at her beautifully decorated house. The decorations are of traditional nature as they are generally done in traditional houses (rondavels) found in rural areas. The same traditional houses referred to in the above paragraph also depict the rural Venda of the past. The descriptions of the traditional houses and decorations tell of the place and period during which they were built.

The traditional activity of people swimming in the river as shown in the extract below also draws a picture of Venda of the past:

*Ho no fhela vhege mbili, nga masiari vhasidzana bambeloni mulamboni wa Tshinane, Muhanelwa a pfa u pfi Maluṭa o vhuya (Madima, 1984:5).*

After two weeks, in the afternoon, when girls were swimming in the Tshinane river, Muhanelwa was told that Maluṭa (her husband-to-be) was around.

There are no swimming pools in rural areas. Instead people rely on rivers for swimming. In rural areas people generally go to the river to wash their clothes. In the past there were no water taps in rural areas. People used to draw water from the rivers and springs. In this paragraph Madima is depicting the Venda of the past where people used the rivers to do their washing and for swimming. This is no longer the case because there are water taps even in rural areas.

The setting in **A si ene** is rural and of the past. This is confirmed by the following

extract:

*Muhanelwa ho ngo tsha vha fhindula, o vha o no livha tshisimani. Vha kelela, vha fhambana nga dzinçila vha ya mahayani.*

Muhanelwa never answered them anymore. She went straight to the spring/ fountain. They drew water and took different routes to their homes.

In the above extract the activity of drawing water from a fountain depicts the rural setting of the past where there were no taps to supply water to people's houses. Water at the time was not even sanitised.

Communication strategies adopted and used in **A si ene** also help to draw a picture of the old and rural Vençã. The following statement in **A si ene** tells of an outdated communication tool used by people in the old rural Vençã:

*“Ni çò mu ñwalela na mu vhudza uri tshisibe tsho fhela,” Ndi Adziambei. ... “Hone nñe arali ndi tou kona u ñwala nga nñe muñe ndi musi wanga a tshi çò tou zwi pfa.” (Madima, 1984:6)*

“You will write him a letter and tell him that the soap is finished,” said Adziambei. ... But if I knew how to write on my own, mine (husband) would get lots of requests.

Here reference to a way of communication amongst people occurs. The way of communication is by means of letters. This implies that this was the people's only means of communication. The speaker (Adziambei) and her friends had just used Muhanelwa's bar of soap. When she complained about this, Adziambei then told Muhanelwa to write a letter to her husband-to-be (i.e. Maluça) and ask him to send her money to buy another bar of soap. Maluça was working in Germiston (Gauteng). This letter signifies the limited means of communication. The old, rural place in which Adziambei and others were staying was isolated as well. This is the period that even predates the time of the landline telephone.

Today, communication has changed drastically. This is the era of the internet and cellphones. Today people no longer write letters. Instead they communicate by means of e-mails, sms, twitter, mxit, blogs, facebook, etc. The latter means of

communication are starkly different from the setting during Adziambei and Maluṭa's time. Characters, in the above quotation, are located in the past and rural Venḡa in which only letters were used the only means of communication with those in urban areas. Letters referred to in **A si ene** as the only means of communication help to delineate milieu and the time during Adziambei and Maluṭa lived. But, today the situation has changed because of the emergence of new communication technologies such as telephones, cellphones, mixit, blogs, twitters, etc.

The few extracts taken from **A si ene** clearly depict a rural Venḡa which is set in the past. The evidence is clear. The *bepha*, the Venḡa traditional dance is often performed by people in rural areas. The type of the houses (rondavels) and decorations are typical of those in rural and old setting. Swimming in the river was a traditional recreational activity. In the past, washing was also done at the river. Then women and girls would swim while waiting for their washing to dry. In the past and also in rural areas people drew their water from fountains. Once more, the use of letters as a means of communication helps to indicate that past in which Adziambei and Maluṭa lived. Only people from rural areas, and in the past, relied heavily on letters to communicate with their family members in the cities. There is no doubt that a structuralist reading of setting in **A si ene** creates a clearly credible time and way of life.

#### 4.3.5 A structuralist reading of conflict in **A si ene**

A work of art is about people or characters and their actions, thoughts, feelings, aspirations and interests. These characters differ in terms of their age, gender, lifestyle, wishes and interests. These differences may serve as a source of conflict which is vital for the development of the plot of a work of art. Conflict, just like characters, is of great importance. It is the conflict that arises from characters' differences that draws the attention and interest of the reader. If well-developed, this conflict grips the imagination of the reader in such a way that the reader feels compelled to read through a work of art to find out how the conflict is finally resolved.

Knott (1983:32) argues that conflict mainly occurs when 'the character's effort to

resolve his/her difficulties is challenged either by other characters or by some natural element.' As long as there are other characters opposed to the actions, thoughts or feelings of one character, there is conflict. Some conflict occurs between a human being and a natural force. For example, one may be intending to go to see one's partner and the effort is made impossible by a natural phenomenon such as torrential rain. This person's intention to be with his/her partner may be thwarted by the rain because if he/ she goes, there is a risk of a serious accident.

Madiga (2000:27) views conflict as 'a state of opposition or clash between ideas or interest... Conflict is also accompanied or characterised by strong feelings of hostility.' This quotation raises an important issue about conflict, namely, the existence of opposing or clashing ideas or interests. Conflict, in other words, will exist as long as people pursue their own unique ideas, interests and wishes. Wilbur (2001:65) expresses a similar thought by stating that conflict is 'brought about by the envy and bitter rivalry of ... man against man.' Such a conflict, Wilbur (2001:65) further states, can 'be between two people passionate about their beliefs.' In other words, conflict can also occur when people have contrasting beliefs and decisions. According to Schmidt (2005:15), conflict is 'sometimes physically violent, ..., expressed with fists, guns or bombs ...' For example, violence which exists in the mind can be expressed verbally and physically. When people are arguing and quarrelling as a result of their differences, their conflict is verbal in nature. But when people are fighting, stabbing and shooting each, such conflict is physical. Conflict can have far reaching implications and may lead to the irrevocable severing of relationships such as the relations between contending people, families or groups.

Madiga (2000:27) further states that 'conflict can be within an individual, between individuals, cultural, racial or religious groups.' These are some of the different forms which conflict can take or different sources from which conflict can spring. For the purpose of this thesis, only three types of conflict will be briefly discussed, namely relational conflict, inner conflict and social conflict. Schmidt (2005:15) maintains that relational conflict occurs when 'a human being is against another human being.' Such a conflict occurs when two people clash or compete against each other. This type of conflict is extremely common in most literary texts. One character may be in opposition to an action, idea or belief of another character. This will be demonstrated

when analysing conflict in *A si ene*.

Insofar as inner conflict is concerned, Wilbur (2001:74) argues that this is 'rooted in being divided between choices of equal weight and value where only one path may be followed.' Such conflict occurs when a human being is against himself or herself. In most cases the character may be uncertain of what choice to make. Opposition and tension occur in the mind of an individual regarding which choice to make.

The third type of conflict is called social conflict because, according to Schmidt (2005:17), it takes place between an individual and a group. In this type of conflict, an individual may be in opposition to views, beliefs or decision of a religious or cultural group. When such conflict arises, an individual is seen to have betrayed the group and is subsequently ostracised by other members of the group. In support of this argument, Wilbur (2001:67) prefers to define this conflict as that which occurs when one 'rebels against ... fellow citizens' beliefs.' One individual opposing a group of people allows the assumption to be made, often incorrectly, that it is the individual who is wrong. The 'so-called rebelling member' is punished by being treated as an outcast by other members of the group.

In the following quotation the reader is introduced to a fierce argument between Adziambei and her mother, Vho Nyadzanga:

*"Nna Adziambei ni tou vha riwana-ḡe a sa pfi vhahulwane vha tshi amba? ḡuvha ḡiriwe na ḡiriwe phungo yaḡu i ḡi nana i tshi ya. We ndi laye wo zwi wana: ni vhutsha, ne tshiambela tshine tsha nga tsha ḡana ḡa muloi!" ... Inwi na hune na ya, tshi ḡo vha tshiane! Na khotsi aḡu ndi vhuya ndi tshi vha vhudza; zwo anza."*

*"A si hone ndi tshi ḡo vhulawa vha wana ḡama; ...!" Ndi Adziambei ane a ralo a tshi vha kongomedza." (Madima, 1984:1)*

"What type of child are you, Adziambei, who does not listen to elderly people? Everyday there is more rumour about you. If one tries to reprimand you, one will have it. You are stubborn and you talk badly and disrespectfully like a child of a child of a witch. Wherever you go, people will always talk about you. I will tell your father about this; it is just too much."

"I will then be killed, and you will have meat to eat me...!" Adziambei said, making mocking gestures to her mother.

In the above extract, Vho Nyadzanga is extremely angry because of Adziambei's

wayward behaviour. She is perturbed by the widespread rumour about her only child. She has heard people talk scathingly about Adziambei's bad behaviour. Adziambei's mother is justifiably angry, because as a parent, she would like to see her child display good behaviour. Every parent wants what is best for his/ her child, and at the same time wants her/his child to exhibit acceptable ways of behaviour so as to avoid being a social outcast in the community. Any child who behaves badly incurs the wrath of community members, especially elders who see themselves as custodians of orderliness in the community. Any criticism of a member of a family drags down the name of that family. Hence, parents try to ensure that their children behave accordingly, to avoid stigma or any labelling by members of the community.

During the heated argument between Adziambei and her mother, Adziambei's response leaves much to be desired. She does not show remorse and apologise for her wayward behaviour. Her arrogance when responding to her mother's accusations reveals a lot about her unbecoming behaviour. She is depicted as a disrespectful child who replies inappropriately to her mother when she is being reprimanded for her wrongdoing. Adziambei says her mother will be happy if she is killed. In this way, Adziambei fails to deal with the problem of her errant behaviour. She is unprepared to change and defends her behaviour. In this case, Adziambei should be acknowledging her wrong-doing and apologising to her mother. It must also be emphasized that the above conflict is not physical but verbal, i.e. a difference of opinion between two people. Such conflict is born out of the verbal outbursts between Adziambei and her mother.

Another conflict situation in **A si ene** which also involves Adziambei is as follows:

*“Ndi ri a ni zwi q̄ivhi zwa mini? Hafhu ndi inwi ni no q̄iita khunzi.” A tshi ralo u sumba Adziambei...*

*Nne ndi do ni sema na shone arali ni tshi khou vhonelelwa. Ni khou t̄ongisani no tou rali-vho? N̄e a thi mme āu lini...” (Madima, 1984: 13)*

“I am saying, what is it that you don't know? By the way, you like behaving like you are the boss.” He said that pointing at Adziambei ...

“I will shame you by insulting you verbally if you are trying to be smart. What are you showing off when you are like this? I am not your mother ....”

The above confrontation between Adziambei and Tshibalo has led to a fierce

exchange of verbal insults. Tshibalo is angry because of Adziambei's disrespect for him. Adziambei is also not taking Tshibalo's verbal insults lying down. She retaliates by also throwing verbal insults at him. To show her disrespect for Tshibalo, Adziambei talks to him like a small boy. This angers Tshibalo so much that he confronts and threatens Adziambei with physical violence. But Adziambei seems not to be scared of Tshibalo because later on she told him to try and touch her. This verbal exchange between the two also helps to depict Adziambei as a character who is not afraid of a challenge, even when men are involved. Of note in this exchange is the fact that Adziambei's reaction indicates that she looks down upon Tshibalo. This adds another dimension to Adziambei's character by depicting her negatively. Adziambei claims that she herself is discriminated against yet she negates her positive depiction by not respecting every person irrespective of class or status.

The next conflict situation in **A si ene** concerns Maluṭa:

*Nna muḡuhulu o vha o no bvisa musho wa zwienda kani? Ndi amba nga u nda pfa a tshi dzhena a tshi tou khwathama. Nahone ndi mulayo wa ngafhi wonoyu wa mukwasha a vhuyaho nnḡa vhathu vha tshi vho ya dzinḡuni. Vho-Mufanadzo, vho fhingula.! A tshi tsee na tshine nda ḡo dovha nda vha vhudza. Vhusiwana ndi vhusiwana hashu, lunyadzo lwo raliho nḡe ndi nga si lu konḡelele..."*

"Has the son-in-law-to-be paid the money to be allowed to wear shoes? I am saying this because I hear the footsteps of his shoes. Besides, where have you seen son-in-law-to-be only coming when people have gone to sleep? Vho-Mufanadzo, you have defied the rules! There is nothing that I can say to you. We may be poor, but I cannot tolerate to be disrespected in this way..."

The source of this conflict is Maluṭa's late arrival at his fiancée's home. In terms of the Tshivenḡa tradition, a man who is about to marry and who is visiting his fiancée's place is not allowed to be outside the yard after sunset. The man is also not allowed to wear his shoes as long as he is inside his fiancée's yard. In this case, Maluṭa violated the practice because he came back after sunset. Secondly, Maluṭa went back to his fiancée's home wearing his shoes which he should have removed. Maluṭa's action, which, traditionally is uncalled for, leaves Muhanelwa's aunt, Vho Maṭamela, extremely annoyed. As a result of Maluṭa's action, which is in conflict with Tshivenḡa traditional practice, Vho Maṭamela finds it unbearable and she then complains to Maluṭa's representative, Vho Mufanadzo. Vho Maṭamela also seems to

feels that Maluṭa acts in this fashion because they are poor. She views his action as a sign of disrespect for Muhanelwa's family because this family is poor. She expresses her unhappiness at Maluṭa's action by stating that, even if her family is poor, she will not allow her family to be disrespected. Although all these verbal blows are aimed at Vho Mufanadzo, Maluṭa's representative, they are meant for Maluṭa for his disrespectful gesture to her family. Vho Maṭamela unreservedly shows her displeasure at Maluṭa's flouting of Tshivenda traditional practice. The above disagreement between Maluṭa and Vho Maṭamela shows the latter's strict adherence to Tshivenda traditional practices and Maluṭa's disregard and failure to observe these hallowed rules and practices.

The following extract shows the physical conflict when the four criminals attack Maluṭa and his girlfriend, Adziambei:

*A edzisa u kakarika, vha mu kovhola nga mabelevhele a mbo ḡi fhasi hwiri; malofha a tshi bva hoṭhe na maṭoni. Adziambei ndi musi a tshi khou tsumbudzana na muṛwe wavho. Ndi Masela! Ene o mu itani? U mu vetekanya he a sala khofheni hu tshi nga ndi tsimu yo lirwa nga phulu dzi sa athu u Jera (Madima, 1984:49).*

He tried to fight. They hit him with belt buckles until he collapsed with blood flowing everywhere, even in his eyes. Adziambei was fighting the other criminal. It was Masela! What did she do to him? She scratched his faced until it was like a field that one ploughed using undomesticated bulls.

Maluṭa and Adziambei were on an afternoon stroll. They were suddenly confronted by four criminals. The four thugs started attacking them without any provocation. Three of them went for Maluṭa, while the other one, Masela, attacked Adziambei. These three beat up Maluṭa so badly that he collapsed. Maluṭa was so badly bruised and battered that he had to be taken to the hospital. But Adziambei stood her ground against the other thug. This situation depicts her as a physically strong and brave woman who managed to defend herself against one of the criminals.

The conflict referred to above is the only one that is physical in nature. All other conflict situations referred to in this chapter are verbal in nature. In verbal conflicts, people tend to suffer emotionally. In the above confrontation, Maluṭa and Adziambei

experienced damaging physical conflict. A number of conflicts both verbal and physical appear in **A si ene**. These include the verbal clashes between Adziambei and her mother, Adziambei and Tshibalo, Maluța and Vho Mațamela. The only one incident of physical violence has been outlined above. All of the above conflicts arose as a result of differences in opinions, actions and/ or personalities of characters. Of importance is the role played by conflict in informing readers of the personalities of characters and their reactions during conflict situations.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

The use of the Russian formalist defamiliarisation technique has rendered the language of this novel artistic. The use of literary devices such as metaphors, personification devices and similes was analysed in **A si ene**. These literary devices helped to unearth deeper meaning about the roles, ideas, feelings, attitudes of characters in the novel (Maluța, Adziambei and Muhanelwa). In other words, the use of literary devices helped to shed more light on the characters' way of life, and their weak and strong points. Additionally, the use of the defamiliarisation technique allowed the reader to experience another dimension and insights into the novel in question.

On the other hand, the structuralist reading of **A si ene** brought to light the setting, characters and the conflict situations that confronted the main characters such as Maluța, Muhanelwa and Adziambei. The use of this approach in analysing **A si ene**, unpacked certain structural elements of the novel (such as characterisation, setting and conflict) which shed more light further light on another dimension of the literary text, i.e. its deeper meaning. The application of the structuralist approach brought readers into a fuller understanding of the main characters' feelings, beliefs, weaknesses, strong points, attitudes and their ways of handling issues in life. This approach also vividly delineated the time and place in which the three characters, namely, Maluța, Adziambei and Muhanelwa lived. The same approach also examined each character's conflicts and the way each of them dealt with these issues in their lives. The meaning and understanding of the novel, **A si ene**, arrived at through the application of the structuralist approach, presents a different alternative to the one arrived at after a reading from the viewpoint of any of the

intrinsic literary approaches. In other words, reading the same novel from an extrinsic point of view would have undoubtedly led to a completely different meaning and understanding.

## CHAPTER 5

### AN EXTRINSIC BASED MULTIPLE-READING OF AN AFRICAN-LANGUAGE LITERARY TEXT

#### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the same Tshivenda literary text (i.e. *A si ene*) that has been analysed from an intrinsic point of view will be evaluated on the basis of an extrinsic literary approach. This exercise will help to demonstrate the point that the use of a variety of approaches in literary discourse will inevitably lead to completely different and unique interpretations of the same literary text. Different literary theories will unearth and expose multiple meanings of the same literary text. Such an exercise also broadens and deepens a reader's understanding of that particular text. This supports the argument that more of the marginalised or under-utilised literary theories should be used in the evaluation of African-language literature.

Four extrinsic literary theories will be used in this chapter. An analysis of the Tshivenda novel, *A si ene*, by E.S. Madima, will demonstrate the power and depth of the multiple-reading approach in uncovering a multiplicity of meanings. These literary approaches will include Marxist historical materialism, the Marxist social theory of alienation, the psychoanalytical approach and the feminist literary approach. The use of different literary approaches to analyse the same literary text will definitely lead to different interpretations of the literary text in question. In other words, evaluating a work of art from different literary viewpoints will, undoubtedly, uncover different insights and understanding. The use of the multiple-reading approach will yield a much broader understanding, and will shed more light on the question of the multiplicity of the dimensions of meaning that any literary text can yield if subjected to a multiple-reading approach.

An attempt will be made to use the general/ broader principles or views advocated by feminist literary critics and scholars. These principles will be used to identify and expose some of the socio-cultural stereotypes operating against women that may be found in some African-language literary texts. In terms of the psychoanalytical

approach, the exercise will signal how an understanding of human behaviour and the human mind can deepen our understanding of human nature. The knowledge generated from this approach can also be helpful in identifying and handling some of the social and psychological problems experienced by people.

## 5.2 The Marxist reading of *A si ene*

Like any other literary theory, Marxist literary theory sheds light on the meaning of a literary text. It offers another way of analysing a work of art by focusing on the aspects that are neglected or downplayed by Russian Formalism, Structuralism and a host of other intrinsic literary theories. Besides the structuralist and Russian formalist approaches, the Marxist approach also serves as a 'magnifying glass' through which a different dimension of meaning of a particular literary text may be displayed. Marxist criticism forms part of a larger body of theoretical analysis which, in Eagleton's words (1978:viii), aims to understand:

... 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.

An assertion can be made that, through a Marxist reading, one can discover and understand the views, thoughts, ideas and values that constitute a world-view or philosophy of people of a particular society at a given time. In other words, a Marxist analysis of a literary text significantly increases one's understanding of social processes that inform a particular work of art. Broadly speaking, a Marxist analysis of a work of art can shed more light on the political, socio-economic, cultural and religious nature of a given society. Although Eagleton does not claim that it is literature only that encapsulates every aspect of human life, he, nonetheless, concedes that literature plays a major role in revealing much about human beings, their experiences and their societies. Eagleton's view also emphasises the fact that people discover and understand more about other human beings, their experiences and their societies from their literature.

In this research, the Marxist literary criticism of *A si ene* will be based on two Marxist literary approaches, namely, Marxist historical materialism and the Marxist social

theory of alienation.

In discussing Marxist historical materialism, Upward (1938:42) contends that 'literature reflects and is itself a product of the changing material world of nature and of human nature. A poet's images or a novelist's characters are not created out of pure 'mind-stuff', but are suggested to him by the world in which he lives'. This statement suggests that a work of art emerges as a product of its material world. Such a work is informed and shaped by the material world within which it is created or produced. In other words, an artist produces a literary work that is dictated to by the prevailing material conditions of the time. To the Marxist literary critics, a work of art is seen as a finished product of the human mind which itself is conditioned, influenced or shaped by the material conditions prevailing at a given time.

For the Marxist literary critics, a good book is one that is true to life. This sentiment is echoed by Alverze-Pereyre (1984:116) who says that 'a work of art does not develop and take its form in a situation of mysterious abstraction, but that it is determined ... by the prevailing material conditions ...' This shows that it is through a work of art readers and literary critics will be able to understand the situation that informed or shaped a particular work of art. This also means that critics can identify the nature of conditions which people were subjected to. In this way a literary critic will be in a position to determine the social reality constituted by the conditions to which the people written about were subjected to. Upward (1938:46) endorses the above contention by stating that 'the greatest books are those which, sensing the forces of the future beneath the surface of the past or present reality, remain true to reality for the longest period of time.' This comment suggests that one can understand the past, present and future of the society within which the work of art is situated. In other words, literature has a useful role to play in a man's life as it helps human beings to understand the dynamics and complexities of human nature.

A picture emerges that shows the strong denial by the Marxist literary critics of the contention by other critics who deny the influence which the material world brings to bear on literature. The advocates of Marxist historical materialism fail to understand the counter-argument by those who cannot see or link the material realities that characterise human life with prevailing material conditions. To the Marxist literary

critics, a work of art emerges as a by-product of and also a reflection of the material world as it is encountered by writers who are living members of a particular society at a given time. Marxist literary critics claim that recognition of the importance played by the prevailing material conditions on a work of art is extremely necessary.

Upward (1938:47) confirms the above argument by contending that 'books written in the past which were true to the surface of life in the past, and which in the present tell us nothing about life as we experience it, may have value as historical documents, but as literature they are dead.' Literature has to highlight human experiences and conditions as they exist in a given society and at a particular period. A literary work written in the past reflects the forces that were at work at the time. As such, it bears relevance to the social realities which prevailed at the time. Such a work of art must also have value for human beings, that is, it illustrates the fundamental realities of human existence. Only a literary work by a writer with vision can penetrate below the surface of life and reflect and remain true to the changing material world. It takes a writer with a profoundly deep understanding of human life of his/her time to create or produce a work of art which will always remain relevant even long after the time of creation.

The continued relevance of such a work of art will obtain as long as it is based on a realistic view of the material conditions of human life. This also illustrates the Marxist point that there is always a relationship between a work of art and its context. A work of art is seen as representing a particular social reality of a given society at a given time. Ryan (1982:197) shares the same opinion by stating that a work of art must be viewed as 'a system, by no means independent of surrounding structures.' This leads one to the assertion that a work of art is hugely influenced, if not informed, by the prevailing conditions at the time of its production or creation. Such a work of art often represents or reflects on conditions pertaining to the life of individuals in a given society. To further endorse the argument that literature is a product of prevailing conditions in a given society, Ryan (1982:204) holds that a work of art 'derives from and expresses, the particularity of the socio-economic base - no work of literature can ever be an isolated or essentially autonomous creation.' This statement is an acknowledgement of the role played by other external factors in the production or creation of a work of art. Moreover, a work of art will always bear the marks of the

context that gave rise to it.

Economic crises, unemployment, migratory labour system, means of transport, religious and cultural beliefs, and practices are 'mirrored' in the works of art of most writers. Such works of art represent and reflect on the realities of life experienced by people living in a particular society at a particular time.

### 5.2.1 A Marxist historical materialist reading of **A si ene**

In order to interpret **A si ene** in terms of Marxist historical materialism, it is necessary to refer to a viewpoint expressed by Selepe (1993:210) who maintains that such an analysis reveals the process by which socio-economic and historical experiences enter a work of art. Historical materialism represents a deliberate transportation of the empirically real into a fictitious reality. This is an addition to the view that is widely held by Marxists that any literary text will bear the socio-economic, cultural and political characteristics of the society which shaped it. Marxists argue that this is the case because a work of art is a product of a particular context. Marxists see a literary text as a representation of the life experiences of the people it is written about. The experiences recorded in the literary text may be of a cultural, social, economic, political or religious nature. These are the material conditions that give rise to the content of a particular work of art. The following extract illustrates the fact that a work of art helps to highlight the conditions under which the people written about in the literary text live or lived:

*Khotsi awe na vhone o vha a sa vha ḑivhi zwavhuḡi. Tshee vha ya makhuwani riwaha uḡa we nzietshekume dza ḡa fhanu Venḡa, a vha athu u vhuya, na maḡwalo vho vha vha si tsha riwala.  
Vho-ḡemuḡamba vho pfuluwa na mukhuwa wavho vha hangei Natala!  
... Shango ḡa hone ḡone ḡo no vha netisa, na u vhuya vha a zwi funa,  
vho lombela, hu tou ḡai masheleni a u vhuya e ndi bva vhubvo.  
Khaladzi awe na ene o vha e makhuwani (Madima, 1984:3).*

She did not even know her father well. Her father had never come back since he went to work in the cities long time ago. He no longer writes letters to his family.

Mr ḡemuḡamba has relocated with his employer and he is now in Natal! ... He is now tired of that country, he wants to come back, it is just that he does not have money for transport.

Even her brother was also in the city (Johannesburg).

The above extract examines the thought processes of Muhanelwa. She was being looked after by her aunt because her mother passed away while she was still a toddler. Her father was working in Johannesburg. It is clear that she did not know her father well since he had left their home seeking work many years ago. The father is also said to have relocated to Natal with his employer. From a Marxist historical materialist point of view, this extract tells of the conditions under which the characters in the book lived. A picture of people leaving their families to work in the cities emerges. This is the kind of the situation that occurred in South African history when Blacks were forced to leave their families behind to seek employment elsewhere. One can also trace in the text the migratory labour system of the time which severely disadvantaged African families. Migrant workers did not earn enough money. Hence Muhanelwa's father could not even afford to pay for his transport fare to go home. As a result of this oppressive system migrant workers stayed away from their families and the family bond was consequently often broken. Here Muhanelwa is said not to know her father well. How is she expected to know and have a strong bond with the father she hardly knows? The irony is her father, Mr Nemuṭamba, has employment but still cannot afford the transport fee just to visit his family. A telling comment is also made about the meagre wages that workers received at the time.

The above quotation is also revelatory of the employers. It is clear that employers were, at the time, interested in seeing their workers doing their job. Families were of little interest to them. Their uncaring attitude and the starvation wages ensured that families were dislocated. The irony is that the employers themselves were always with their families. Ultimately this kind of migratory labour system disrupted the family life of many African people and led to increasing urbanisation of African people. In the above extract, too, it is mentioned that Muhanelwa's brother was also working in the city.

The above extract serves to endorse the Marxist historical materialist view that a work of art always reflects the conditions of society. The extract from ***A si ene*** shows the dehumanising conditions under which most African people lived in South Africa. The migratory labour system of the time is one instance of such oppressive conditions. The literary text helps the reader to know about and understand the experiences of the African people of the time. The novel reveals some of the harsh

realities that were experienced by African families as a result of this migratory labour system. It is clear then, that in this instance, the Marxist argument is justified - a work of art, as stated by Selepe (1993:249), 'reflects or reproduces social reality.' Moreover, the life experiences of the people written about in literature will be reflected. Thus the Marxist literary approach empowers readers to penetrate, search, unravel and reveal the hidden meanings of the literary text. The analysis of this Venḡa novel, from the point of view of Marxist historical materialism, helps to expose and highlight the material conditions under which blacks in South Africa, Vhaventḡa men in this case, were subjected to in the past.

The migratory labour system also led to intermarriage among Black people. This can be traced in the following extract:

*Adziambei zwoḡhe zwine a vha nazwo u zwi ḡewa nga khotsiawe. Iḡa tshalana ye a vha e nayo, o vhuelwa nayo nga malume awe zwe vha vhuya na musadzi wa mukhaḡa, tshifhefho tsha ḡwahoḡa (Madima, 1984:12).*

All that Adziambei has was from her father. That small shawl she had was given to her last autumn by her uncle's Motswana wife.

The above extract appears in the context of a discussion about Adziambei's man who was chosen for her by the parents. He is said to have been very irresponsible. What is important is the reference to a Motswana woman who is married to Adziambei's uncle. Black people in South Africa lived apart from other population groups because of the separate development policy of the time. To be exact, Vhaventḡa, Vatsonga, amaZulu, amaXhosa, Batswana, Northern Sothos and Southern Sothos did not stay together. But the extract from **A si ene** reveals that the migratory labour system led people of different ethnic groups to start mixing. The fact that Vhaventḡa men spent much of their time in the cities, especially Johannesburg, allowed them to come into contact with people from other ethnic groups. They also found girlfriends and wives in these ethnic groups. Intermarriage among Blacks in South Africa occurred then as a result of this system. The occurrence was inevitable because these men were forced by circumstances beyond their control to stay away from their homes for long periods and some of them could not afford to go home.

Human nature played its role. As men, these migrant workers needed women to love, and the only available women were either Sothos or Ngunis. A further social and political comment is necessary. The policy of separate development failed to keep people of different ethnic groups apart. This is also endorsed by the statement made by Vorhies (1991:30) that ‘... economic system is so crucial to our survival that it affects everything else about our society.’ In this instance, people were forced to leave their families behind because of the migratory labour system which was driven by the emerging South African capitalist system. People were no longer dependent on traditional farming and hunting, but had the opportunity to leave home and work in the mines, on farms as well as in factories and kitchens. This had far reaching implications, especially for African people. Inter-marriage was one of the many effects of the migratory labour system. It is not surprising to hear of Vhavenḁa men marrying Batswana women and bringing them home as their wives.

According to Lever (1982:23), ‘individuals do not choose the form of their social life. They are born into society and are formed by it.’ A literary text can reveal the nature of social relations which are prominent at a given time. The following quotation serves as a good illustration of this argument:

*Na a Vho-Langanani vhe vha rwiwa nga Ramadipe vho xedza basa, vha shavha vha tshi lila, kholomo dzo sala na zwitukana zwiḁukuḁuku zwivhili (Madima, 1984:12).*

They also heard the news about Mr Langanani who was beaten up by the white man responsible for cattle dipping for failing to produce an identity document, which he had lost. It is said he ran away crying leaving the cattle in the care of two very small boys.

It is easy to determine that the relations between Blacks and Whites were not healthy. Impervious to the presence of children, the white man assaults an old man (Mr Langanani) for merely failing to produce an identity document. Most people would avoid any confrontation in front of children. Mr Langanani also does not retaliate. Instead he runs away crying like a small child. This also says much about his humiliation or that he is afraid to defend himself because he could not fight back against a White man. Relations were possibly so subservient that he accepted the fact that the failure to produce an identity document merited a beating. Moreover, this kind of scenario can also be attributed to a general view that was held by some

African people that the White man is always right. The above quotation sheds light on South African racial relations. Racial relations are depicted as being extremely unhealthy. An oppressive system had emerged as a result of a particular ideological and political system. The White man, beating up an elderly person in front of children, is conforming to the dictates of a particular ideology supported by the political system of the time.

Madima (1984:44) continues to highlight the unhealthy human relations between Blacks and Whites

*ǀiduna ǀa muvhili na thumbu ya vuhesheheshe, ǀa ǀingo ndapfu.  
Hoǀhe vho vha vha tshi ǀivha uri a ǀi ambi na boyi luvhili.*

A huge and fat man with a big tummy and a long nose. It was known all over that he never spoke with his worker twice.

This situation occurs when Maluǀa returned to his employment after missing work for days. He could not go to work because he was still busy with preparations for his marriage. Maluǀa did not even dare to explain to his employer what delayed him. He knew that trying to do that would land him in trouble. He did not question his dismissal when it occurs. Instead he just collected his identity document and letter of reference and then left.

In the above depiction, the White man had very poor relations with his workers. The assumption is also made that he would not take anything from his worker, nor could anyone question his authority. The implication is that his word is always final. There was no reason for him to listen to the views of his workers.

Female employers also do not escape Madima's attention and criticism for their harsh treatment of their workers. This can be observed in the following quotation:

*Ni mbo ǀi vuwa ni tshi ya hone, khamusi ni ǀo vha na phanǀa na u wana. Hurǀwe hune muthu a nga ǀavhanya u u wana ndi dzikhishini; hone hu dina vhomesisi; ngeno tshelede i siho (Madima, 1984:45).*

You must just go there tomorrow. You may be lucky and get one (work). It is also easy to get work in the kitchen; but the problem is with the female Whites (employers) whereas the pay is not

satisfactory.

Reading the above paragraph leads one to realise the writer's dissatisfaction with the manner in which female employers treat their domestic servants. The pay which the domestic servant receives is clearly not satisfactory. This deplorable state of affairs adds further weight to the dire situation of workers who are treated as disposable. The above extract highlights both the very poor climate of race relations and also the job dissatisfaction of workers.

The following quotation also points to the terrible conditions which black South Africans were subjected to in the past:

*Nangoho nga matshelo vhathu vha tshi dzhena mishumoni a vha u livha Germiston. Ngei hofisini ya dzibasa a bva na/lo bammbiri /a tshipentshela tsha u /o/da mushumo (Madima, 1984:45).*

Indeed, when others were going to work, he (Maluṭa) went to Germiston. He was given a special permit to look for work from the pass office.

Maluṭa had just come back from Venḍa. He had been dismissed from work for overstaying at home. He was now looking for work. Blacks were not allowed in urban areas if they were not working. A special permission to be in urban areas was required for Blacks if they were unemployed. Maluṭa had to acquire such a permit. If an unemployed black person was found without a permit in an urban area, he or she was immediately arrested. Such a person was in most cases summarily given a 72 hours notice to leave the urban area or risk being arrested and thrown into jail. According to Hindson (1987: 62), such an action was legally permissible in terms of the Urban Areas Act of 1952, Section 10 which stated that 'no African could remain in a municipal area – termed "prescribed areas" – for longer than 72 hours without the permission of an officer.' This Act was legislated as a measure to stop Blacks from moving to the cities in large numbers. White people at the time were vehemently opposed to Blacks flooding the cities because they were seen as a threat to peace, stability and cleanliness in the cities.

Blacks found it extremely difficult to earn a living and survive in the homelands. As a result, they started streaming into the cities in search of employment since there was

none in the homelands. Blacks no longer waited for periodic recruitment by the factories and the mines. Instead they took the initiative and streamed to the urban areas. White people viewed this as a serious threat to the so-called stability and tranquillity of the cities. To stem the tide of Blacks flooding the cities, the Nationalist Party government enacted a law (the Urban Areas Act of 1952) which legalised routine checks on Blacks to determine if their stay in cities was legal or illegal. Any black person found in an urban area without the special permit endorsed by the municipal authority of a particular city was immediately arrested and, as already stated, given 72 hours notice to leave the city or else risked being jailed. When Maluṭa obtained a special permit from the municipal authorities of Germiston, he was ensuring that he could look for work without contravening the Influx Control Act. Otherwise he would have risked being arrested and thrown in jail.

As we have already seen the Marxist historical materialist interpretation of a literary text can reveal much about the historical and political conditions in which people lived. The following extract from ***A si ene*** bears witness:

*Maluṭa, "Zwa u mala nga kholomo, zwone zwi ḡo vhuya zwa fhela. Dzi khou ya dzi tshi fhungudzea miriwaha yoṭhe. Pfulo a iho. Na vhalisa vha hone a vha tsheeho nga mberego." (Madima, 1984:26)*

Maluṭa, using cattle to marry is coming to an end. Cattle are becoming fewer as time goes on. There is no grazing land, there are fewer herdboys because of the (White man's) work.

Traditionally, Vhaventḡa people use cattle as payment when they marry. Of note in the above extract is the statement that there is no more place for people to graze their cattle nor are there young men to look after the cattle. It is apparent that change has occurred because young Vhaventḡa men no longer afford to stay at home looking after cattle. The fact that there is not enough grazing land also suggests that there are fewer cattle than before. Black people could not afford to have too many cattle because there was not enough grazing land. It must be remembered that they had lost most of their land as result of the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936. Consequently, people could no longer survive on cattle rearing only. This forced them to leave their homes to search for employment in the mines and factories in the urban areas. Hence, there were no more young men in the villages to look after the cattle.

The lack of grazing land can be related to the land problem in South Africa at the time. The Land Acts of 1913 and 1936 had far reaching implications on the life of African people in South Africa. Most of the land was allocated to white people and for industrial development. Blacks had to be content with the little land left for them. This kind of situation forced black people to sell most of their cattle since there was insufficient grazing land. Blacks also had to start working for whites in order to survive or fend for their families. Consequently, Blacks no longer had enough cattle or land to produce sufficient food for their families. The two draconian Land Acts thus had widespread negative implications for the African people. This kind of interpretation is possible only with the help of Marxist historical materialism. The above analysis clearly confirms the view that a work of art represents or expresses material conditions under which people live at a given time.

Using Marxist historical materialism as a tool for literary analysis reveals the extent to which family life was affected by the migratory labour system. Further elements of this system are revealed by the following passage:

*Musidzana waṅu arali a tshi khou ḡilugisela u vhingwa zwavhuḡi, inwi na mbo ḡi ṡuwa nga henefha ha mushumo wa ḡikhuwa, a zwi nga ni vuḡisi. Inwi ni ḡo vha wa u vheregela lurumbu. Mberego a i fheli! Fhembeledzani! (Madima, 1984:29)*

It will not be wise for you to leave just for the sake of the White man's work. You will not marry. After all you can still find another work! Be patient!

Tension that is brought about by migratory labour system is apparent. Before the advent of the system, young Vhavanḡa men had no problem when marrying as they were staying with their families. Now that they have to work for the Whites, they have to return home to marry. But unfortunately the process of marrying is long-winded and unpredictable. The process might not have been concluded before a young man's period of leave expired (generally only a few days could be spent at home). When things do not get done frustration occurs. This frustration is brought about by the knowledge that if they fail to go back to work on the scheduled date, they may lose their work. They unfortunately find themselves trapped as they are forced to choose whether to honour the slow process of the marriage proceedings or their duty to return to work. A decision either way leaves them with a problem. If the young man

chooses to go to work, he is faced with the likelihood of losing the bride and an opportunity to have or start a family. If he decides to stay and go ahead with the marriage, he is faced with the prospect of losing his work. Consequently he will find himself with a wife but with no means of support. The above quotation highlights the difficult choices that many young Vhavenḁa men had to make at the time as a result of the migratory labour system.

Madima continues to examine the effects of the migratory labour system on traditional family life. This can also be traced in the following passage:

*Makhuwani ʒo lala nga maanḁa, ri vhona vhone Vhakhāḁa. Ro vherega ra ḁi i sia ngeo. A i tendi u vhuya Venḁa. Muriwe wa vhaḁa vhaḁhannga a ri, "Nḁe ri sa vhuyi makhuwani ri ʒiwa nga vhathu vha fanaho na hoyu a re apha phanḁa." (Madima, 1984:40)*

It is alright in Johannesburg (the city). There is just a lot of Tswana women. We worked but have left it (money) there. It is difficult to bring it home.

One of those men said, "We do not come home because of women like this one."

The above statement is uttered by one of the Vhavenḁa men who were talking with Maluḁa at a train station. They are expressing their frustration at their failure to bring money home with them. Since they are far away from their homes working, they are expected to return home with some money. Unfortunately, some of their money had been spent on the Batswana women in the cities. Their disillusioned statement says it all: 'The money refuses to come to Venḁa.' Work ensures that these young Vhavenḁa men spend most of their time in the cities. It is natural that they end up falling in love with Batswana women and spending their hard-earned money on them. By the time they go home, they have no money left. In the same extract, some men even confess that they fail to come home because of the beautiful women they meet in the cities. This reference was actually to Adziambei who was with Maluḁa at the time. Their comments illustrate the extent of the damage done to their families by their double failure, That is, to come back home and also their failure to bring money home for their dependants.

The Marxist historical materialist literary approach enables a reader to discover something about the nature and the extent of the impact of the policy of separate development. The latter was a policy which separated different ethnic groups. People were compelled to stay with only those of the same colour or who spoke the same language as theirs. This policy was aimed at ensuring that Blacks were not allowed an opportunity to mix with Blacks of other ethnic groups as this would allow them to forge links and fight for their freedom from the Nationalist Party government of the time. As a result of this, most people were ignorant of the existence of other Blacks and their languages. In effect it was not even necessary to learn other African languages because one would always live amongst one's own people who spoke the same language. However, contrary to the policy of separate development, Blacks started mixing with other black people who spoke different languages in the cities. In this way the aims of the apartheid policy were ironically thwarted by the migratory labour system. Cities, as a result of industrial development and mining, drew people of different ethnic groups together. Vhavenḁa, Northern Sothos, South Sothos, Batswana, Vatsonga, amaZulu and amaXhosa who flocked to urban areas in search of employment started mixing at work. The following paragraph by Madima (1984:42) is a good example of how the migratory labour system backfired. Ironically, the migratory labour system posed a threat to the achievement of the objectives of the separate development policy:

*Tshe tsha dina Adziambei ndi luambo lwa Luvuvhu. O vha a sa vhuyi a pfa na mini, a tshi sokou sea musu vhaḁwe vha tshi sea (Madima, 1984:42)*

What annoyed Adziambei was the language that was spoken, that is Northern Sotho. She could not understand anything. However, she would just laugh whenever they laughed.

In the above extract, it is clearly stated that Adziambei found it difficult to communicate in Setswana. Apartheid policy had separated Vhavenḁa people from people of other ethnic groups. The then policy of separate development, which preceded the institutionalisation of the homeland system, ensured initially that black people in South Africa became strangers to each other. Languages spoken by other Blacks were ignored and unlearned. Ethnocentrism took a strong hold during the period of separate development when Blacks were alienated from each other, and

even came to despise each other just because they were not of the same ethnic group or did not speak the same language. For example, those who spoke languages from the Limpopo Province were, generally speaking, looked down upon by those who spoke isiZulu, isiXhosa and Sesotho. Speaking isiZulu became a symbol of status in the cities.

People who spoke the languages that were despised were forced to pretend not to be, say, Vhavenḁa, Vatsonga or Northern Sothos. Ironically, the very same system that wanted to separate Blacks perpetually from each other helped to bring them together. Hence, in the above passage, Venḁa people are depicted as living together with Tswana-speaking people in Hammanskraal. Both Sotho and Venḁa-speaking people found themselves in urban areas because the Whites needed their services. People of different ethnic groups from different homelands converged on the urban areas. When Whites required Blacks to work for them, they did not make any provision for language or grouping like, for example, that Batswana will only be hired in Pretoria, amaZulu in Johannesburg, amaXhosa in Cape Town and Vhavenḁa in Louis Trichardt and Ṱhohoyanḁou. White employers recruited workers from everywhere. Thus people of different ethnic backgrounds, who were by law required to live separately, started staying together in urban areas. This development strongly contradicted the objectives of the policy of separate development. Thus the Marxist reading of Madima's novel has elicited knowledge and understanding of the way in which different ethnic groups in South Africa were separated yet brought together by the separate development system created by the South African government of the time.

The following passage tells of a migratory labour system and its consequent impact on many black families in South Africa:

*Ndi fhanō ndo ḁa nga yone mberego ndi tshee mutukana... Zwi vho ita miṅwaha miḁanu na miraru ndi sa athu kanda hayani (Madima, 1984:66).*

I have been here because of work, and I have been here since I was a small boy... It is now almost eight years that I have never set foot home.

The above words were uttered by Matshaya, a character in ***A si ene***. Matshaya, originally from Pietersburg (now Polokwane), was working in Benoni. He had been there for almost eight years. At the time he never went home. His statement conveys more than what is written. It is immediately clear that Matshaya's family went through a very rough time. They had to endure the pain of not seeing one of their family members for almost eight years. Matshaya must have also suffered emotionally by staying away from his family for such a long period. The period he spent away from his home must undoubtedly have had an extremely negative impact on the family bond. The migratory labour system greatly disrupted many black families. Since black men mainly worked on a contractual basis, they were forced to stay away from their families for very long periods. Consequently, most black families were destabilised by this system. Women had to raise children on their own since their men were not there to play the fatherly role.

The following extract from ***A si ene*** also sheds light on the socio-political situation of the time when this work of art was created or produced. The passage goes as follows:

*Hu dina shango jino a jo ngo luga. Nda ri Muhanelwa nga de ngeno vha do hana. Na ene a nga si tende. Hone nangwe a tenda ndi nga mu dzudzafhi hafhu ndi tshi lala komponi! (Madima, 1984:77)*

The problem is that this place is not safe. If I ask Muhanelwa to come, they (the parents) will not allow her to come. She will also not agree. But even if she agrees to come, where will I accommodate her because I am staying in a compound!

The above extract outlines the problem that was experienced by black men who went to work in the cities. They could not go there with their wives. As human beings they also wished desperately to be with their wives. Their problem was one of accommodation for their partners. Most black men could not accommodate or stay with their wives in urban areas because they stayed in what were then called 'compounds' and later hostels. These premises were meant to accommodate migrant male workers only, especially those who were working in the mines. They were communal compounds built especially for migrant labourers. Only men stayed in these compounds. It is clear that no consideration was given or effort made to

accommodate Black men and their families. Clearly Blacks were not allowed to stay in the cities as families. It is not surprising to hear Maluṭa expressing his frustration and disgust at the thought that he could not bring his fiancée to the urban area.

The few extracts which have been quoted from *A si ene* help to prove the fact that different literary theories can be used to unlock the many hidden meanings in the same literary text. In this section, Madima's work of art has been interpreted from the Marxist historical materialist point of view. Much has been uncovered with the help of this literary theory. What is significant is that, with the Marxist reading of Madima's work of art, it has been possible to learn more about the experiences, feelings and situations of characters in an oppressive political and economic system in South Africa in the past. The reader is able to learn from the characters that a particular system of legalised policy of discrimination, as indicated in Madima's novel, clearly depicts the unfair treatment of Blacks as inferior citizens which was permissible and sanctioned. A further example in Madima's novel reveals to the reader that black people were forced to carry identity documents. The Pass Law was legislated to control movement of Blacks in the urban areas. This was supplemented by the Influx Control Act which was also meant to ensure that Blacks could only go to urban areas to work and not simply to stay there. Hence, the 72 hours scenario alluded to earlier.

The Marxist reading also helps one to learn and understand that animosity between different races and ethnic groups was also created and promoted by the policy of separate development. Some Blacks, especially those who spoke isiZulu, isiXhosa and South Sotho, felt they were superior to other ethnic groups, especially those that came from the Limpopo Province. Some, especially the amaZulu, used their ethnicity to bully other ethnic groups. As a result of this, there is a myth, in South Africa, that amaZulu are aggressive by nature. It is with the help of the Marxist historical materialist literary approach that one can uncover the hostility that characterised the lives of Blacks in South Africa, especially after the introduction of the policy of separate development. The most interesting part of this debate in the literary studies domain is the fact that the Marxist approach helps to uncover some of the many different underlying meanings which one might not have been able to find via other literary theories. This illustrates the point that literary theories also complement each other: they make up for other theories where they fall short.

### 5.2.2 A Marxist social theory of alienation's reading of *A si ene*

In addition to Marxist historical materialist and dialectical literary approaches, a work of art can also be analysed from another Marxist angle, i.e. the Marxist social theory of alienation. This theory can be of great help in tracing human alienation in a literary work. This theory helps to highlight the causes or determinants and the impact of alienation on human life which most of the widely used literary theories in African-language literature fail to do this. The underlying principle of this theory enables one to trace and highlight human alienation where it is recorded in literary texts. The Marxist social theory of alienation also explores the manner in which alienation disrupts and stifles human life.

In the context of this thesis, this social theory of alienation will be used to explain and shed light on the dimension and impact of alienation on human life. Karl Marx's concepts, which he used to highlight the economic alienation of human beings as a result of capitalism, will also be used to highlight human alienation in literature. Vorhies (1991:24) holds that 'the concept can also be used to understand human alienation caused by socio-cultural factors.' This implies that the Marxist social theory of alienation can also be used as an analytical literary tool to unearth and highlight human alienation which is brought about by both social and cultural factors. This postulation is premised on the argument that a human being is both a social and a cultural being. The essence of man's social and cultural being is also manifest in man's literary and artistic endeavours to recreate and reflect on the world around and about him/ herself.

Although Marxism is predicated on the humanist tradition of the West, its' human element draws it closer to African humanist thought, which is simply called Ubuntu. Commonalities between the two are highlighted by their passionate concern for the well-being of people. Literary critics often borrow the concept of 'alienation' from Marxism and use it as an analytical tool in the field of literary studies. Literary critics draw upon a Marxist interpretation in an attempt to, in the words of Gugelberger (1991:28), 'find analogues in the literary text for the views of Marx on ... alienation.' In other words, Marx's concept of alienation will be adopted and applied accordingly to

the domain of literary criticism as a tool to unlock a literary text and unearth meanings which other literary theories often fail to explore. Marxism is mainly premised on economic circumstances. In this thesis, the Marxist concept of alienation will be used to look at the manner in which socio-economic, political and cultural circumstances lead to human alienation. However, the research in this section will adopt an approach best termed an 'enlargement of Marx's critical method of alienation.' This modification is aimed at also encompassing the kind of alienation that is brought about not only by economic factors, but by socio-political and cultural factors as well.

According to Fromm (1966:v), Marxism is a school of thought which is opposed to 'dehumanisation of man.' Human alienation is believed to be a by-product of the dehumanisation of man. Fromm (1966:44) states that alienation is 'essentially experiencing the world and oneself passively.' In an attempt to clarify his statement, Fromm (1966:46) further argues that alienation is 'man's relinquishment of himself.' Kruger and Friedemann (1982:42) also share the same view of Fromm with regard to human alienation as they state that that alienation is 'a negative moment in man's life that makes man to deny himself, thereby throwing himself in a state of misery.' When alienation sets in, man begins to harbour an attitude which alienates him from himself, his fellow-men and his surroundings. Man could well also be alienated from his or her society, religion or culture. An alienated person loses his/her self-worth. Such a person, ultimately, becomes withdrawn, and this may lead him/her into emotional and spiritual impoverishment.

Alienation also destroys an individual's pride. It impacts negatively on an individual's soul so that he/she no longer experiences happiness. His/ her inner-self is 'mutilated' and degraded to an extent that he/ she experiences a loss of self-identity and belonging. This finally makes an individual feel worthless and rejected. These feelings, in one way or another, incapacitate individuals to the extent that they find themselves in perpetual self-condemnation. An alienated person has no faith in himself/herself. Such an individual lacks the strength and courage to take charge of his/her life. He/she lacks the power to determine or shape his/ her own destiny. In the light of the above postulations, an assertion can be made that human alienation occurs when an individual is in a state of remorse and resentment of oneself and life in general. Consequently, one experiences a loss of a sense of belonging, self-

identity and self-worth. Life, for an alienated individual, is never happy and is also not fulfilling. A severe form of human alienation can finally result in drug abuse and alcoholism, destitution, violence and suicide as well as mental incapacity. In this manner, one can see the extent of the damage that results from human alienation which, in turn, creates many social ills that hamper human development.

The application of the Marxist social theory of alienation will revolve around the love triangle involving Maluṭa, Adziambei and Muhanelwa, the three main characters in *A si ene*. It is important to start off by giving the background of the love triangle because such an exposition will help to create and provide the necessary context upon which the analysis of the above novel, from the point of view of the Marxist social theory of alienation, will be based.

Maluṭa had just started with the preparations to marry Muhanelwa when he suddenly fell in love with Adziambei. Ironically, the latter was also a friend of Muhanelwa. In Venda culture, once *lobola* is paid it is assumed by the community that the two are married. Maluṭa and Adziambei's action was heavily criticised by the community.

Adziambei finally eloped with Maluṭa to Gauteng (i.e. Germiston) where Maluṭa was working. In Gauteng, the two find peace as there was no one who disapproved of their love affair. This lasted until the time when Adziambei was treacherously abducted by Fanyana, Maluṭa's friend and former colleague. Fanyana forced her to be his wife. After an unsuccessful frantic search for Adziambei, Maluṭa gave up and revived his relationship with Muhanelwa. He married her and she stayed with his mother. He later asked her to pay him a visit in Gauteng (i.e. Germiston). Just a day before her arrival, Maluṭa was reunited with Adziambei. She had managed to escape from Fanyana's home after she employed another man, Matshaya, to kill Fanyana. Maluṭa did nothing to stop Muhanelwa from coming to Gauteng (i.e. Johannesburg). After her arrival, Muhanelwa could feel that she was not welcome. Maluṭa then took her to an abandoned house in a sports field. He told her that it was his house. He then left saying that he was going to fetch his belongings from the hostel. Meanwhile, Maluṭa had arranged with the criminals to kill Muhanelwa. They later came and showed him Muhanelwa's heart. Maluṭa was happy that Muhanelwa was dead and that he would now be able to spend his time with Adziambei.

Muhanelwa's death created many problems for Maluṭa. The death of Muhanelwa started haunting him so much that he could hardly sleep. He started calling out Muhanelwa's name even in his sleep. At the end, his behaviour started to deteriorate into derangement. After all attempts to treat Maluṭa failed, Adziambei gave up. She sent Maluṭa home saying that some rituals have to be performed first for him to be well again. On his arrival, Maluṭa saw Muhanelwa among the people who had come to fetch him since could not walk on his own. He could not believe that Muhanelwa was still alive. He then died of shock.

In accordance with the Venḡa tradition, marriage is arranged by parents. Whether or not the two people loved each other, this was not important. It is believed that love will develop with the passage of time. What is important to the parents is that their child must be married to a family that does not practice witchcraft, a family without dreaded diseases and a family where their child will be looked after by a hardworking woman or man. This shows that the individual's interests do not come first. The family elders check if the marriage between the two will benefit the entire family before they give thought to the interests of the marrying couple. This practice leads to the disregard or suppression of the interests and feelings of the two individuals being forced to marry. As a result, individuals sacrifice their freedom in the interests of the family because they are discouraged from doing what interest and satisfy them.

Any action contrary to the expectations of the family or community will lead to one being seen as rebelling against the authority. The punishment may come in the form of ostracism by family members, in particular, and the community at large. The guilty member may be reprimanded and sometimes disowned by his/her family. As the family and the community do everything to make the guilty party feel unacceptable, the culprit may finally feel cursed. Consequently, a feeling of rejection develops. Such a person becomes alienated from his family and community members.

An alienated person does not do things voluntarily. Things are imposed from outside. Such a person struggles to ensure that he/she fits into the dictates of her/his own cultural environment. The life of such a person becomes poorer, barren and unfulfilling because communal practices stand opposed to his/her individual

autonomy. Alienation stunts human life and social intercourse with others. Thus socio-cultural practices put more emphasis on the interests of the family or community above those of an individual. A human being's will and liberty are limited. This argument leads to Schweitzer's (1982:68) view of alienation as pertaining to 'relations of domination and subordination, appropriation and exploitation, and power or control in society.'

The above viewpoint by Schweitzer can be used to conclude that an individual's interests are dominated by those of the family or society. An individual is expected to respect and observe socio-cultural practices, norms, values and beliefs of the community. This, once more, endorses the expectation that one has to act or behave in accordance with the dictates or expectations of the community and not one's own. An individual is not in control of his/her life. The community determines one's way of life. In an attempt to illustrate the apparent existence of tension between an individual and the community, Schweitzer (1982:71) believes that human alienation is 'a manifestation of forms of socio-cultural contradictions and struggle' between an individual and his/her community. The clash of an individual's interests and those of the community leads to frustration as human beings cannot find fulfilment for themselves. The negative impact of the limiting socio-cultural factors is also endorsed by Vorhies (1991:24) who states that '... alienation retards social liberation.' This means that an individual is not given or allowed space and freedom to choose for him/ herself. One is dictated to by the family or the community.

**A si ene** lends itself easily to the above argument, Adziambei, one of the three main characters who will be discussed in this section, is regarded as an outcast because she is forbidden to be in love with Maluța who, in the eyes of the public, is married to Muhanelwa. Adziambei is expected not to give in to Maluța's proposal even if she loves him. She must refuse an involvement with him because he is legally married to Muhanelwa. In terms of the Vența culture Adziambei, is not at liberty to do as she wishes. She is bound by cultural practices, values and beliefs that prohibit her from yielding to her own feelings. Otherwise she will be contravening the socio-cultural norms and values of the Vența tradition. It is, therefore, not surprising to find Adziambei being severely criticised for her unbecoming behaviour by members of the Vența community. In this instance, one can see that an individual's liberty,

Adziambei's for example, is sacrificed for the sake of the norms, values and beliefs which members of the family and community are expected to strictly observe. This kind of a situation engenders a feeling of being unwelcome and rejected, and it ultimately alienates one from other members of the family or community. Tension finally builds up between an alienated individual and those isolating that particular individual. In the following extract, one can read the feeling of unwelcome, rejection, frustration, uncertainty and increasing tension between the two (i.e. Maluṭa and Adziambei) and members of the community:

*No vha ni tshi ḡo litsha zwithu zwo fanelaho nga hone u ofha uri  
vhathu vha ḡo ni amba?  
Nḡe ndi uri a thi na mushumo na muthu a dzulaho muḡini wa hawe.  
Ndi mala ane a fusha maḡo anga; na ane mbilu yanga ya mu takalela  
(Madima, 1984:20-21).*

Were you just going to stop doing the right thing because you are afraid that people will talk about you?  
I don't care about a person who is at his/her home. I marry anyone who satisfies my eyes; and the one that I love.

In the above conversation between Maluṭa and Adziambei, both are aware that, by falling in love, they have contravened Tshivenḡa traditional practices, especially after they had eloped together. However, Maluṭa does not regret having decided to follow his heart by falling in love with Adziambei, simply because he knows deep down that he loves her dearly. At the same time, he is also aware that people are opposed to his action because he failed to live according to the expected and commonly held traditional Venḡa practices, values and beliefs. The extract also highlights the clash of the interests of an individual and the community. Maluṭa reveals his determination to go against the dictates of his community by exercising individual freedom of choice. Maluṭa has decided to fall in love with Adziambei without the approval of the elders or the community. Maluṭa's dissension is also portrayed. He has resolved to do as he likes and not as is expected by his community. Maluṭa's decision gradually creates a chasm between himself and his community.

The tension between Maluṭa and his community is created by the fact that he has arranged his own relationship with Adziambei whereas this is, traditionally, supposed to be done by the elders. Moreover, he already has a wife-to-be. The Venḡa

traditional point of view construes that Maluṭa and Adziambei are wrong because a person is not allowed to choose his/her marriage partner since this is done by elders delegated by one's parents who follow certain cultural criteria.

The above extract also depicts clearly the hostile attitude already harboured by Maluṭa against the traditionally pre-arranged marriage system. Maluṭa shows his total disregard of traditional marriage procedures by indicating that he is happy that he has done what pleases him and not what pleases the family or community. Maluṭa is also aware that his relationship with Adziambei will not receive the blessing of the members of his family and community. Contrary to the traditional norms, values and practices, by falling in love and eloping with Adziambei without the approval of the elders, the interests of an individual have been entertained at the expense of those of the family and the community. Maluṭa has not sacrificed his happiness for the sake of the elders or the community. He has chosen to put his individual interests before those of the community by doing everything without the approval of the elders. Maluṭa and Adziambei have done what Praver (1973:20) calls 'the ability of the human spirit to deny and invalidate a whole range of false social values and reaffirm the priceless freedom, independence, and integrity of the self.

The above extract illustrates the point that once people are dictated to in accordance with social values and norms, they deny themselves the privilege of entertaining their own individual wishes, aspirations, likes or tastes. In other words, they sacrifice their wishes as expressed by their inner selves. In so doing, they miss the opportunity to fulfil and satisfy themselves. This denial of the self hampers an individual's freedom or independence. This kind of situation does not affirm individuals but strips them of their integrity.

Maluṭa and Adziambei's action illustrates the new trend that was beginning to emerge among the Venḍa people. A generation of young Vhavenḍa people is emerging. This generation of young Vhavenḍa people are bold enough to go against the traditional laws that deny individuals freedom to choose and do as they wish. This new generation, springing up unexpectedly, is not willing to sacrifice its happiness for the sake of meeting the expectations of the elders and the community. Maluṭa's decision to fall in love with Adziambei without the approval of the elders is setting him

up in a collision course with his family and the community. The same scenario applies to Adziambei. Her action warrants vehement opposition from her family, in particular, and the community at large. Both her family and the community will fiercely oppose her. A husband has already been earmarked for her, yet she has made a decision autonomously and is determined to pursue her love affair with Maluṭa. The family and the community are not only incensed by the fact that the two fell in love without any consultation with their elders, but also because their relationship is likely to derail Maluṭa's marriage with Muhanelwa which is viewed as the one that has been properly arranged.

Maluṭa and Adziambei's relationship is unacceptable and unblessed by elderly people who believe that it will destabilise Maluṭa and Muhanelwa's marriage. What infuriates Maluṭa and Adziambei's families even more is the fact that their relationship will lead to the rest of the community stigmatising them and also speaking badly about the two families. The two families will now be criticised by the community for having been seen to condone the unbecoming behaviour of their children. Once this happens the image of the two families will be tarnished. Consequently, they will lose the respect of their fellow community members if they are seen not to oppose the forbidden and unblessed relationship between Maluṭa and Adziambei.

To avoid being ostracised by other members of their community, the two families would prefer to be seen to be observing and practising traditional Venḡa marriage norms and values. This is done by reprimanding Maluṭa and Adziambei. They do not associate themselves with the actions of Maluṭa and Adziambei. Consequently Maluṭa and Adziambei are ostracised even by their own families. Their families are doing this in response to the expectations of their community in terms of their traditional norms and values. The fierce opposition to Maluṭa and Adziambei by their families and their community makes the two feel rejected and disowned. The special bond between the couple and their families and the community is tampered with by their action. Their feeling of being unwanted and disowned by their own people marginalises them. A feeling of rejection and human alienation sets in. Rejection by their family and other members of the community impacts negatively on their lives. The Concise Oxford Dictionary's definition of alienation is applicable (1991:28) as it states that: alienation 'causes a person to feel isolated or estranged from friends or

society, etc.’ Indeed Maluṭa and Adziambei feel isolated from their own people because of their daring defiance and resistance.

Maluṭa and Adziambei continue to act in a defiant manner. What matters most to them is their happiness and not the expectations of their families and community. They fall in love fully aware that their actions are contrary to the expectations of their elders and the community. This can be traced in their confession of their love to each other in the following extract:

*..., fhedzi ndi ni funa u fhirisa vhaṭhannga vhoṭhe, khamusi na onouḷa ane na ri ndi ene-ene. A thi ḡivhi uri ndi nga ita mini. Hone ra sa anḡana, ndi ḡo vhuya nda tou swika lufuni ndi kha ḡi vhilaela. Ni songo sokou litsha vhathu vhaṅu nga nḡe. Arali lu lufuno na nḡe tshee nda ni vhona mbamulovha, ..., ndi pfa ndo sokou takala ndi tshi ni vhona. Ngoho ndi mashudu ro ṭangana hafhano (Madima, 1984:21).*

..., but I love you more than other men do, perhaps even more than the one you think is the right one. I really don't know what I can do. But if we can't agree on this, I will die worrying about this. Don't just leave your people because of me. But I have loved you ever since I saw you. It is just luck that we met here.

The love that binds Maluṭa and Adziambei is very deep and unshakable, uncaring of traditional Tshivenda norms and practices. However, there is no doubt that both Maluṭa and Adziambei are aware that their love affair will experience problems because Maluṭa already has a future wife. Despite the knowledge that Maluṭa already has Muhanelwa as his wife-to-be, the two decided to go ahead with their love affair. In this way they choose to satisfy their own interests and not of their families as expected in their community.

Their action shows the beginning of an encroachment of the Western way of life into the Tshivenda way of life. The interests of individuals are beginning to matter even to Vhavelwa people. People no longer do what suit the elders, family or community. They think, behave and act according to their own dictates. The emergence of a new situation (a conflict of interests) is challenging and new. A rift between an individual and his/her community is created. An individual feels frustrated and rejected by the community that denies him/her the freedom to choose or do as he/she wishes or likes.

The aftermath of the frustration and the feeling of rejection lead to human alienation. A feeling of negativity begins to engulf the life of an individual. The same applies to Maluṭa and Adziambei as the two begin to develop a negative anticipation of the way the community will react to their falling in love. They begin to anticipate criticism from the community members. This is inevitable because they have violated the traditional norms regarding relationships and marriage procedures. In the following paragraph, one can sense Adziambei's negative anticipation of severe criticism from the community members:

*Lufuno wavho lwo vha Lu tshi vho tou fhasi hokum.*

*Maluṭa, "Mbamatshelo nga tshino tshifhinga ri ḡo vha ri tshidimelani, arali na inwi no ḡinala. Nḡe hone zwa sa itea ndi ḡo fa ndi tshi ḡinembeledza."*

*"Hone ndi u tou ḡiseisa-vho nga maḡithu a Hatshivhasa." Ndi Adziambei ane a ralo a sa ḡivhi tshine a amba nga dakalo (Madima, 1984:35)*

Their love was now very hot.

Maluṭa, "If you are also really serious, the day after tomorrow by this time, we will be in the train, but if this does not happen I will hang myself."

"But we are just going to be a laughing stock of the Tshivhasa people." Adziambei said this not knowing what to say because of joy.

The above quotation clearly shows that the two are deeply in love. It is apparent, too, that the couple has agreed to elope. This highlights Maluṭa and Adziambei's commitment to their love affair which they continue with despite the disapproval of their families and community. The couple is fully aware of the severe criticism they will incur because of their unacceptable action. They know that they will become the laughing stock of the community. Interestingly, they will not only be laughed at. But, they will also be heavily criticised. Their punishment may even go beyond criticism. This may inevitably lead to their isolation and ostracism by the community which is a very severe form of punishment. This will cost them dearly as they will not get any support and comforting from their community as a result of their contravened of traditional Venḡa practices.

Their concern about the consequences of their disregard for the traditional Venḡa ways of life is depicted below (Madima, 1984:41):

*“Arali ndi na nḡevhe dza malingo, dzi pfaho zwa kule-kule, ndi musi ndi tshi ḡo thetshelisa nda pfa zwine vha hayani vha amba nga riḡe.”*  
*“Ndi zwihulu hezwino, miladza i ḡiwa nga riḡe. Fhedzi vha ḡo neta! Ro bva ro bva, ri ḡo vhuya zwenezwo ri tshi vho funa.” Ndi Maluḡa.*

“If I had magic ears which can hear from far away, I would listen to what they are saying about us at home.”

“It’s a party, they must be talking about us even when they eat. But they will get tired. We are not going back, we will come back when we like.” said Maluḡa.

In the above extract, Maluḡa is still concerned about the reaction of people at home. Their knowledge that they have contravened the Venḡa traditional way of life makes them to be concerned about what people back at home might be saying about them. They are aware that their undermining of traditional Venḡa ways of life must have left the community shocked and disgusted. As a result, Maluḡa and Adziambei are now thinking of the possible revulsion with which people will react to their action. However, Maluḡa and Adziambei are happy that they are back together again. Nevertheless, the problem is that their happiness is founded on their disregard of the Venḡa traditional way of life.

The growing tension and conflict between Maluḡa and Adziambei’s families, on the one hand, and the community’s anger and shock at their behaviour, on the other, hand, highlights the gradual development of alienation between the two camps. Schweitzer (1982:75) says alienation is the result of ‘forced conformity to the predominant values and institutions of society...’ This quotation shows the rift that has developed between the two camps. Maluḡa and Adziambei get frustrated and are finally alienated from their own people and culture. They fiercely resisted their community’s limitation on and interference with their right to choose individual freedom. Members of the community see their action as a deviation from the generally accepted traditional Venḡa social processes and values. Consequently, Maluḡa and Adziambei begin to experience denial and rejection by their own families and community.

According to the Marxist social theory of alienation, it is these social and cultural norms and values which produce extremely dehumanising conditions and deny individuals the right to exercise their freedom of choice. Such a situation produces a

rebellious tendency in the individual who then disregards the restrictive social and cultural norms. It is, therefore, not surprising to see Maluṭa and Adziambei vowing to go ahead with their intention to stay together. What is unfortunate is that the rebellious people who are shunned by the community may even fail to be in control of their lives or lead a meaningful life because they will be living with a guilty conscience. Individuals, irrespective of their actions, still remain members of a community. The ties of blood and community are so strong and they can never be fully eradicated. Whatever the outcome, they will always need the cooperation or approval of their behaviour by their fellow community members. Even though the couple has gone to Gauteng they still show allegiance to their families and community.

The following extract also highlights the continued feeling of alienation of Maluṭa and Adziambei as a result of their choice:

*“Ni sokou takala, zwi re hayani ndi zwi hulu!”*

*“Mbilaelo dzi nga si ri thuse vhunga zwo no ḡi rali. Na hone vha hayani vha nga si fane na inwi kha nḡe. Ndo vha ndi tshi ḡo vha ndo ṭungufhala ngamaanḡa arali ndo ḡa fhanu nda ni sia ni ha haḡu.” A tshi ralo u khou mu vhanḡavhanḡa khofheni (Madima, 1984:47)*

“You may be happy, it must be chaos back at home!”

“Worrying will not be helpful when things are already like this. People at home cannot be like you to me. I would be very sad if I came here without you.” He said this caressing her face.

In the above, it is clear that alienation has clearly set in. Adziambei and Maluṭa know that people back home do not approve of their action. Yet they do not regret their action which is responsible for their estrangement. They take responsibility in the knowledge that their actions have served to further their own individual interests. Despite the knowledge that their families and community are disgusted by their action, the two refuse to bow to social pressure which is a sign of a disregard for their own families and community’s interests.

Maluṭa and Adziambei are satisfied and extremely happy with their situation because they love each other dearly. This is clearly illustrated by Maluṭa’s statement that what people say is not important but it is their being together which matters most to him.

Maluṭa claims further that had he not come back with Adziambei he would have been a very unhappy man. Nonetheless, the two find themselves in a dilemma. This is revealed by Maluṭa's statement that the elopement has surely shocked and alienated people against them, but leaving her behind would have also left him unhappy. The interesting part of this argument is the fact that being together does not necessarily bring complete happiness. They still find themselves always thinking or talking about possible repercussions back home. They cannot deny their common humanity. As human beings, they are linked to their fellow people and they cannot just simply ignore feelings, opinions or perceptions of their fellow community members. In other words a further alienation has taken place, and the outright happiness they expected is tempered by the thought of the division that has occurred. It will simply not go away.

Another example of human alienation is displayed by Maluṭa in the following passage:

*“Vhaventṣa vha sa athu u ṭalukanya zwa dzibugu vha phanṣa. Vhenevho mikhwa yavho i a lemela; wa i tevhelela yoṭhe u nga tshinyalelwa nga zwinzhi.” (Madima, 1984: 47)*

“Illiterate Venṣa people are worse. It is not easy to follow their orders; if you do you will end up losing a lot.”

In the above quotation, Maluṭa launches a severe criticism of his own traditional and conservative Venṣa people. He is suggesting that they are too conservative and strict because they are illiterate. This criticism also reflects Maluṭa's position. He has now divorced himself from his fellow people because he failed to behave as expected. The fact that he has now distanced himself from them clearly points to his alienation. To feel better and to avoid taking the blame, Maluṭa accuses them of being socially rigid because of their illiteracy. Maluṭa is also making a critical comment about the oppressive and frustrating traditional Tshiventṣa marriage procedures applicable to young Venṣa men and women.

Traditional Tshiventṣa marriage procedures make it difficult for young people to choose their own partners. Maluṭa thinks that if he has to follow traditional Tshiventṣa practices to the letter, his happiness and future life will be severely compromised. In

this case, he would have not been able to confess his love for Adziambei. To Maluṭa such practices are unfair and frustrating. They estranged Maluṭa from his family and community members. His comment on illiteracy alludes to the conservative and oppressive nature of traditional Tshivenḁa marriage practices. It alienates him because it sets him up against his own people and the Tshivenḁa tradition. It estranges him because it forces him to ignore his feelings for Adziambei.

Traditional Tshivenḁa practices put Maluṭa on a collision course with his own people and tradition. Consequently, Maluṭa is embittered and comes to detest those institutional elements that deny him an opportunity to exercise his freedom of choice. This creates a feeling revulsion in him. The proof of this is his attempt to label Vhavenḁa people as illiterate. His bitterness and revulsion with a conservative and oppressive traditional system leads him to distance himself from Vhavenḁa people. Consequently, a double wedge has occurred. It is no longer only the people back home who are distancing themselves from Maluṭa. Maluṭa is also taking an active role in this exercise. As a result, Maluṭa starts taking precautionary measures to avoid meeting Vhavenḁa people in Gauteng. He is, of course, afraid that if he meets some people from Venḁa, they will criticise him for eloping with Adziambei. This shows how Maluṭa is beginning to gradually distance himself from his own people. Maluṭa's estrangement from Vhavenḁa can also be traced in the following extract:

*“Germiston hone ndi havhuḁi ngauri a hu na Vhavenḁa vhanzhi vhane vha nnḁivha. Na zwino vha pfa murwe wa vhaḁa vhaḁhannga a tshi mbudzisa, vha mu vhudze uri ndi vho shuma mabulasini, Rosiḁtembere. A thi tsha funa u ḁangana navho, ...” (Madima, 1984:47)*

“I think Germiston is alright because there are not many Venḁa people who know me. If you meet one of those young men who ask for me, tell him that I am now working on a farm in Rustenburg. I no longer want to meet them ...”

Maluṭa's alienation extends beyond his family and community members. He is now making a concerted effort to avoid meeting Venḁa people even in Gauteng. He shuns contact with anybody who came from Venḁa. Maluṭa is doing all this in reaction to the traditional Venḁa marriage practices which he perceives as outmoded and hostile to an individual's interests. The above quotation also comments on Maluṭa's revulsion

at the traditional Venḁa marriage practices which lead him to hate mixing with Vhavenḁa people.

Maluḁa's failure to follow tradition also impacts negatively on his relationship with Adziambei and Muhanelwa's families. Both families are caught up in this controversy. Adziambei's parents feel angry and bitter that Maluḁa has lured their daughter to elope with him. This is compounded by the fact that they have already chosen a husband for Adziambei. Maluḁa and Adziambei's action is viewed as a transgression of the traditional Venḁa marriage system and disrespect for the elders. The action by the two also creates conflict between Adziambei and Maluḁa's families. Adziambei's parents direct their anger at Maluḁa's parents. As a result of Maluḁa and Adziambei's action, a bitter quarrel erupts between the two families. The two families fiercely attacked each other. The enmity between the two families, stemming from Maluḁa and Adziambei's elopement, is reflected in the following paragraph:

*Vho-Mukona vho vha vha tshee vho halifha. Na henegei makhuwani arali hu si uri vho vha vha sa hu ḁivhi zwavhuḁi, ndi musi vho namela vha tou ḁoḁa nga tsha vhukoma. (Madima, 1984:60)*

Mr Mukona was still very angry. If he knew Gauteng well he would have boarded the train and gone to look for Adziambei by himself.

The above paragraph highlights the fact that Adziambei's father was furious about Adziambei's disappearance. He is irate because Maluḁa and Adziambei's elopement shows disrespect for him and the traditional Tshivenḁa marriage system. He is also angry at the thought of the implications of their actions. He fears that his family will be despised and blamed for Adziambei's action. This will be further taken as a sign that he has failed as a parent to discipline Adziambei. No person can bear to hear people talking badly about his or her family. Further far-reaching implications are that everyone connected or related to Maluḁa or Adziambei is caught up in this wrangle. The conflict that develops between Maluḁa and Adziambei's families, Adziambei and her suitor's family as well as Maluḁa and Muhanelwa's families demonstrates the extent of the damage and estrangement brought about by their elopement.

Maluḁa's actions, later on, breeds further alienation between the two families.

Maluṭa's mother makes contact with Muhanelwa's parents to finalise the marriage:

*Mme a Maluṭa vha ḡiṅala vha tsa Vondwe u sela Muhanelwa, vha vhuya vha tshi fhufhura nḡevhe; hu si na tshinaki. Makhadzi wa Muhanelwa vho thukhuthela, vha sa funi u pfa. "Vhusiwana ndi vhusiwana zwaho. Muhanelwa ha tambiwani ngae nḡe ndi hone lini. Mu litsheni u ḡo kegulela henefhanu muṭani wa nḡe makhadzi wawe." (Madima, 198:74)*

Maluṭa's mother resolved to go to finalise marriage preparations for Muhanelwa. She came back without achieving anything because she was chased away. Muhanelwa's aunt was angry; and was not prepared to listen. "We may be poor; but you cannot do this to Muhanelwa as long as I am around. Leave her and she will grow into an old woman in her aunt's home."

The above quotation reveals the anger and bitterness of Muhanelwa's aunt because of the attempt of Maluṭa's family to revive the relationship between the two families after he had eloped with Adziambei. Muhanelwa's aunt was so angry that she felt that there was no point in talking or associating with the family whose son had embarrassed them. The relations between his family and that of Muhanelwa are strained so much that Muhanelwa's aunt felt offended and angry. Her fury and bitterness demonstrates the extent of the estrangement and damage done to the relations between the two families by Maluṭa and Adziambei's action.

Maluṭa and Adziambei also suffered heavily despite the fact that they were the ones who started the controversy. However, their action, which was intended to serve their own individual interests, was viewed as a total disregard of the traditional Venḡa marriage practices. They were, as a result, severely criticised, shunned and ostracised not only by their families but by their entire community. It is not surprising to hear Maluṭa and Adziambei saying the following:

*"Ndi kha ḡi dovha nda tsa Venḡa nḡe?"  
"Na nḡe ndi nga si tsha hu kanda." (Madima, 1984:85)*

"Do you think I will ever go to Venḡa!"  
"I will also never set my foot there."

The first question is uttered by Adziambei in rhetorical form. She already knows the answer and this serves to emphasise that she has vowed never to go to Venḡa

again. She does not see any reason for going back to people who have rejected her. Adziambei believes that their disapproval and criticism of her action have led to her family and community disowning her. She has no motivation to return to the people who have shunned and ostracised her for what she did. Her statement is a clear indication that she has been alienated from her family and community.

Just like Adziambei, Maluṭa is also alienated from his family and community. This is evident from his statement after Adziambei has revealed her intention never to return to Venḍa. He shares the same sentiments with Adziambei by emphatically stating he will also never set his foot in Venḍa again. Maluṭa is aware that his family and community do not approve of his elopement with Adziambei. Returning to Venḍa is unnecessary because he will not be welcome. It is clear that the two prefer to stay forever in Gauteng because they will not be welcome back home because of their defiance. They conclude that it is better to stay away from people who will reject and snub them. Instead of facing up to the bitter pill of being unwelcome, they choose to stay away from home where there will be no one to remind them of their contempt for their own tradition.

The few passages cited above help to trace and highlight the impact of alienation. Maluṭa and Adziambei's life was put in disarray because they chose to entertain their own individual interests instead of living according to the dictates of their community.. Their families and the community hounded them for their decision to satisfy their selfish interests. Rejection and perpetual criticism by family and fellow community members alienate Maluṭa and Adziambei from their own families and the community. This shatters their life completely and culminates in their resolution never to go back to Venḍa. Their resolve represents the extreme nature of their estrangement.

### **5.3 A psychoanalytical reading of Asi ene**

A psychoanalytical approach also plays a very important role in the evaluation of African-language literature. This approach helps to unpack and indicate the way in which literary texts encapsulate human personality in the form of human actions, words or thoughts. It further attempts to highlight the causes or determinants and the psychological impact of human behaviour. This approach also lays bare the

psychological impact and effect of human alienation. The application of this approach in the analysis of *A si ene* will enable the critic to get the most out of a literary text which intrinsic literary theories cannot perform. The approach will indicate that a literary text will always yield different meanings if different literary theories are used in evaluating it.

Freud is the founding father of the psychoanalytic approach. Freud's followers adopted and adapted this approach to suit other new fields of study. This theory has also borrowed elements from applied psychology to be used in the domain of literary criticism. From a Freudian point of view, as stated by Bressler (1994:92), literary psychoanalysts view a work of art as an 'external expression of the author's unconscious mind.' The basic rationale of Freudian psychoanalysis is that human behaviour is a reflection of the state of an individual's mind. Everything that an individual does is a reflection of the state of his/ her mind. A person's actions, words and thoughts reveal much about that person's personality and state of mind. The early psychoanalysts who applied this approach in the literary field are Carl Gustav Jung and Northrop Frye. These psychoanalysts maintain that a work of art reveals the writer's state of mind because it is a reflection of what happens or what is going on in the mind of the writer. They further hold that a literary work also reveals the writer's personality. The early psychoanalysts also espoused the idea that human behaviour is, exclusively, biologically determined. The advocates of this approach tend to ignore the fact that there could be other factors that may have a bearing on human behaviour other than biological determinants.

A breakthrough in the application of the psychoanalytical approach to the literary domain was realised as a result of the efforts of the sociologist Eric Fromm. He laid the foundation for this approach and his principles attained unparalleled influence even in the field of literary criticism. Literary critics preferred his principles because he moved away from the assumption that all human behaviour was biologically determined. He argued that, other than biological factors, human behaviour was also determined by socio-cultural factors. Most important for the application of psychoanalytical approach in literary criticism is Fromm's contention that a work of art does not necessarily reflect the writer's personality or state of mind, but that it can also reflect the personality or state of mind of people other than the writer. This shifts

the argument to a level where one can argue that a writer does not necessarily write about himself/ herself but about the experiences of his/ her fellow beings.

The literary psychoanalysts who were influenced by Eric Fromm contend, as stated by Bressler (1994:92), that a work of art 'embodies or houses the cumulative knowledge and experiences of human beings.' Reading a work of art enables one to learn about the fears, hopes, dreams, anger, hatred, and guilt of human beings. All these, according to psychoanalysts, reveal much about the state of the mind of those particular human beings. Bressler (1994:94) comments that psychoanalysts hold that a work of art is 'an outward manifestation of the human experiences lying hidden in the human mind.' He advances the argument that the use of the psychoanalytic approach in literary criticism can help to 'unlock the hidden meanings housed in symbols throughout the story and arrive at an accurate interpretation of the text.'

The argument in the foregoing paragraph suggests that people's dreams, ideas, fears, feelings, aspirations, sorrows, sadness, happiness, etc. can be traced in their literature because writers tend to imprint their findings about human beings in their literary texts. When a work of art is finally produced, an artist will have re-created human experiences, thoughts, fears, desires and feelings in the form of his/ her work of art. Put in another way, artists produce works of art to re-create and record human experiences. The psycho-analytic approach provides the best method to 'strip and peel the writer's language to uncover the underlying meaning of a work of art' Bressler (1994:95). Beneath the surface of every work of art much remains to be learned about human experience and personality.

Psychoanalysts, as indicated by Bressler (1994:95), hold that human beings are 'complex creatures whose behaviour or actions are motivated by or are a representation of their mental and emotional state.' They argue that one can understand human personality with all its idiosyncrasies, and internal and external conflicts. Here they are alluding to the fact that social problems or ills find expression in human behaviour which equally manifests the mental state of the human beings in question. Happiness or sadness in an individual's life also impacts on the human mind. The significance of the psychoanalytic approach in human life is also espoused by Eagleton (1983:92) who expresses his belief that a literary text is a 're-creation of

the experiences, fears, hopes, feelings, wishes, etc., in the human mind.' Eagleton (1983:159) also views psychoanalysis as a theory of the human mind which tries to determine the causes of mental illness or mental disturbance in order to cure it. Thus psychoanalytical theory is seen as an attempt to explore and explain the causes and motivation of an individual's behaviour or actions. Such behaviour or actions always manifest themselves in the form of an individual's fears, hopes, dreams or guilt. This further suggests that once one can identify and understand the basis of one's fears, hopes, dreams or guilt, one will be able to begin to explore ways and means of dealing with one's situation.

According to Eagleton (1983:152), a psychoanalytical approach helps to determine the cumulative effect of the impact made by social experiences on an individual's mental or psychological life. This assertion suggests that all accumulated human experiences have a direct bearing on an individual's state of mind. Eagleton (1983:159) further endorses this assertion by stating that 'if only we can understand ourselves or the world we can take appropriate action.' This suggests that human beings need to understand what motivates them to act, think or behave in the way they do. Such an understanding will empower them in order to deal effectively with whatever situation in which they find themselves.

Meyer et al. endorse the argument advanced by those psychoanalysts who believe that human behaviour is not only biologically determined. Meyer et al. (1989:117) hold the argument that 'human personality is also greatly influenced by socio-cultural factors.' The proponents of this view further argue that socio-cultural factors affect the human personality which then may manifest itself in the human mind. These psychoanalysts, as stated by Meyer et al. (1989:142), maintain that the human personality can be understood also with reference to a specific social context. This assertion shows a radical shift from the original Freudian psychoanalytical approach which excluded the role played by external factors in the shaping of human personality. From this premise, one can argue that unfavourable socio-economic, political and cultural conditions can lead to deviant human behaviour. This may ultimately have an impact on all human actions. In the end, deviant human behaviour may lead to mental disorder.

Psychoanalysis can be helpful in reading and interpreting the mental state of the characters in a literary text. The psychoanalytical reading of *A si ene* below will be primarily focused on the assessment of the impact of human alienation. This was also dealt with in the previous section which focused on the Marxist social theory of alienation.

An attempt will be made to demonstrate that human alienation can be brought about by cultural and other social factors which can further lead to the need for psychotherapeutic intervention in the lives of traumatised individuals. For the purpose of this thesis, only the case of Maluța in *A si ene* will be looked into. He qualifies as a candidate for psychotherapy more than other characters such as Adziambei and Muhanelwa. It is clear in *A si ene* that Maluța's mental condition deteriorates to such an extent that it can be clinically referred to as a mental disorder.

According to Meyer et al. (1989:163), mental disorder can also be attributed to individual's guilt feelings. These scholars hold the view that negative feelings can create crises which may finally lead an individual to a state of mental illness. Their argument suggests that mental disorder starts with a simple guilt feeling. As one continues dwelling on and harbouring that negative feeling, it gradually builds up tension. As the tension intensifies the guilt feeling starts impacting negatively on the mental state of an individual. It is highly likely then that an individual will experience some form of crisis which saps one's conscience and mind.

Maluța also begins to feel guilty after Adziambei's disappearance. This occurred when Fanyana, Maluța's friend and former colleague, deceives Adziambei and goes away with her. Maluța's guilt feeling begins when he blames himself for Adziambei's disappearance. He is so worried about this that he cannot sleep at night. He spends most of the time thinking about it. By continuing to blame himself for Adziambei's disappearance, he begins to erode his mental strength. Tension and later crisis develop in his mind.

Maluța's crisis is further compounded by his conscience. He begins to believe he is guilty because he engineered their elopement without the blessing of the elders. A mind going through a crisis of confidence will finally give in to the weight and

pressure of negative feelings. If this intensifies, an individual may end up experiencing mental disorder. The same applies to Maluṭa. By constantly blaming himself for Adziambei's disappearance, he is perpetually troubled by this. His continued worry and concern about Adziambei, together with his apprehension of what Adziambei's parents will say when they know the truth about Adziambei, burden his soul and mind to such an extent that his mental state is negatively affected. The following quotation helps to highlight Maluṭa's feelings of guilt. Signs of the deterioration of his mental state are also apparent:

*Maluṭa mafhungo a Adziambei o mu ṭanganya ṭhoho. "Nwana wa vhathu we nda sokou hwala hu si na a zwi ḡivhaho! Ndi nga mu sumafhi? ... Ene kana u tshe hone zwi ḡihwa nga nnyi? Nwana wa vhathu u ḡo tou fa a tshi ḡifunga. Na nṅe ndo khakha."*

*Khofhe o vha a sa vhuyi a dzi doba. Ḍuvha ḡirṅwe na ḡirṅwe a lala a tshi ana ngano, o fara ṭhoho a tshi alamula ḡa vhuya ḡa tsha, maṭo o sokou tswuka. A onda a sala o tou tshakata. U tshimbila hu u tou denengedza yone ṭhoho ye ya vha i tshi vho tou nga ya phinimini yo ṭhuvhiwa. (Madima, 1984:76)*

Adziambei's disappearance frustrated Maluṭa. "I just took her without anybody knowing! Where can I report this? If she was born here in urban areas it would have been better. Adziambei may be clever, but she is not used to the urban way of life. No one knows whether she is still alive or not. She will die very angry. I am also wrong." He could not sleep. Every day he would talk in his sleep, he would hold his head and yawn until the following day, with his eyes being red. He became very skinny. He was now just left with a big head which looked like that of a 'phinimini' (i.e. water duck) without feathers. He also stopped going to Hammanskraal. What annoyed him was that wherever he went people never forgot to remind him of Adziambei who had been abducted.

Maluṭa constantly blames himself for Adziambei's disappearance. His failure to find a solution to this problem begins to wear down his spirit. This creates a crisis which builds up even more tension and confusion from within. Maluṭa aggravates his situation by continually harping on the disappearance of Adziambei with no prospects of finding her. He cannot sleep. He even talks in his sleep about Adziambei. The writer also reveals that the problem is also beginning to affect both his physical and mental well-being. He is depicted as a person who is fast losing weight. He is said to be so skinny that his big head dominated his body. His feelings of culpability induce

anger, bitterness and frustration all of which impact negatively on his mental health.

Maluṭa continues to show that he is suffering from a guilty conscience when he remarks to his mother:

*“Vhone havho u dinalea ho fhela; nḡe hafhu ndi kha ḡi tou ndo vhaiala! Nahone a thi fulufhedzi uri ndi ḡo dovha nda vhuya nda tou takala-vho.” (Madima, 1984:79)*

“You are no longer sad; but I am still very sad. I don’t believe that I will ever be happy again.”

The above statement by Maluṭa indicates the extent to which Adziambei’s disappearance has affected him psychologically. It represents an admission of deep-seated remorse. He has been psychologically paralysed by the event. The agony of many sleepless nights worrying about Adziambei’s whereabouts and safety has traumatised him. Maluṭa has virtually reached a point of no return. He has suffered permanent mental damage. His utterances serve to highlight the fact that he holds out no hope of recovery from the terrible blow he suffered in losing Adziambei. One can sense Maluṭa’s feelings of hopelessness and desperation. This can also be interpreted as a cry for psychotherapeutic intervention in his life. He needs outside help as he has already given up hope of trying to heal himself. He has resigned himself to perpetual bitterness and anger.

Therapy is necessary because Maluṭa’s statement reveals his inability to deal with or bear the traumatic experience which was brought about by Adziambei’s disappearance. The incident has created such an agony that Maluṭa admits that it has ravaged his mind and soul beyond recovery. Maluṭa’s statement suggests that there is a need for the cleansing of his mind and the soul. It further suggests that Maluṭa’s mental state is no longer stable. However, this does not mean that he has already reached a mental breakdown level. He is, however, showing the symptoms of an individual who is bordering on mental breakdown. Maluṭa also finds himself experiencing uncertainty about the state of his mental health.

Maluṭa is experiencing an extremely rough time in his life because he is intensely

worried about Adziambei's whereabouts and safety. He changes into a character with an extremely over-burdened and troubled soul because he is continually blaming himself for Adziambei's disappearance. He is not at peace with himself. His guilt continues to feed on his troubled mental and physical health. He continues to lament Adziambei's disappearance. The extent of the hurt brought about by his guilt feelings is revealed when he agonisingly pleads for knowledge about Adziambei. If only he can see or know that Adziambei is still alive then that he can know peace. This confession helps to express the extent of the frustration and bitterness that lie entrenched in Maluṭa's heart. Maluṭa's desperation is also highlighted when he states that he does not mind if she might be with another man, but seeing her will heal his soul.

What one can read in Maluṭa's lament is that his soul has known no peace since the abduction. He continuously blames himself for what happened to Adziambei. At this stage Maluṭa's situation seems almost to have reached a state of mental aberration which calls for psychotherapeutic intervention if he is to be saved from a total mental breakdown. Only psychotherapeutic intervention will help him to deal with his guilty conscience or help salvage the damage already done both to his physical and mental health. Once he is helped to understand and accept what has happened, possibly he will stop harbouring guilt feelings which are tearing his soul apart. This will also gradually lessen the burden on his soul. If Maluṭa does not receive urgent and necessary assistance he will soon be experiencing full-blown mental disturbance.

The following extract also helps to illustrate the sorry state of Maluṭa's mental health:

*Mbilu ya Maluṭa ya thoma u saw he a pfa na muvhili wothe u tshi fhisa. "Arali ndi vuwe ndi tshi ya nga ḽavhuraru, ndi musu ndo mu wana. U khou vhilaela nga nḽe, ndi musu a si ḽo ḽuwa. Zwino yo no sokou ḽi vha phambani-vho. A ri ḽi! Adziambei mufunwa wanga! Ndi tama hani u ni vhona. Na musu no no vha na murḽwe munna. Nda ni vhona luthihi zwanga mbilu yanga i ḽo rula!" (Madima. 1984:81)*

Maluṭa was so worried that his body started feeling hot. "Had I gone there on Wednesday, I would have found her. She is worried about me, otherwise she would not have left. Now we have just missed each other. Oh! Adziambei, my love! How I wish I could see you! Even if you are with another man, if I see you just once I will stop worrying!"

The above extract carries a tone of extreme frustration and desperation on the part of Maluṭa. The statement mirrors Maluṭa's confused state of mind as a result of his intense worrying about Adziambei's safety. Perhaps the words of Meyer et al. explain more aptly the state of Maluṭa's mental health. These critics (1989:163) hold the view that 'mental problems are the result of circumstances which prevent the individual from finding good solutions to ..., crises.' This observation aligns with Maluṭa's situation – a man emotionally and psychologically traumatised. He has expended so much emotional and psychological energy on this problem which remains insoluble. This continued intense concern about Adziambei's disappearance and safety has completely torn his soul apart. The only solace for his tormented soul would be to see Adziambei; otherwise Maluṭa will never know peace. The above extract also delineates Maluṭa's deep love for Adziambei. Hence he says that even if she is with another man seeing her alive will make him stop worrying. However, the fact remains that Maluṭa's intense concern about Adziambei is slowly and severely affecting his physical and mental health.

Another incident with far reaching implications for Maluṭa's mental health took place after Maluṭa has been reunited with Adziambei. He was recovering from the traumatising experience he went through after Adziambei's disappearance when Muhanelwa, the wife he married when Adziambei was away, came to visit him in Gauteng. Having found Adziambei, Maluṭa decided to hire some hoodlums to kill Muhanelwa. To prove to him that they have killed Muhanelwa they brought him a heart which they claimed was Muhanelwa's. Misguidedly and immorally, Maluṭa commissioned this crime so that he could live peacefully and happily with Adziambei. Ironically, their happiness was short-lived. Maluṭa started experiencing intense guilt feelings about Muhanelwa's death. After he had hired people to kill an innocent person, his conscience once again started plaguing him. The knowledge that he was responsible for Muhanelwa's death nagged and consumed his conscience.

Maluṭa's new feeling of guilt compounded his already weak health. It was worse this time.. Now he felt as if he was directly responsible for the death of an innocent human being was involved. As he constantly blamed himself for Muhanelwa's death, his culpability began to gnaw at his conscience. The weight of the new problem was even heavier than that of the first one. He was also already worn out because of the

first problem. What also made matters worse was the fact that he never went for psychotherapy or received any kind of counselling when he had his first problem. The second problem, which was even more serious than the first one, found him much more weak and vulnerable. His emotional and psychological resistance level had extremely deteriorated that when the second problem started he gave in too easily. His mental condition started deteriorating to the extent that it became obvious that he was starting to 'crack' under the weight of his extreme remorse. Finally his condition deteriorated into full blown mental breakdown. This is attested to by the following extract:

*Vhusiku hothe Maluṭa a lala o dzula, a tshi fhafhaḡa. O vha a tshi sokou tshenukana, a amba-amba. Adziambei na ene ho ngo i doba; ngauri o vha o tou fara gaḡa, a tshi ṭolou karuwa a mu dzinginyisa musi e khazwo. Khuhu dzi dovholola u lila Maluṭa a bvela nnḡa a tshi vhea mukosi. "A vho ngo laṭisa. Vhone vhafhio? Kana ho vha hu tshi iwafhi, vhathu vho ḡidzulela hayani? Ndo vha ndi tshi nga ita mini tshinwe ndi na Adziambei wanga? Tshe nda tevhelelwa; izwo a vho ngo laṭisa! Ndo ḡi amba, na mme anga ndi ḡo vha riwalela. Kana ndi ḡo tou mini-wee? Muhanelwa o vhulawa nga malaitha nḡe ndi mushumoni." (Madima, 1984:90)*

The whole night Maluṭa could not sleep. He would quickly just wake up and start talking. Adziambei also could not sleep as she was kept busy by always waking him up whenever he started talking. When the cocks crowed again Maluṭa rushed out shouting, "Yes, they have disciplined her (Muhanelwa). I said it. I will also write to my mother. Oh what will I say? I will say Muhanelwa has been killed by hoodlums while I was at work."

After Maluṭa was shown the heart that was said to belong to Muhanelwa by the gangsters he had hired to kill Muhanelwa, he had difficulty in sleeping. He was gradually becoming delirious because of his knowledge that he was to blame for Muhanelwa's death. His delirium also serves as an indication that his problem has taken him to a much higher level of emotional and psychological disturbance. He was now experiencing a complete mental breakdown. To confirm this, Maluṭa was now babbling in his sleep about his involvement in the killing of Muhanelwa. Waking in the middle of the night he would mutter cryptic statements revelatory of his guilt. The extract below sheds more light on Maluṭa's mental condition as a result of Muhanelwa's death:

*Duvha ja vhuya ja tsha e khazwo. Zwa nana ha vhuya ha mbo di vha vhulwadze vhu sa takuwi. A lwala a tou ri ndo zwi pfa. Vhugona ha sala vhu tshi nga ha lutshele. Handa ha hone hu marambo fhedzi. Thunzhi dza sotokana. Mavhudzi a fhufha. Thoho yone yo vha yo fhirixana tshothe; a si na javhuḁi line a amba. (Madima, 1984:91)*

He did that (speaking like an insane person) until the following day. The situation deteriorated to such an extent that he became very ill. Yes, he was very ill indeed. Even his knees were now protruding. His hands were now bones. His waist bones were now peeling off. His hair was also falling off. He was now completely mentally deranged; whatever he said had no sense.

A picture of a completely insane Maluḁa emerges. Maluḁa wakes up at night and runs around shouting and saying that Muhanelwa's heart only cost five pounds. He reveals the amount that he paid (five pounds) to the gangsters he hired to kill Muhanelwa. His mental breakdown is also accompanied by the deterioration of his health. The picture that is painted of Maluḁa is appalling. He was now very skinny and his hair was falling out. His mental illness is now categorically clear. Without help and his guilt rampaging through his mind, Maluḁa's physical and mental health has reached a point of total collapse. Hence he behaves in a deranged fashion, as indicated in the above quotation. Maluḁa's condition has now left him so frail that it was becoming obvious that he would not live for long. Realising the seriousness of Maluḁa's mental breakdown, Adziambei decided to send Maluḁa home in the hope that perhaps Maluḁa's family would do something to help him. She sent him to Venḁa by train.

On Maluḁa's arrival in Venḁa, his family went to fetch him. They found that he could not even stand up and walk. Maluḁa was shocked beyond belief when he saw that Muhanelwa was one of the people who had come to fetch him. He then died of shock when he saw Muhanelwa since he had always thought she was dead. The damage to Maluḁa's mental health had already been done by the traumatic experiences he had undergone while he was still in Gauteng. It was difficult, if not impossible, for Maluḁa to survive the shock of seeing Muhanelwa whom he thought was already dead as he had hired thugs to kill her.

Had there been psychotherapeutic counselling at the beginning of Maluḁa's problem,

he might have been saved. This would have helped him to understand and accept the problem he had created. This would also have helped him to stop blaming himself. The entire situation had now impacted negatively on him. Maluṭa's case also reveals the dark side of the Venḍa culture. In Tshivenḍa culture, communalism takes precedence over individualism. Whatever happens among Venḍa people has to be in the interests of and in terms of the dictates of the community. Individuals are not allowed to do as they wish but have to conform and honour traditional practices. Those who fail to conform to the expected forms of behaviour are ostracised by their families and the community. In terms of the Tshivenḍa culture, Maluṭa is seen to be responsible for his own death. His death is seen as a tragedy that befell him because he did not conform to the expectations of the community. To be blunt, his death is seen as a punishment for his defiance of the traditional Venḍa way of life. However, from the point of view of the psychoanalysts, Maluṭa's death can be blamed squarely on the rigid, conservative and traditional Tshivenḍa ways of life which are imposed on individuals by their families and community. Maluṭa's death is seen as a result of a lack of freedom of choice and the disregard of individual rights.

The psychoanalysts may argue that if Maluṭa's relationship with Adziambei had been approved and blessed by the elders, Maluṭa would have not experienced the guilt which finally took his life. This concept of the sacrifice of self is accommodated in African culture. Individuals are swamped by society's demands for conformity with cultural practices. Psychoanalysts hold that an individual who is over-burdened with society's demands is likely to experience problems which impact negatively on his/her mental state. Forcing an individual to satisfy the demand of the society at the expense of his/her own individual interests may be frustrating. Such a person may end up developing negative feelings towards that very same society. In some instances, such an individual may develop self-hatred for failing to meet the expectations of the society. A situation of this nature serves as a recipe for a disaster for all those individuals who choose to disregard the demands of society and not unexpectedly follow their own interests when it comes to a matter of the heart. The resentment of society and self-hatred creates a problem for an individual.

In view of the above, it is not surprising to hear of what happened to Maluṭa. He started hating himself for thinking that he was responsible for Muhanelwa's death. He

started to believe that he had killed Muhanelwa because he failed to conform to the demands of the community. His mental disturbance serves as a reflection of his bad relationship with himself and his family, as well as other members of his community. His relationship with himself was not sound because he also perpetually blamed himself for being responsible for Muhanelwa's death. From a psychoanalytical point of view, Maluṭa had developed self-resentment, hostility and anxiety because of the pressure he was subjected to by his own people when they denied him the freedom of choice.

Maluṭa's perpetual feeling of anxiety and helplessness brought about alienation and, finally, neurosis. Psychoanalysts argue for a balance between the interests of an individual and those of society in order to create an enabling environment for effective and healthy human existence. Psychotherapy can only be realised if there is a realistic relationship between the ideal and the actual self. This will enable an individual to accept himself as he/she is and to set realistic goals in life. Such an individual will be free to acknowledge his/her mistakes as well as his/her successes.

In the context of African culture in general, and Venḁa culture in particular, the removal of the impediments of self-actualization or fulfilment is difficult because any attempt to do so is perceived as placing the self at the centre and the society on the periphery. Any attempt to accept the fact that individual interests are just as important as those of the community is seen as being selfish and against the long established societal norms which put the demands/needs of the community before those of an individual. Psychoanalysts maintain that communal stability and satisfaction should start with the satisfaction of the individual. People, as individuals, must find the needs and demands of the society agreeable. It is then that they will respect and honour them. Individuals should not be forced to agree or abide by societal norms. A way must be found to strike a balance between the demands of the society and the interests of individuals, if cases like those of Maluṭa are to be avoided.

Adziambei and Muhanelwa were also affected. It became abundantly clear that they needed therapy. What happened to Maluṭa also touched them and it also left an indelible mark on their lives. For example, the emotional and psychological suffering that Adziambei went through by being shunned and rejected by her parents and

other members of the community was also unbearable. She also went through an extremely traumatic experience after she was abducted by Fanyana who forced her to be his wife. Her having a hand in Fanyana's killing as well as having to look after Maluṭa when he became mentally deranged was too much to contemplate. All this must have made such a negative impact on her life both, emotionally and psychologically, that she needed some form of psychotherapeutic assistance in order to cleanse her soul.

Muhanelwa's plight was as bad as that of Adziambei. The news of her fiancé eloping with another woman, especially her friend, Adziambei, must have strained her emotionally and psychologically. Another incident that must also have traumatised her occurred when she learnt from the gangsters who wanted to kill her that they had been hired to kill her by her own husband. One can also imagine what and how she felt when she came face to face with her own husband who had hired and paid people to kill her.

The above situation leads to a consideration of whether counselling or a similar practice existed in Tshivenda culture. This also makes one reflect on how mental cases were dealt with in accordance with Tshivenda culture. Most important for this thesis is the fact that the use of the different literary theories in analysing a literary work brings about a better understanding of human existence, and hopefully improving human life. In this case, the use of the Marxist social theory of alienation, Marxist historical materialism and the psychoanalytic approach has helped in tracing and highlighting the negative impact of rigid and conservative socio-cultural practices on human development. The literary evidence which can be gathered with the help of the Marxist social theory of alienation and psychoanalytical approach can be used, in the words of Meyer et al (1989:164), to 'uncover the nature and the origin of the underlying problems of human beings and also to help them to work through those problems.'

The above discussion also has the effect of issuing a challenge to African-language literary critics and scholars to begin to explore the possibilities of interfaces between African-language literature and psychology as well as psychiatry. African literary texts can also be used as study cases by psychologists and psychiatrists who have to treat

African mental patients who need counselling for their social problems. A vigorous exploration of the interfaces between these disciplines and the possibility of training people in this area will bring about more efficient speech therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, etc. Drawing from both disciplines can bring about a more holistic understanding of the dynamics of human behaviour or human nature which will further help in identifying and dealing with social and pathological problems.

### 5.3.1 The self concept versus society/community/family

Human life in African society is regulated in accordance with the demands and/or expectations of the society or community and family. This argument stems from the over-emphasis of communalism over individualism in African society. In African society what matters is not the individual but the community or the family. As a result, it is the interests and ideals of the community or family, and not those of an individual, which are cherished. Those of an individual come second to those of the community or family.

The scenario outlined above does not take place only in African societies. The same situation can be traced even in those societies founded on both capitalist and communist systems. This argument receives its affirmation from Meyer et al. (1989:133) who state that the 'communist order advances society's needs at the cost of an individual's needs, while the capitalist system advances the individual's needs at the cost of the society's needs.' The above statement illustrates a lack of balance between the individual and society. The above situation fails to take account of the fact that an individual also has his/her own needs which need to be satisfied just as much as the fact that she/he needs other people to associate with. Insofar as this imbalance of relationship between an individual and community or family is concerned, Meyer et al. (1989:125) hold the view that 'an individual will always be engaged in a constant struggle to retain his worth and freedom in spite of society's pressure to conform, which threatens to alienate and isolate him.' This argument suggests that individuals are generally expected to conform to the dictates of the society or family. In other words, the interests of the community or family come before those of an individual. This argument also tries to capture the essential nature of an individual's attempt to free him/ herself from the social and cultural trap

according to which an individual is supposed to align his/ her way of life. It is quite apparent that an individual is not allowed the space and freedom to entertain his/her individual needs. In this kind of a situation, anything that is seen to be threatening the societal demands and interests or expectations is viewed as abnormal or deviant. The sentiment is further expressed by Meyer et al. (1989:126) in the following extract:

The pain of being human is also closely bound up with the fact that man wants to be an individual, free of all bondage, yet also wants to escape from loneliness and isolation by committing himself to his fellows and to society. There is thus a conflict between individual and society which can be resolved only through balancing the demands of each.

The above extract highlights the fact that human beings are individuals and also members of a society. They have their own individual needs which they have to satisfy. At the same time they have to embrace those needs of the society. For the purpose of this research the most important part of the quotation is the last section which calls for the balancing of the demands or interests of an individual and those of society. If no equilibrium is restored between the two, a clash of interests is bound to happen. This will leave an individual in a dilemma. In this case one will have to choose between satisfying one's own demands or interests or those of the society. From a psychoanalytical point of view, it is the occurrence of this clash of interests which creates a problem for an individual. The problem of an individual ultimately manifests itself in the individual's personality or behaviour. This can further be traced in the actions, words or thoughts of an individual. From a psychoanalytical literary point of view, characters will display their problems through their words, actions or thoughts. In other words, they will do, say, think or express thoughts which will reveal to the reader more about their personality.

In view of the above argument, one can conclude that there is a need for the reconciliation of the demands or interests of an individual and those of the society, if there is to be stability. Failure to stabilise the situation between an individual's demands or interests and those of the society may create tension within an individual and also between an individual and the society. If this kind of situation arises, an individual gets alienated from society. This ultimately impacts negatively on the individual. Consequently the individual develops and harbours ill-feelings towards the society. This strains his/her bond with other members of the society as it happened

with Maluṭa and Adziambei. Once an individual's relationship with other members of society is strained, he/she begins to experience a feeling of isolation and rejection. A sense of guilt will, ultimately, leave a negative psychological impact. If the situation worsens, the individual in question experiences severe feelings of failure or stops being an effective or functional being. The situation may deteriorate to such a level that it leads to psychological damage on the part of an individual. This is exactly what happened to Maluṭa. The latter became mentally ill after being ostracised and alienated from his own family, Adziambei's family, Muhanelwa's family and members of his own community.

According to Meyer et al. (1989:132), Fromm places much emphasis on the need for the society to 'permit man to operate within manageable and observable dimensions, and to be an active and responsible participant in the life of society, as well as the master of his own life.' This postulation calls for recognition of the importance of an individual or his self-concept. This entails an individual being given the space and freedom to enjoy his/her individuality or uniqueness without trampling on the interests of society. To psychoanalysts, suppression of the self, in a way, breeds rebellious tendencies against society within an individual. Failure to arrest the situation may end up bringing about permanent psychological damage to an individual and this may further result in an individual developing deviant behaviour. Meyer et al. (1989:132) cite the view advanced by Fromm to the effect that what is needed is to achieve an optimal balance between the individual and society. If this kind of equilibrium is attained and maintained, the tension between an individual and the society will be reduced, if not entirely eliminated. This will further avoid the problem that is caused by those socio-cultural factors which work against man's human nature. Meyer et al. (1989:133) further quote Fromm who holds that 'a sick society will produce sick people, while a healthy society will produce healthy people.' The latter will function effectively in their society.

Some people argue that allowing individual freedom may create problems because individuals may begin to disregard society. This may happen when people put their individual interests above those of the society or community. According to Fromm, as cited by Meyer et al. (1989:127), the destabilisation of society can be prevented or minimised with the help of the human conscience which 'serves as a regulatory agent

... which enables the person to evaluate his own behaviour according to established norms and values.' Meyer et al. (1989:127) cite Fromm again, stating that conscience can be divided into 'authoritarian conscience and humanistic conscience.' The authoritarian conscience is 'the external authority,' like parents, state, or society, which directs or controls the individual's behaviour. This type of conscience is prohibitive as it reduces an individual's freedom and forces him to conform. It emphasises obedience, self-sacrifice, duty or an individual's social adjustment. It inhibits individuality and freedom.

Meyer et al. (1989:127) further indicate that the humanistic conscience is the person's 'inner voice,' which determines whether or not the person is behaving in accordance with his true human nature. The expression of man's self-interest and integrity is consequently centred. In this case the control comes from within the person and shows an individual's level of discipline and maturity. This is the type of conscience which, according to Fromm, controls man from engaging in disruptive actions which may even destabilise the social order.

In the case of ***A si ene***, the self-concept versus community opposition is clearly shown in Maluța and Adziambei's behaviour. The two characters are faced with an extremely difficult situation. They are in love but both are betrothed to other people. They have to decide whether to follow their hearts and resist the norms of the society or suppress their feelings for each other in order to be in line with the expectations of their community. But the two are so much in love that they choose to satisfy their own personal interests rather than the expectations and norms of the community. Maluța decides to abandon preparations to marry Muhanelwa. Adziambei, on the other hand, decides to leave a man who has been chosen for her by her parents. On realising that their decisions had grave consequences and are also opposed to the norms and values of their community, the two decide to elope to Gauteng. Eloping ensured that their own personal choices and decisions were not compromised for the sake of community norms. The two knew that they would be criticised by their families and members of their community for their resistance and defiance. The two also knew that when they are in Gauteng, their own personal choices would not be criticised as the setting was less prescriptive compared to the restrictive demands in Vența. Being away from their families and the community would save them from

criticism and carping judgement about their wish to pursue personal happiness.

#### **5.4 Feminist reading of A si ene**

Feminism has always been met with the wrath and prejudice of the reactionary man whose allegiance to the androcentric order of society is blinded by selfish interest. Even in the West, where it originated, feminism has evoked much debate. When its influence appeared to be reaching the African continent it was also met with vitriolic and vicious attacks and criticism by those who benefited from the marginalisation of women. Feminism continues to receive scathing opposition from those who have been 'brainwashed' beyond change by their allegiance to the androcentric social order that promoted subjugation of women. Feminism is viewed by its opponents as propaganda for women's rebellion against the traditionally long established dominance of society by men. However, of interest is that some feminists use feminism as a weapon to achieve their own selfish goals. Some use it to display their anger and bitterness over the miscarriage of their lives. Indeed, this misjudgement should not be used as an excuse by the forces that are reluctant to let go of their cultural stereotypes and those who are afraid to embrace change which argues for equality for people of different sexual orientations. Feminism must be seen as epitomising women's struggle against their exploitation.

In the domain of literary criticism, feminism is seen as signalling the advent of yet another dimension of literary appraisal which can help to unearth the meaning of a literary text which other literary theories may not be able to expose. Feminists should not just be seen as 'those people' claiming to be bearers of the flag of the Women's Liberation Movement; rather, most importantly, they should be viewed as literary critics who are making an effort to gain recognition for the feminist movement and significantly help shed more light on the interpretation of a work of art. Another aim of feminism is to indicate the extent to which human development is stifled by a total disregard of the efforts and capabilities of women because of a tug-of-war between those who fight for the rights of women and those who stand against them.

Women's struggle against their exploitation dates back from as early as the era of oral tradition. Long before the emergence of the feminist movement, women have

been expressing their indignation at their repression by the endrocentric culture. However, the emergence of feminism should be seen as an organised women's struggle against male domination. Some oral songs also attest to the fact that women have been protesting against their exploitation long before the advent of feminism. Nonetheless, their protest was done in a very subtle manner.

The quotations below show some of the factors that laid the ground for the flourishing of the so-called rebellion by women:

The female is a female by virtue of a lack of certain qualities.

(Aristotle)

A woman is an imperfect man. (St. Aquinas)

Women are inferior since they display patterns of 'weakness', uncertainty, they also focus on the trivial, frivolous, the unserious and they also stress personal emotional responses. (Selden, 1985:131)

The above extracts starkly reveal the negative way in which women were regarded in society. Women were portrayed as weak and inferior to their male counterparts. These attitudes were an affront to the feminist movement but they embodied stereotypes which had to be dealt with in order to change male perceptions of women.

Another vile statement against women was made by Tercullian, one of the Fathers of the Early Church. Tercullian's negative perception of women is cited by Ruthven (1984:83) who states that to him a woman is not only 'the gateway of the devil but also a temple built over a sewer.' Such perceptions expedited the rise of the feminist movement that would embark on an unprecedented undertaking to erase the prejudiced perceptions of women. The feminist movement ensured that women were no longer viewed as inferior by their male counterparts. Selden (1985:131-132) contends that patriarchy subordinates the female to the male. It treats the female as an inferior male. Power is exerted directly or indirectly in civil and domestic life to constrain women. This type of patriarchal ideology produces stereotypes of strong men and feeble women. Society is viewed as being male-dominated to the extent that all structures are under the control of males. They are arranged in such a manner that they serve the interests of the ruling gender. Such structures are also arranged to protect and advance males.

In light of the background sketched above, it is clear that feminism aims at raising women's awareness of their oppression. According to Selden (1985:134), feminism exists to fight against the sexist ideology which is seen as a blanket of oppression against women. Feminism is a powerful critique of the patriarchal culture that subjugates women to perpetual slavery. Hence Humm (1992:2) says that the main aim of feminism is to call for 'equal rights and equal opportunities for women.' She (1992:1) further sees it as advocating 'a belief in sexual equality combined with a commitment to eradicate sexist domination and to transform society'. Feminism aims at eradicating the forced dependence of women on men and their exclusion in the public sphere. Feminists set themselves up to challenge the legalities of a patriarchal world in which women are viewed as objects or victims of social knowledge. In support of Humm, Levison (1991:133) contends that the task facing feminists is that of challenging traditional power structures which use androcentric culture to marginalise women. In other words, the feminists' mission is to attempt to 'deconstruct' male-dominated ways of 'seeing' things.

Humm (1992:12) takes further the above argument by defining feminism as 'a social formation searching for egalitarian social relations and ways to change unequal social conditions between men and women.' The advocates of the feminist movement are trying to eradicate misconceptions that men are the best, the most intelligent, the most capable and more daring than women. Feminists wish to dispel the myth that women are passive, submissive, promiscuous and destructive monsters.

This kind of chauvinistic tendency relegates women and their efforts to the background, thus robbing the world of its most vital asset in the development of human beings. Feminists argue that women should be accorded the dignity they deserve so that they can also use, to the maximum, their potential for the betterment of human life. Despite democratic advances, women continue to be coerced by a system of sex-role stereotyping to which people have been subjected to from the earliest age. This is evidenced by the general belief that feminist objectives are just disruptive grievances and not necessarily genuine concerns. Some people often try to defend their bias by saying that male dominance and subjugation of women is

God-given. People also resort to the biological make-up of women as a way of justifying the deprivation of women.

The emergence of feminism also caught the attention of literary critics. The latter started to test the ideas advocated by feminists. Feminist concepts were borrowed, adapted and used to advance the cause of feminism on other fronts. Literary critics saw the need to apply feminist principles also in the domain of literary criticism. The underlying aim was to stem the tide of attitudes and perceptions that perpetuated cultural subjugation and exploitation of women. Subjugation, consciously or unconsciously, was effected and perpetuated by male writers who failed to recognise the abilities and rights of women. As a result, women were deprived of opportunities and the freedom to express their views, ideas and responses or to engage in creative writing to the same extent as men. In other words, women were also not given the freedom and encouragement to engage actively in creative writing, and the promotion of their writings. Most African writers perpetuate cultural stereotypes by portraying male supremacy as natural and desirable.

Literary critics who espouse the conventions and rules of the feminist approach maintain that female characters in African writings are often distorted. Female characters are mostly portrayed as spoilers, murderers, witches or cheats. Feminists are not against the idea of pointing out the follies of women. However, they maintain that the evil done by male characters must also be exposed. In other words, writers are being discouraged from the practice of rationalising the weakness of male characters by trying to apportion the blame to female characters. The following extract (Madima, 1984:13) illustrates the unfair and distorted portrayal of some African female characters:

*Adziambei, "Khamusi a ni vhoni uri ni khou amba na nnyi; arali e nne ndi nga si rwiwe nga buphuthu ji no nga bo pfukwa nga vhasadzi."*

Adziambei, "Perhaps you are not aware as to who you are talking to; I will never be beaten by a fool who appears like he has been skipped (jumped) by women."

Although the character uttering the above statement is a woman, one still observes how she indirectly undermines women. Her utterance is based on the traditional

belief that a man must never allow a woman to go over him (i.e. jump/ skip him) because he will become a fool. It is believed that such a man will not work or get married. Adziambei responded in anger because she was quarrelling with a young man called Tshibalo. He was not working and this made women to disrespect him. Adziambei tried to belittle Tshibalo. However, her statement reveals the way in which women are traditionally viewed in Venḡa culture. If a woman goes over (jumps/ skips) a man, the perception is that such a man will no longer work or marry. This implies that women bring bad luck. Adziambei does not portray women in a positive light. Her position constitutes some of the beliefs and tendencies that feminists are fighting against. This also shows that women were also brainwashed into believing societal misconceptions and stereotypes about themselves.

The following is another prejudicial belief which justifies the need for the feminist stance. Here some traditional Venḡa practices and beliefs serve to marginalise and perpetually enslave women:

*“Nḡe ndi na munna wanga, a hu na musidzana na muthihi mungafhano a sa athu u funiswa munna ha hashu.” (Madima, 1984:21)*

“I have a husband, there is no girl of my age who has not been given a husband.”

Adziambei uttered the above words in reply to Maluḡa’s proposal. Her bitter comment informs us that she did not choose her husband. The latter was chosen for her by the elders. This shows that Adziambei was not allowed to choose her own husband. She is forced to love a man even if she does not love him. As long as it pleases the elders, she is bound to accept and respect their decision. She has to act against her own will or wish. If she resists the choice made by the elders she will be viewed as a rebel. And if she marries anyone else without the approval of the elders, she will not receive the blessing of the elders. They will also later refuse to have anything to do with her marriage to the man whom they did not choose. Feminists propagate the idea that as a grown-up woman, Adziambei should choose the man she loves. Feminists are opposed to the idea of forcing a woman to be married to a man she is not in love with. They maintain that, if this is allowed, a woman in such a relationship will not experience fulfilment in her marriage. Her life will be miserable. Feminists

stake a claim for women to be allowed to exercise their right to choose and decide for themselves rather than being dictated to.

Maluṭa also reveals his sexist beliefs. This can be traced in the following extract:

*Adziambei ene u nga o khwaṭhisa; nangwe ndi sa tu u mu fulufhedza nga maanḁa. Ndi uri vhathu vhahammeni vha itwa nga u sa ḁivha uri mulanga ndi mini. (Madima, 1984:30)*

It appears like Adziambei is serious although I do not trust her. The problem is that women cannot honour an agreement.

Maluṭa makes an extremely disturbing generalised sexist remark about women. According to his opinion women in general cannot be trusted as they often do not honour agreements. This is a negative remark which may well be true about some women. But it becomes controversial if it is attributed to all women. This bias and untruth is one of the many perceptions that feminists are trying to eradicate. Statements like this one delineate women in a bad light. The following sexist statement from **A si ene** would also draw the wrath of the feminists as they would deem it to be unfair and biased:

*Adziambei ene hathu u vhuya a wana-vho riwana. U khou sokou ya naḁo. (Madima, 1984:93)*

Adziambei does not have a child. She is just going everywhere now.

From a feminist point of view, the above quotation is blatantly sexist and malicious. It is uttered to discredit Adziambei. The implication is that Adziambei is barren. Traditionally, for her to prove her womanhood she must have a child. The problem is that people are not sure as to whether or not it is Adziambei or Maluṭa who cannot bear or father children. Adziambei is the first to be criticised because she is a woman. This is what traditionally happens among Venḁa people. If a couple cannot conceive a child, the blame is normally apportioned to the woman. She is the first one to be suspected of being barren. The feminists maintain that a woman must be treated with the same respect as a man. If there is a problem in conceiving, the blame must not automatically be assigned to the woman. Infertility must be thoroughly investigated instead of an unfair judgement being levelled against the woman.

Another good example that justifies the cause of the feminists in combating unfair and biased practices and beliefs is Maluṭa's elopement with Adziambei. Adziambei, as outlined previously, elopes with Maluṭa who was about to marry Muhanelwa. The writer graphically reveals Adziambei's weakness, thereby blaming her for agreeing to elope with Maluṭa. Although she was also about to be married, she displays weakness by agreeing to the strategy. The author writes as though Maluṭa is not wrong by eloping with Adziambei. From the writer's point of view, it is Adziambei who should have refused Maluṭa's proposal. She is blamed for breaking down Maluṭa's affair with Muhanelwa. From the feminist point of view, Maluṭa is equally guilty of an immoral action. The writer should have also revealed Maluṭa's lack of commitment to his affair with Muhanelwa. The writer ought to have portrayed Maluṭa as a character who is unfaithful and who lacks resolve. In short, what would irritate feminists is the writer's biased concentration on revealing the weakness of a female character. Hardly anything is said to reprimand Maluṭa for his actions which caused Muhanelwa, a woman for that matter, to suffer.

The following extract also illustrates the manner in which female characters are generally depicted in most African-language literary text:

*“Nḡe ri sa vhuyi makhuwani ri ḡiwa nga vhathu vha fanaho na hoyu a re afha phanḡa.” (Madima, 1984:40)*

“It is women like this one who make us not come back from Johannesburg.”

On the surface this statement refers to Adziambei's beauty. However, the underlying meaning is that there are very beautiful women in Johannesburg who make it difficult for men to go back home. This extract paints women negatively as if they deliberately prevent men from going home (i.e. Venḡa). This statement depicts man as an innocent victim of the situation. A man is viewed as powerless and at the mercy of unscrupulous women. When men working in the cities fail to return to their families, women are immediately blamed. In this case, man is not held responsible for his actions. Society then looks at these women as seductresses, who lure and cheat men. In the end it is a woman who is chastised for preventing the man from going

home. Female characters are portrayed as bad people who are responsible for the breakdown of many families. This false perception becomes entrenched as a generally accepted negative view of society.

The bitterness of feminists who rail against the unfair depiction of female characters in most African-language literary writings is also highlighted by Bressler (1994:98) as follows:

Women must not be portrayed as supplemental creatures that have only the role of pleasing men.

In other words, feminists lobby that the presentation of distorted images about female characters must come to an end. Writers must begin to portray female characters as complete human beings who can handle their own situations and not people who only exist as extensions of men. Writers must also stop depicting female characters as people who are there to prey on innocent male victims. Male characters must also be criticised for their actions which lead female characters into situations which end up disrupting their life. Feminists call for a balanced depiction of female characters. What worries feminists also is that in most African-language literary texts, female characters are depicted as adulterous and deceitful. Writers hardly point out the good qualities of some female characters. They are mainly preoccupied with the negative aspects of female characters. Women in African-language literature are generally depicted as evil and cursed people. This results in what can be called the 'literary rape and murder' of female characters in African-language literature. The concern of feminists over unfair depictions or misrepresentations of women is also clearly expressed by Humm (1992:44) when she says:

Society sets up the male as a positive norm and the woman as negative, second or the other.

The above statement is true in the case of Adziambei and Maluṭa. Nothing bad about Maluṭa is said in ***A si ene***. Maluṭa is depicted as a clean, decent and innocent young Venḡa man who is madly in love with Adziambei. The writer does not seize the opportunity to highlight the devastating consequences of Maluṭa's advances and proposal to Adziambei. The essential fact that cannot be glossed over is that

Maluṭa's elopement with Adziambei caused much pain to Muhanelwa who was about to be married to Maluṭa. The writer does not discuss in any way the immorality of Maluṭa's behaviour.

Feminists maintain that female characters should be treated in a balanced fashion – thus both good and bad comments are permissible, and indeed, required. Feminists also maintain that to advance the feminist cause, creative writings by women must not be marginalised. Prejudice against women writers is wrong. It is untrue that only women authors can best represent themselves but feminists maintain that creative writings by women will provide a good platform for women to express their opinions, views and ideas which have to be recognised, respected and treasured.

#### 5.4.1 Marginalisation of women and human development

While the above discussion is about the way in which female characters are depicted as well as the role they are traditionally assigned to play in society, it is easy to draw conclusions on how the exercise may impact on human development in general. Broadly speaking, the efforts of feminists help to bring to the fore the frightening picture of what might happen if the subjugation and exploitation of women as depicted in most African-language literary texts is not attended to. The concerns of feminists go beyond their just indignation at the negative depiction of female characters in African-language literature. Feminists further express concern at the negative impact of the subjugation and exploitation of women on human development. This concern is aptly summed up by Humm (1992:43) as follows:

The preference of males over females for industrial efficiency and its preservation through economic and political laws, social and cultural traditions, not only checks the development of the woman's personality, but prevents her from making that contribution to the common good which is the privilege and obligation of every human being.

The opinion expressed in the above quotation indicates that the neglect of or marginalisation of women restricts the potential capacities of women to participate constructively in the advancement of human development. For full human development to be realised and productivity to stay high, old perceptions and sexist

cultural stereotypes need to be done away with. This calls for new social formations that will break down the outdated but still powerful discriminatory socio-cultural structures that separate women from men. Huston (1979:116) also talks of the deterrents to progress by stating that the 'desire of women to adapt to the changing times precedes evolution of customs that govern their lives (thus) creating conflicts with those who would restrain them to outmoded roles.' This calls for people to refrain from doubting the capacity of women to make meaningful contributions towards the development of communities. Huston (1979:116) further affirms the above argument as follows:

Restricted mobility ... and economic dependence are but a few of the male dominance related factors that tie women to submissive behaviour, thus denying them the opportunity to participate in their community's advancement.

One deduces here that any systematic marginalisation of women undoubtedly stifles human development. Such a situation leads to a vicious cycle of underdevelopment and low productivity. Input by women should be encouraged and welcomed. Recognition of women will turn them into productive partners in national development. In order to achieve this, an enabling environment that will permit women to participate fully in the advancement of their communities must be created. Women have been largely ignored in developmental efforts and this has done much to limit their opportunities to engage in fruitful and productive activity. For the maximum development of human potential, women must be allowed to be just as assertive and competent as their male counterparts.

Dauber and Cain (1981:27) hold that 'women, who have been marginalised to all historic power structures, represent a unique resource and expertise available for the construction of new social formations, new approaches to human productivity and welfare.' This comment suggests that the recognition of the contribution made by women will lead to higher productivity in society. If granted the opportunity, women can emerge as a vital force for the promotion of human development. Huston (1979:xiii) says 'we need to remove the barriers that keep women from realizing a fair share of the available benefits of development.' For this to be realised there is an urgent need for rapid legislative, attitudinal and institutional change, as well as an eradication and positive adaptation of customs that bind both men and women to

outmoded traditional beliefs. More women need to be allowed access to technology, education, credit, agricultural and marketing skills so that they can also contribute to national productivity which in turn is necessary for national development. Unless this is realised national development will flounder. Three quarters of humanity is faced with urgent, pressing social and economic problems, so much so that the country cannot afford to turn women into liabilities by marginalising them. Women must also be equipped with relevant skills and be given the space to utilise their skills to influence the development process constructively.

In South Africa, as much as traditional beliefs, practices and social structures failed to recognise women, the Apartheid policies also failed to recognise the significant role that women can play. They, in effect, did not only ignore the important role that women can play, but also disregarded and reduced some sections of the population to a dependent majority. Human development was stifled because the largest section of the population depended on the minority. Just as marginalisation of some sections of the population stunted their capacity to develop, the neglect of women also has an adverse effect on human progress and development in South Africa.

To emphasise the need for women to be allowed to participate fully in the advancement of human development and nation building, it is important to take note of a dire situation that South Africa is faced with as a result of the marginalisation of people on the basis of race or sex. Pupils and students at schools, universities, colleges of education and technikons, pensioners, mentally and physically handicapped people, patients in hospitals, street children, hoboos, the unemployed as well as prisoners constitute more than 55% of the South African population. By a not inconceivable stretch of the imagination the above may be construed as a 'liability' group. If productive women are also added to this group, a question must be posed about how the South African nation is expected to grow and develop. Such a scenario will, undoubtedly, stretch the productive capacity of the remaining South African population too far. Marginalisation of women who constitute the largest percentage of the South African population is tantamount to ignoring more than 50% of the country's human resources. The omission or marginalisation of women is potentially dangerous to the future of the entire country.

## 5.5 Conclusion

The discussion and application of the different literary theories in this thesis, especially the marginalised and under-utilised extrinsic literary approaches undoubtedly help to signal the extent to which African-language literary criticism can benefit from the use of a variety of literary theories. The exercise also helps to indicate that African-language literary critics, who show a knowledge of literary theories they previously did not subscribe to, will be enormously advantaged in their interpretation and understanding of a work of art. Analyses can be broadened and deepened. In the previous chapter, it was shown that the intrinsic literary approaches (i.e. Russian Formalism and Structuralism) laid emphasis on the uniqueness of literature by focusing on the artistic nature of literature (defamiliarisation) and the need for component parts of a work of art to be balanced. However, the extrinsic literary approaches (i.e. Marxist historical materialism and the Marxist social theory of alienation, Feminism and Psychoanalysis) helped to expose other dimensions of the meaning of the same literary text. This was also realised by demonstrating the role and impact of socio-cultural, economic and political factors in determining human nature. In other words, this chapter helps to highlight the need for literary critics to open up and embrace literary theories they do not espouse or literary approaches which contradict their ideological leanings. Openness and flexibility in literary criticism leaves literary critics with more options and alternative literary views to employ in their interpretation of literary texts. By so doing, they will be able to unearth meanings which no single literary approach can alone discover.

## CHAPTER 6

### GENERAL CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 Introduction

The main aim of this research has been to address the problem of the apparent preference and/or marginalisation of other literary theories in the evaluation of African-language literature. The study also aimed at bringing to light the fact that such practices can stifle progress in the evaluation of African-language literature. Every literary theory focuses on certain aspects of a work of art. In other words, no literary theory can reveal all facets of the meaning of a literary work. For example, the intrinsic literary approaches focus on internal elements of a work of art. They shun the role played by external factors in shaping or influencing a work of art. On the other hand, the extrinsic literary theorists lay much emphasis on those aspects of a work of art which intrinsic literary theorists choose to avoid or ignore.

#### 6.2 Multiple-reading and literary text's multiple meanings

The need for a multiple-reading of a literary text is anchored on the assumption that many meanings lie hidden in a work of art, and that such meanings can only be uncovered by the use of different literary theories. The discussion of literary rules or criteria of different literary approaches laid bare the different focuses of each literary approach. It has also highlighted each literary approach's strengths and weaknesses. The debate on the theoretical premise of each literary approach has further shown that when only one literary approach is used, many aspects of a work of art are not addressed. The reader is then left with a limited understanding of a work of art. Disregard of other literary theories makes it difficult for readers to be able to unearth many other 'meanings' that lie hidden in the same literary text. This deduction is confirmed by Armstrong's (1990:17) assertion in which he argues against the preference or marginalisation of some literary approaches. He claims that such an action becomes 'an authority that may rigidify into dogmatic tyranny and this may ward off improvement in literary criticism.'

The contestation between the proponents of the intrinsic and extrinsic literary approaches does not augur well for African-language literary criticism. Intrinsic literary critics and scholars are opposed to allowing external factors as having a bearing on the evaluation of a literary work. Their opposition stems from their belief that such an exercise will make room for subjectivity in African-language literary criticism. On the other hand, extrinsic literary critics and scholars argue that they offer a valuable contribution as they raise issues that intrinsic literary critics shun. The advocates of the extrinsic literary approaches snub the intrinsic literary approaches for their failure to look beyond the literary text. To them, the importance of external factors cannot be compromised if there has to be a valid and holistic interpretation of a work of art.

These opposing viewpoints lead to the debate on what can be called the 'mixed method' in literary criticism, otherwise known as the multiple-reading approach. The advocates of eclectic literary theories accommodate both internal and external factors which they believe play an important role both in the production and evaluation of a literature. The proponents of the eclectic literary approaches encourage the mixing of literary criteria from both the intrinsic and extrinsic literary approaches as this strategy benefits the evaluation of literature far more than a one-minded approach. Eclectic literary theorists hold that, to come to a full and deeper understanding of a work of art, all factors need to be taken into consideration.

The rationale for the multiple-reading of a literary text is that each literary theory unlocks the meaning of a work of art in a unique manner. Only through a multiple-reading of a literary text will the critic achieve full analysis and understanding of the different 'meanings' that are contained in a literary text. A further deduction can be made that no literary approach is infallible. This thesis stresses the importance of opening up and embracing different literary approaches in the analysis of a work of art. It also shows the need to appreciate the interpretative significance of diverse literary views which help the reader to have a full understanding of a literary text. The research is predicated on the principle that disregard of some literary approaches tends to restrict or stifle progress or development in the criticism of African-language literature.

An analysis of a work of art from the structuralist point of view, for example, clearly leads to a different interpretation and meaning of the same literary text if analysed from the Marxist point of view. This also endorses the argument that different literary theories complement each other since each literary theory addresses aspects which no any other literary theory can address. In other words, reading a literary text from diverse literary viewpoints will help to reveal the different dimensions of meaning of the same literary work. A multiple-reading of literary text will enrich and broaden one's understanding of that work of art. This will be the case, simply because the use of a variety of literary approaches in analysing the same literary text will help to unearth multiple meanings of that particular literary text.

### **6.3 Intrinsic literary approaches and multiple meanings in A si ene**

Russian Formalism and Structuralism belong to the intrinsic literary school of thought. Nevertheless, these literary theories focus on different aspects of a work of art. Russian Formalism, for example, focuses on the uniqueness of a work of art as opposed to any form of literature. This literary theory focuses on language and style as tools or techniques that are employed by the writer to render a work of art unique and different from other forms of literature. This means that Russian Formalism unearths the meaning of a work of art by focussing on the unique usage of language.

On the other hand, Structuralism helps to unpack a meaning of a literary work by focusing on the structural elements of a particular work of art. The structural elements covered in this research, include, among others, characterisation, conflict and setting.

Bressler (1994:63) expands the debate further by saying that the structuralists maintain that '...author's intentions can no longer be equated with the text's overall meaning, for meaning is determined by the system that governs the writer, not by an individual author's own quirks.' In this case, the structuralists are opposed to the use of external factors in the evaluation of a work of art. They hold the view that the meaning of a literary work can be expressed only through the shared relationship of the text's component parts. They further argue that meaning can be found by analysing a system of rules that constitutes literature itself.

According to the structuralist literary theory, a work of art is seen as a whole made up of parts that need to co-exist harmoniously in order for the whole to function effectively. This is attested to by Bressler (1994:63) who holds the view that structuralism is 'a method of investigation with the aim to discover how all the parts fit together and function.' A literary work is seen as an entity made up of a number of elements. Every element must play its role for the effective functioning of the entity. The role played by one part cannot be fulfilled by any other part than that specific part. For a work of art to be construed or regarded as good, all the elements (conflict, theme, setting, characters, etc.) have to be well-developed and employed. A lack in any one of these elements may result in that work of art being of poor quality.

The important point in this argument is that, although Russian Formalism and Structuralism belong to the same literary camp, they unpack a work of art differently because each of them focuses on different aspects. Russian Formalism focuses on language as a tool that delineates a literary work's uniqueness. It is, nevertheless, important to note that the use of both literary theories is of utmost importance in the criticism of literature. As stated previously, the use of both literary approaches helps to discover more or different meanings, in the same literary text.

In this research, only two intrinsic literary theories, namely, Russian Formalism and Structuralism, were applied in the analysis of a Tshivenda literary text. The defamiliarisation technique of Russian Formalism was used to analyse this text. The discussion of the defamiliarisation technique centred on literary criteria such as metaphors, personification and simile to evaluate ***A si ene***. The discussion revolved around whether defamiliarisation does indeed render the language artistic and different from the language used in other subjects. It has been adequately demonstrated that the use of figurative language indeed defamiliarised the language of the novel under discussion. The language, as a result of the use of metaphors, personification devices and similes, was changed from ordinary language into charged, artistic and multi-layered language. Most importantly, it was also demonstrated that the use of defamiliarisation in the analysis of the selected literary text helped the reader to understand the characters in the novel and their cultural, religious and psychological experiences. In other words, Russian Formalism, through its principal tool, the defamiliarisation technique, offers an

alternative reading which enhances the reader's understanding of the meaning of a work of art.

Although Russian Formalism focuses on language and style through defamiliarisation, the meaning extracted from the literary text gives more insight into the experiences and behavioural tendencies of characters. For example, characters such as Maluṭa, Muhanelwa and Adziambei take on living and breathing personalities. Maluṭa's chauvinism is balanced against his guilt. Muhanelwa's passiveness is skilfully sketched while Adziambei's beauty, stubbornness, talent and skill around the home are subtly portrayed. The focus is on language as a revelatory tool.

The structuralist approach focuses also on other elements which help to provide other dimensions and meanings of the literary text. The structuralists, as Bressler (1994:63) argues, maintain that the meaning of a literary work can be expressed only through the shared relationship of the text's component parts which need to co-exist harmoniously in order for the whole work of art to be meaningful. For the purpose of this research, the analysis concentrated on the structural elements of *A si ene* such as character, setting, and conflict. The arguments of Visser (1982:62-63) and Mawela (1994:25) are relevant in this respect.

In terms of the structuralist approach, all structural elements of a work of art need to be well-developed for the work of art to be intelligible and meaningful. A work of art is written on and around characters. Readers are interested and intrigued by the story of the characters and their ideas, thoughts, dreams, aspirations, goals, reactions and behaviour. A character is key in fiction which simply captures and reflects on 'characters' situations, conflicts, goals, dreams, aspirations, fears, weaknesses', as highlighted by Wilbur (2001:175).

The discussion on characterisation in *A si ene* has offered insight into the lives, behaviour and experiences of the main characters in this novel, namely, Maluṭa, Adziambei and Muhanelwa. Adziambei's ill-discipline and stubbornness emerged as well as her positive side (her talent in singing and dancing and homecraft skills). Defamiliarisation revealed Maluṭa as a character who is 'modernised' and desperate

to get married. But he is not grounded as he cannot decide and focus on his wife-to-be, Muhanelwa. His dubious decisions and lack of morals become evident. Ultimately, Maluṭa is shown as an unfaithful character that starts another relationship while he is still in the process of finalising preparations for his marriage to Muhanelwa. In the process, Maluṭa is depicted as a character who also disregards some of the traditional ways of doing things, for example, getting consent from the elders to marry the second wife.

Muhanelwa is depicted as a traditional, quiet and respectful young Muvenda woman. Even after Maluṭa had eloped with Adziambei; she still remains faithful to Maluṭa and waits for him to return home and marry her. She does not contest the elopement nor bear ill will against Adziambei. She is also shown as a hard working young Muvenda woman.

The experiences and behaviour and the results of the actions of characters such as Maluṭa and Adziambei emerge clearly with the help of the structuralist approach. The analysis of these characters in **Chapter 4** makes their lives and behaviour completely clear and understandable. The use of the structuralist approach reveals and unmasks these characters, enabling readers to make their own judgments about these characters.

Another intrinsic literary approach, that is, the moral-philosophical literary theory, reveals further meaning. Adziambei, the wayward young Muvenda woman, ought to have refused Maluṭa's proposal. She had unambiguous knowledge of Maluṭa's preparations to marry Muhanelwa. Nevertheless, Adziambei is also seen as decisive when she takes the initiative to ensure that they (herself and Maluṭa) talk about their relationship. In Tshivenda tradition a woman is not supposed to initiate or conduct discussions about love. Only men are expected to initiate such a discussion.

Contrary to the pronouncements of the moral philosophical literary approach, as sketched out earlier on, the feminist literary approach depicts Adziambei in a completely different way. From the feminist literary point of view, Adziambei is seen as a brave and assertive young Muvenda woman. She is depicted as a modern Muvenda woman who puts her interests first. She is seen as a strong woman who

does not allow her life to be planned and run according to the norms that will disadvantage her as a woman. A feminist interpretation of **A si ene** also allows the reader to view Maluṭa objectively as he is depicted as a man with no focus. Feminists see Maluṭa as being morally weak and undecided. Moved by Adziambei's beauty, Maluṭa hastily abandons his plans to marry Muhanelwa. He gives no thought to the consequences or the effect of his action on Muhanelwa. The feminist approach also reveals his weakness when he still agrees to marry Muhanelwa after Adziambei's disappearance. Feminists view him as being unfaithful to both Adziambei and Muhanelwa. His unfaithfulness starts when he decides to elope with Adziambei. His lack of fidelity is confirmed by his weak decision to stop searching for Adziambei after she was deceptive and treacherously abducted by Maluṭa's friend, Fanyana. The upshot of this self-centred decision is that Maluṭa decides to go back to Muhanelwa. In short, a feminist reading unveils Maluṭa as a weak, undecided and unfaithful to both Muhanelwa and Adziambei.

The analysis of structural elements of setting and conflict in **A si ene** also makes it easier for the reader to understand the context in which the events took place. Activities such as girls doing washing and swimming at the river, girls fetching water from the fountain, the use of buses and trains as the main means of transport, and the use of gravel roads depict the old and rural setting. However, some of the characters, like Maluṭa and Adziambei, are shown to be moving between urban and rural settings. Their stay in Gauteng constitutes another setting which is in stark contrast to the rural Venḡa.

While the intrinsic literary approaches only focus on the physical appearance of the places and the infrastructure and resources of the time, the extrinsic literary approaches dig deeper and reveal another dimension attached to such places and the infrastructure of the time. Information such as dilapidated houses, gravel roads, lack of water taps and transport reveals that rural areas were neglected. The use of the extrinsic literary approaches has helped to illustrate the point that urban areas, as delineated in **A si ene**, are well-developed that the rural areas. Urban areas are further delineated as being well-capacitated. They are shown as having adequate infrastructure and other necessary resources such as trains, buses, taxis, cars, buildings and traffic lights. The stark difference between rural and urban areas is as a

result of the consequences of the discriminatory Apartheid policy. Apartheid system ensured that the urban areas were well-developed since they were reserved mainly for white people. On the other hand, the impoverished rural areas, inhabited mainly by Blacks, were neglected and ignored. An extrinsic literary approach exposes the political and economic reasons behind development and under-development in South Africa.

The conflict that takes place between different characters is also unpacked. Many examples of conflict are examined in *A si ene*, for example the conflict between Adziambei and her parents, Adziambei and Tshibalo, Adziambei and Maluṭa when the enormity of their action started sinking in, Maluṭa and Muhanelwa's aunt, and between the principal characters and the Venḡa elders. The conflict around Maluṭa and Adziambei depicts them as disrespectful of the traditional way of doing things. They are portrayed as rebellious members of society who oppose the norms of the community and elope in order to be together. The insights made possible by the defamiliarisation technique and the three structural elements enable readers to 'visit' the world of these characters. It is with the help of these literary theories that readers have a clear understanding of these characters' experiences and behaviour.

The extrinsic literary point of view sees conflict as inherent in any society because of the existence of different classes and groups of people. From the Marxist point of view, socio-cultural norms are designed to protect the status quo. Norms are meant to regulate individuals' lives for the sake of the community or society. The supposition is that societal norms are imposed to protect the interests of those in power or the elders. If norms are observed and followed, the interests of those in power or elders are not threatened. In the case of this novel (*A si ene*), Maluṭa and Adziambei act in opposition to the norms of the society when they fall in love. They are found to be contravening the norms of the society which do not acknowledge the right of individuals to satisfy their own interests. This puts Maluṭa and Adziambei on a collision course with the elders and members of the community.

The application of feminist literary criteria allows the reader to see a female character like Adziambei as a victim of female marginalisation. As a woman, she is traditionally not expected to trespass on the male domain. This she does when she ensures that

she and Maluṭa find time to conclude their talk about their relationship. Her action puts her in conflict with her family and members of her community. Intrinsic literary approaches do not debate conflict in *A si ene* in the same way as it is debated in Marxist and Feminism.

It is quite clear, in light of the conclusions drawn above, that the use of all these literary approaches helps to highlight more about the conflicting situations in this literary text.

#### **6.4 Extrinsic literary approaches and multiple meanings in *A si ene***

Intrinsic literary approaches, by dwelling on language and style as well as structural elements such as characterisation, conflict and setting, helps readers to understand more about specific characters' ways of life and their experiences. Extrinsic literary approaches have also helped to uncover other meanings of the same Tshivenda literary text. They take, as their point of departure argument raised by Upward (1938:42) that 'literature reflects and is itself a product of the changing material world of nature and of human nature.' The influence of external factors on a work of art is unavoidable and, of necessity, must be explored.

Although Marxist historical materialism, Marxist social theory of alienation, psychoanalysis and the feminist literary approaches belong to the extrinsic literary approaches, they focus on different aspects of a literary work. Marxist historical materialism helps to reveal more about the material conditions in which characters in a work of art find themselves. This is also endorsed by Alverze-Pereyre (1984:116) who says that 'a work of art does not develop and take its form in a situation of mysterious abstraction, but that it is determined ... by the prevailing material conditions ...' In **Chapter 5**, the application of Marxist historical materialism depicted the challenges that some of the characters faced as a result of the migratory labour system, racism and inter-marriage. Muhanelwa's father is said to have been in Natal for many years without ever visiting home. As a result of the pernicious labour system, Muhanelwa had to be brought up by her aunt. Reference to situations where adults were physically assaulted by Whites simply because they were black occurs. Vho-Langanani is beaten by a white man in front of children. He does not try to

defend himself or fight back because he sees himself as a victim. White women are also depicted as terrorising their workers. The use of this theory also brings to light the changes that were happening in black communities as a result of the migratory labour system. These changes led to intermarriage between people from different ethnic groups. For example, Adziambei's uncle is said to have been married to a Motswana woman. Another changing situation was that of young people beginning to choose their own partners. For example, Adziambei chose to ignore the man chosen for by her parents. She instead chose to have a relationship with Maluṭa. This shows that young people were starting to question and disregard certain decisions taken by elders on their behalf.

The social theory of alienation helps to show the extent to which modernisation has created challenges for individuals, families and communities. This theory shows how Maluṭa and Adziambei's decision to oppose the conventional way of conducting relationships leads to alienation. They fall in love fully aware that their relationship will not be recognised. The couple feel that they can elevate their own interests above those of their families and community. It is exactly this assertion of self-interest that pitted them against their own families and community. In this way Maluṭa and Adziambei are ostracised by both elements, namely, their families and the community. It is not surprising to hear Maluṭa and Adziambei agreeing not ever to go back to Venḁa. Their knowledge of their rejection by their own families and members of the community leads to their estrangement and the loss of a vital support base.

The study of the same literary text from the viewpoint of the psychoanalytical literary approach allows a focus on another aspect which the intrinsic literary approaches deny. The impact of material conditions leading to alienation of an individual cannot be neglected. As has already been discussed, Maluṭa was alienated from his own family and community after abandoning Muhanelwa and eloping with Adziambei. His decision also to hire criminals to kill Muhanelwa who had come to visit him in Gauteng puts him beyond civilised parameters. Maluṭa's elopement with Adziambei had already done serious damage to his mental state as he began to fret over his actions. But it is the planned killing of Muhanelwa that leads Maluṭa to a complete mental breakdown. Guilt undermines him as the full impact of his immoral action to dispose of Muhanelwa is internalised. It is with the help of the psychoanalytical

literary approach that readers can fully understand the impact of a guilty conscience, isolation and the rejection of an individual by one's family and community. Bad decisions and actions can lead to a disaster, such as Maluța's untimely death. It is clear that the psychoanalytical literary approach deepens readers' understanding of human behaviour and the human mind. Such an understanding can also be helpful in identifying and handling other social and psychological problems that people experience in life.

The feminist literary approach used in this research, as applied to the analysis of the novel, sheds another dimension on the same literary text. It identified and exposed the disregard and marginalisation of women in society. This literary theory picks up subtle discrimination, contempt and disregard of women. In ***A si ene***, the writer's obsessive focus on female characters' weakness, for example Adziambei and Muhanelwa, is apparent. The writer spends much time on exposing the wickedness of women. Men's weaknesses are not pointed out. The writer leaves no stone unturned when showing a female's wayward behaviour (i.e. Adziambei). But he fails to also point out the appalling behaviour of Maluța. The latter is weak and unfaithful and yet little is said about his negative actions when he abandoned his preparations to marry Muhanelwa. Maluța also despicably arranged with thugs to kill Muhanelwa. By eloping with Adziambei, Maluța also went against Vența traditional norms. Despite his knowledge of possible consequences, he encouraged Adziambei to elope with him. A focus on the weaknesses of female character is indicative of how community structures and societal norms are used to disregard and marginalise women in society. This practice stifles human development in general. As a result of such stereotypes about women, the latter are not allowed to play a role in the advancement of human development and nation building.

The feminists prove their opposition to the stereotyping of female character. For example, in ***A si ene***, Adziambei is the one who receives criticism because she is a woman. But Maluța is spared criticism because he is a man. Feminism examines societal structures, norms and rules which are informed by the patriarchal nature of the society in which Adziambei and Maluța lived. From the feminist point of view, criticism of Adziambei is seen as being unfair. Feminists, firstly, argue that Maluța should also be subjected to criticism for he is the initiator. In other words, he is seen

as being equally guilty. On the other hand, feminists see Adziambei's decision to fall in love with Maluṭa as normal because she was honest. She loved Maluṭa and she was simply following her heart. Feminists see Adziambei as a strong, honest and assertive woman who considers her own interest over those of family or community. On the other hand, feminists see Muhanelwa as passively allowing herself to be abused by Maluṭa who cynically 'dumps' her.

The use of the extrinsic literary theories in the analysis of **A si ene** has helped to raise issues that are not important for the advocates of intrinsic literary theories. Extrinsic literary theories place emphasis on cultural, social, economic and political issues that mark the life of characters. Human alienation which is due to cultural, socio-political and economic pressures is also highlighted. A good example is Maluṭa and Adziambei's alienation from their own families and community after they failed to conform to expected community norms. Their elopement and stay in Gauteng can be seen as a direct result of their alienation from their own families and community because of the disregard of the Venḡa traditional norms and practices.

Both the intrinsic and extrinsic literary approaches used in this research have shown the extent to which African-language literary criticism can benefit from the use of different literary theories. The application of both approaches can enrich and invigorate African-language literary criticism instead of stifling the field of African-language literary criticism. The use of both literary approaches has undoubtedly uncovered many more 'meanings' of the same literary text. Their application can also broaden readers' understanding of the same literary text. Reading **A si ene** from both points of view unearths a multiplicity of meanings, all of which contribute to a fuller and more satisfying understanding and appreciation of a work of art. Broadened and deepened understanding of a work of art is possible by this expanded view of what criticism can entail.

Eclecticism also alerts literary critics to the disadvantage of sidelining other literary theories. Most importantly, this thesis highlights the need for literary critics to open up and embrace those literary theories which they do not espouse. It is important also to state that this exercise shows that African-language literary critics should be open, accommodating and flexible as well as being ready to experiment with those literary

theories that do not sit comfortably with their ideological leanings. Openness and flexibility in this field will leave literary critics with more literary critical options to explore in their interpretation of literary texts.

The survey of different literary approaches that have been used in the evaluation of African-language literature illustrates the fact that intrinsic literary approaches have been used more in the evaluation of African-language literary texts. The statistics shows that almost 69% of the research conducted in African-language literary criticism has been done from an intrinsic literary point of view, while only 27% and 4% of research has been conducted in terms of the extrinsic and eclectic literary approaches respectively. This shows that the field of African-language literary criticism has been disadvantaged by the infrequent use of the extrinsic and eclectic literary approaches. A corollary is that many other meanings which lie hidden in a work of art were not discovered or remain to be discovered. It is recommended that African-language literary critics should not focus on a few literary approaches, but should, instead, also embrace literary ideas which they might not prefer.

This research shows that extrinsic literary approaches have either been marginalised or under-utilised in the evaluation of African-language literature. This is confirmed by the low percentage of research done in the category of extrinsic literary approaches. This has concomitantly worked against progress in the evaluation of African-language literature because marginalisation or under-utilisation of the extrinsic literary approaches in African-language literary criticism has compromised the full exploration and interpretation of African-language literary text. In other words, African literary texts can be explored and analysed to their fullest with the use of both intrinsic and extrinsic literary approaches.

The outcomes of this study also point to the gains that can be made in the criticism of African-language literature now that the identified stumbling blocks in the development of African-language literary criticism have been identified. If such obstacles are eliminated, African literary criticism will be re-invigorated through a proliferation of new and diverse literary ideas on the nature of African-language literature. Constructive and critical debates amongst diversely positioned literary critics should be embraced and encouraged. In other words, criticism of African-

language literature can best be improved by accommodating ideas from various opposing literary camps. An acknowledgement, by African literary critics, of the fact that no literary theory is infallible is necessary. All literary theories have their own strong and weak points. The validity of this argument has been confirmed by the analysis **A si ene**. It has been significantly, demonstrated that each and every literary theory can help to unmask a particular meaning of a literary text which is beyond the scope of other literary theories.

The most important finding in this research is that both intrinsic and extrinsic literary approaches complement each other. It is therefore important that literary critics should accommodate and be open to new and ever-changing literary views to avoid impeding progress in African-language literary criticism. The field of study of African-language literary criticism can be profoundly enriched as long as literary critics continue to make literary input and also draw from a pool of diverse literary views and ideas. This exercise will further facilitate a completely objective assessment of the criticism of African-language literature.

This research also demonstrates that even South African literary critics and scholars are caught up in the fierce debate about the nature and direction of the criticism of African-language literature. These literary critics and scholars have shown inclination towards some literary theories, thus neglecting others. As a result, the picture that emerges in the assessment of African-language literature is that of unchecked, wholesale propagation and application of certain preferred literary theories and intolerance of others. This tendency sidelines the call for neutrality or inclusiveness in literary practice which the advocates of the holistic literary approach so vehemently propose. Some literary critics and scholars display conservatism, stubbornness and fixated belief in a particular literary school of thought. They do not open themselves to new and ever-emerging literary views and ideas which may prove their literary presuppositions ineffective or invalid. They do not welcome any challenge or dissension. The problem with such African literary critics is that they deny their opposing literary peers any space for a fair test of the merits of their literary viewpoints.

This research further highlights the fact that there are literary critics and scholars who are stubbornly stuck to their convictions despite overwhelming evidence that their literary viewpoints also have some flaws. Such literary critics ignore the possibilities of alternative literary tools. They overlook the fact that no literary theory is absolute since all claims made by the advocates of the different literary theories are relative. This means that all literary theories are limited. Therefore, no literary theory alone can bring about a single interpretation as the only correct and valid one. A literary theory which is exclusive is a major obstacle for the interpretation and an adequate and broader understanding of literature. Each literary theory is important because it singles out a particular area of human experience for close attention which other literary theories cannot do. All literary theories contribute in one way or another in the assessment of a literary text.

This research also highlights the problems of those literary critics and scholars who seek the capitulation of their literary adversaries because they fervently believe that their literary views hold greater validity than those of others. They, deliberately or because of ignorance, decide not to heed the postulation by Armstrong (1990:7) that 'every ... standpoint has its own dialect of blindness and insight - a ratio of disguise and disclosure which stems from its presuppositions.' In other words, such literary critics fail to realise or accept that every literary theory reveals something which another competing literary theory may fail to disclose. The drawback of this tendency, which is also common in the assessment of African-language literature, is that it prevents or discourages literary innovation. It destroys and constricts free exploration and the exchange of literary ideas and views. In support of this assertion, Armstrong (1990:17) argues that such an action becomes 'an authority that may rigidify into dogmatic tyranny and this may ward off improvement in literary criticism.' The assessment of an African literary text (***A si ene***), from both intrinsic and extrinsic literary viewpoints in **Chapters 4** and **5** is a good example of the extent to which African-language literary criticism can gain more by opening up and embracing different literary viewpoints. The time has come for all literary critics and scholars engaged in the criticism of African-language literature to realise that diverse literary views help to multiply and broaden readers' ways of interpreting and understanding a literary text.

This study also highlights the point that literary critics need to take cognisance of the fact that differences and disagreements are inevitable. However, it must be noted that differences and disagreements provide for alternative literary options that offer a deeper and broadened interpretation of a literary text. According to Armstrong (1990:20), literary criticism is a 'potentially boundless act of creation which allows for variety in interpretation.' The employment of different literary tools in the interpretation of a literary text helps to elicit various meanings of the same work of art. This suggests that one literary theory cannot give all the possible meanings of a literary text. It, therefore, stands to reason that different literary theories are needed if an adequate interpretation and understanding of a work of art is sought. For example, the application of the Marxist literary theories in **Chapter 5** raises a number of issues which were not raised by the Russian Formalist and the structuralist approaches in **Chapter 4**.

The problem with those 'fixated' literary critics and scholars is that an attempt to bring change or adapt existing literary theories is seen as a threat to the status quo in literary circles. The situation they prefer is the unquestioning recognition of and obedience to the existing literary standards. Such literary critics lose sight of the fact that all literary theories, as Armstrong (1990:21) holds, 'work equally well, and they frequently require amendments and refinements that would not be necessary if we alone are in charge.' Armstrong's view helps to endorse the argument that different interpretive readings of a work of art help literary critics and scholars to re-examine their literary viewpoints. A diversity of literary views promotes constant revision and improvement of the existing literary viewpoints. This research boldly recommends that for significant progress to be realised in the field of criticism of African-language literature in general, and Tshivenda literature in particular, recognition of the existing divergent literary views and their constant interrogation, refinement and sometimes their adaptation to the African world-view are of paramount importance. The following statement by Bennet (1990:194) seems particularly relevant in closing this discussion. Bennet states, in no uncertain terms, that what is suggested in this research, that is, – culpability for the restriction or stifling of progress and the development of criticism of African literature in general and African-language literature in particular – should have a wide audience:

There is a need to break with the critical illusions upon which such approaches depend, and which they foster, in favour of a more pragmatic and accommodating stance in regard to approaches.

The above statement, in the context of the rationale of this research, alludes to the fact that literary critics and scholars of different literary persuasions have to be tolerant of each other and also recognise and embrace the literary views of their peers from opposing literary schools of thought, if any marked progress is to be achieved in the field of African-language literary criticism.

This research stresses the need for tolerance, openness and flexibility in the African-language literary criticism domain. It calls for a focus on the benefit of achieving wider and deeper understanding of a work of art through the application of different literary approaches rather than focussing on differences. It must be noted further that differing literary views also help to challenge literary critics of the opposing literary camps to continuously stretch their imagination in an attempt to improve their literary views. Most importantly, opposing literary critics need to appreciate the fact that a variety of different literary approaches widens the scope of literary interpretation as different interpretations of the same literary text emerge. African-language literary criticism can benefit and advance if African-language literary critics can avoid being fixated on one literary view. Armstrong (1990:7) discourages the disregard of opposing literary views by stating that 'every ... standpoint has its own dialect of blindness and insight - a ratio of disguise and disclosure which stems from its presuppositions.' Armstrong's argument further demonstrates the point that both the intrinsic and extrinsic literary approaches have their own strong points and weak points. It is, therefore, vitally important that none of the literary theories from the two opposing literary camps should be marginalised because each literary theory unearths a different and unique meaning of a literary text being studied.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

For African-language literary criticism to realise change and progress, no strand of ideology should be allowed to dominate others. In other words, no particular strand of ideology should be given an unfair advantage at the expense of other ideological strands. Writers and literary critics from different cultural and ideological backgrounds

must be allowed to debate and canvass their ideas openly. It must be left to them to prove the validity and effectiveness of their literary ideas in the assessment of literary texts. Literary critics and scholars from diverse backgrounds need to be encouraged to allow openness in literary debates. They must allow those who advocate and subscribe to different literary views to do so without any impediment. They need to be urged not to be reactionary to the literary ideas of those they see as their adversaries. This is necessary because a more positive and accommodative attitude allows for the convergence of diverse literary ideas which will enrich African literary discourse.

An attempt to gag the literary views of one's literary adversaries does not benefit the field of literary studies at all. Such an attempt further impoverishes this field of study, and as a result, very little progress has been made in the field of African literary criticism. Amuta may have succeeded in using highly charged language to shoot down the literary views espoused by, for example, Egujuru, Mboku or Chinweuzi and others. But the fact of the matter is that the literary views conceived and advocated by different literary critics and scholars have helped to create more options of literary views which can be used in the interpretation of African-language literature. The problem with dismissing opposing literary views is that too much effort and time is spent on shooting down the views of one's adversaries than proving the validity and effectiveness of one's literary views.

This research sets out to argue against preference and/ or under-utilisation of certain literary theories in the evaluation of African-language literature. Six different literary approaches have been used in the evaluation of one Tshivenda literary text (**A si ene**). This exercise aimed at demonstrating that the use of different literary approaches helps to uncover more 'meanings' of the same literary text. Multiple-readings of the same literary text in this research has proved beyond doubt that openness and flexibility in accommodating and embracing other literary views broadens and deepens one's understanding of a work of art. Each literary theory is able to unearth a meaning that no other literary theory can. This has been adequately demonstrated above by using, for example, Structuralism, Marxist historical materialism and Feminism to analyse conflict or characters from the same literary text. The meanings arrived at by using different literary approaches to analyse Maluṭa and Adziambei's character and the conflict situations in which they found themselves

provide good examples. Different literary approaches both enhance readers' understanding and also broaden and deepen insight into these characters. This study, in other words, categorically shows that an extensive and insightful understanding of these characters has occurred as a result of the application of more than one literary approach as Armstrong (1990:23) says that: 'Any procedure of interpretation is a set of possibilities for understanding ...'

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