

**THE ZULU LITERARY ARTIST'S CONCEPTION OF CELESTIAL BODIES  
AND ASSOCIATED NATURAL PHENOMENA**

**by**

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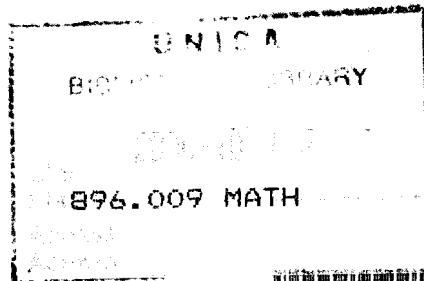
DECLARATION

I declare that "The Zulu Literary Artist's Conception of Celestial Bodies and Associated Natural Phenomena" is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



.....  
SIGNATURE  
(MR L.F. MATHENJWA)

30/11/1999  
.....  
DATE



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**DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to my wife Sibongile, daughter Sithokozile, son Mphilisi, daughter Silondiwe, daughter Zamathenjwa, daughter Noxolo and my parents late father Mzawu and mother Nozintombi.

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- To all people who contributed one way or another, I say:  
*Ukwanda kwaliwa abathakathi asebekhunkula ngonoghakala kwelikaMthaniya* (multiplicity of people is denied by witches who are practising witchcraft in broad daylight in Mthaniya's land).



**SUMMARY**

This study gives the Zulu's views and ideas about celestial bodies and associated natural phenomena and how they illustrate features in both the oral and written literature.

It sketches various conceptions about the whole universe focussing mainly on celestial bodies and natural phenomena. The concentration is on the sun, moon, stars, thunder and lightning in poetry and prose both modern and traditional. Emphasis is on the fact that Zulus do not perceive celestial bodies as mere bodies but assign certain beliefs and philosophies to them. In examining these different conceptions, Western as well as African literary theories have been used in this study.

In traditional *izibongo amakhosi* are associated with the sun, the moon as well as the stars. Their warriors' attack is associated with the thunderstorm.

These celestial bodies are also used as determinants of time in terms of day and night, seasons and different times for different daily chores. In modern poetry these bodies are mainly associated with God and in some instances they are referred to as God himself. In prose they are used as determinants of time and are also used figuratively to describe certain circumstances.

The study gives an idea of how Zulus in general perceive these celestial bodies and natural phenomena.

**Keywords:**

Russian Formalism, New Criticism, Defamiliarization, Metaphor and metonymy, Cultural image, Celestial, Underworld, *Mvelingqangi*, *Nomkhubulwane*, *Izibongo*, *Imbongi*.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 PREAMBLE

This chapter is an introductory orientation to this study. It will cover the following subtopics: motivation, objectives of the study, definition of terms, methodology as well as scope.

#### 1.1 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Looking at previous studies, it appears that not much has been done on the celestial bodies and natural phenomena in isiZulu. It is only Msimang (1980) in his Honours B.A. article entitled: "Imagery in Zulu praise-poetry" and in his book: *Izimbongi Izolo Nanamuhla, umqulu 2* (1988). In these two references it is demonstrated how images of celestial bodies are used in *izibongo* and modern poetry. This situation cries out for a thorough study to reveal how Zulus perceive the firmament, celestial bodies and natural phenomena.

The sky and its components that will be discussed here are used as symbols. This emanates from the fact that when a Zulu artist looks at the celestial bodies, he/she

does not just look at them as ordinary objects but assigns theistic meanings to them. The problem is that no one really knows or has a clear idea of the supreme being believed to have created these heavenly bodies. This study addresses questions regarding the relation of man's symbolical conceptions of reality. The confusion around the celestial bodies whether they are God himself or his representatives, has motivated me to undertake work of this nature. The idea by Bevan (1962-4:24) that refers to mental images drawn from man's earthly experience has had a very wide use in religion, as presenting something which is believed to characterise divine life-images. These images at the outset were no doubt understood by men as literal descriptions of God or of the divine world. Although we no longer take them literally, we cannot discard nor eliminate such notions from discourse about God because they are inextricably woven into the fabric of our religious thought and language. The first we shall consider is reference to spatial height, the propensity of men everywhere to regard the chief Divine Power as living in the heavens. To place Him as high up as is imaginable goes with the odd, but universal, association of distance from the earth's surface with spiritual or moral worth seen in such words as heavenly superior or sublime. This then prompted me to undertake this study in a bid to ascertain if these sky bodies are actually symbols or the Creator himself.

## 1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to help future scholars to have a clear understanding of the metaphorical use of the celestial bodies and natural phenomena in literature. This study will also be used as an eye-opener for critical thinking about the significance of these bodies in our daily speech used to review the relationship between heaven and earth. I will also retrieve the thinking that was in the minds of traditional *izimbongi*. This will also be looked at in relation to contemporary writers' perceptions. The main aim is to see if both groups looked at these bodies as God himself or his representatives. Ascertaining the divinity assigned to these bodies may help future artists and scholars to have a clear idea of God and his creation. That relationship and how he communicates or reveals himself to his subjects will be dealt with. Artists are a people or community's mouthpiece. Getting their views or conceptions of the universe will help to ascertain how they are perceived.

## 1.3 DEFINITION OF TERMS

### 1.3.1 Literary artist:

To come up with a clear definition of a literary artist, one should first offer a definition of 'literary' as well as 'artist'. Fowler & Fowler (1995:795) define literary as: constituting, or occupied with books or literature or written composition, especially of the kind valued for quality of form. Literature are those

written works whose value lies in beauty of language or in emotional effect. They further define an 'artist' as a person who practices the skill of art in any artistic field, not merely painting.

One can therefore define a literary artist as a person who is occupied with books or literature or written compositions especially valued for quality that lies in beauty of language and emotional effect. This quality and character of literary works is evaluated through literary criticism.

### **1.3.2 Literary criticism:**

According to Webster (1996:6), literary criticism involves the reading, interpretation of a commentary on a specific text or texts which have been designated as literature. This is the predominant activity associated with literary study. It is practised by professional critics and circulated in published form in books and journals. All students of literature in essays, examination answers or dissertations also practise it.

It is therefore imperative that before we have literary criticism we must first have a literary artist, literary text and a literary theory. The whole process or practice of estimating and analysing the qualities and characteristics of the literary works is what we call literary criticism.

### 1.3.3 Celestial bodies:

This term refers to anything of the sky or of the outer space as observed by astronomers such as material objects and phenomena.

### 1.3.4 Firmament:

This term refers to the sky which is regarded as a vault or an arch on which celestial bodies and phenomena are seen to be hanging. It is therefore not easy to divorce these two terms, "celestial" and "firmament". This has caused confusion to other people as they regard it as one and the same thing. We will treat them as separate entities so as to avoid further confusion.

## 1.4 METHODOLOGY

In view of the analysis it is imperative to mention methods employed. It is based on both printed and unprinted material in the form of published books and oral interviews. The information found will be analysed with an aim of achieving an in depth grasp of the celestial bodies and natural phenomena in isiZulu literature.

To accomplish this well accepted literary theories or approaches will be used. To make sure that a thorough study has been done, professional categories of people variously linked to the topic were interviewed. This involved professional bards (*izimbongi*) and traditional

healers (*izinyanga*). Both incorporate the celestial bodies and natural phenomena into their utterances.

*Izimbongi* give their own account on how they view the celestial bodies and natural phenomena in relation to the earth. Do they have a similar understanding or imagination of the sky bodies like all other human beings? This question has been mainly triggered by the fact that these celestial bodies and natural phenomena play a large role in their poetry. On the part of *izinyanga*, they should also come with their understanding of these sky bodies. It will then be our task to ascertain similarities as well as differences in the understanding of the celestial bodies and natural phenomena as conceived by different artists.

It goes without saying that since celestial bodies and other natural phenomena are mostly taken as symbolising something in isiZulu, theories or approaches used should be derived from symbolism or imagery.

### 1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

We will be looking at the Zulu literary artist's conception of the celestial bodies and other natural phenomena that includes amongst other things weather conditions, darkness and light. It will concentrate on two aspects of literature i.e. poetry and prose two fields which are both very wide. The approach will take in both traditional and modern poetry as well as traditional and modern prose. To be more specific, in traditional poetry the focus will be on *izibongo* of



certain *amakhosi*, depending on their relevancy to the study. In modern poetry I will limit the study to a few poets i.e. B.W.Vilakazi, N.J.Makhaye and D.B.Z.Ntuli. I will take in a few novels, short stories and essays that have some bearing on this work. Though our focus will be on the celestial bodies and other natural phenomena it will be, however, necessary to give a broader picture of the Zulu's conception of the whole universe. This will help to portray the relationship of the celestial bodies to the whole universe. It is important to have knowledge of the Zulu's conception of the universe which is the three-tier idea. It is imperative to recognise the relationship between man on earth, in space and in the underworld to look at the three divisions of the earth. It reveals the relationship that exists between the earth, heavens and the underworld. I will have to look at their role in poetry both modern and traditional, novels, short stories, essays and traditional prose.

Language and literature are regarded as storerooms of cultural beliefs, ideas, values, views and conceptions of a particular society such as that of the Zulus. This is reflected in their folklore, songs, poetry, stories and books in modern literature.

Reference will be made to views held by people of Central, East, North as well as West Africa regarding the world around them and what is reflected on it. From the data it will appear that almost all of them believe in the three divisions of the universe. This also involves their way of worshipping. According to their

beliefs how does the Supreme Being reveal himself to them?

**Chapter 1** is an introductory orientation to the whole study. It also gives certain guidelines that will be followed like the aim of the study and how it will be achieved.

**Chapter 2** deals with literary theories or approaches that are used in the study of literature. Some of these theories will be used in analysing material in this study.

**Chapter 3** forms the core of the study. It deals with the metaphorical use of the celestial bodies and natural phenomena in traditional *izibongo* and modern poetry.

**Chapter 4** looks at the usage of the celestial bodies and natural phenomena in traditional and modern prose.

**Chapter 5** is the concluding chapter that proposes findings and recommendations.

## 1.6 CONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE UNIVERSE

When attempting a study of this nature, it is important to review different conceptions about the whole universe. It is also important to see if the way we perceive the universe is still the same as that of the early Zulus. Different people may view the universe from different angles. This will involve the three-tier creation of the universe. I will be looking at the celestial bodies in isiZulu from a literary artist's point of view. Narlikar (1977:1) says:

The Universe, by definition, includes everything. Even with all his limitations, man has looked at it from many different points of view. The Universe presents one aspect to the philosopher, another to the scientist, and another to the artist. It is beyond the capacity of any one person to describe the Universe in all its manifestations.

People from different walks of life cannot view the universe in the same way. Their interests as determined by the fields in which they belong mainly influence this. Anthropologists will be interested in the anthropological aspects much as the scientist will focus on the scientific side. What is interesting is that the universe is open for all-comers according to their requirements and needs. I will have to look at the way how previous generations have viewed them. I may not lose sight of the fact that the new generation may be looking from a different angle. Narlikar (1977:1) says in this regard:

Indeed, if history is any guide, man's view of the Universe has changed steadily with time, and will continue to do so in the future. Primitive man looked at the heavens with awe and wonder. Instinctively he ascribed divine or mystical powers to the Sun and the other objects in the sky. This gradually gave way to a spirit of rational enquiry, based on a more scientific way of thinking. As the scientific approach to heavenly objects progressed, the mystical element began to give way.

Different people tried to give their own interpretations of the universe. Scientists came with their own scientific interpretations that contradict those by the Christians. This then opened gates for the study of this nature where one is free to make his own enquiries about the universe from his own discipline's point of view. To get a concrete picture about the universe, we need to get different perceptions by different people from different fields regarding the universe. This, however, is not the focus. Much as what Narlikar has said may be true, this study will try to prove that these divine or mystical powers of the Sun and other celestial bodies have not been ignored in isiZulu.

As I claim to approach this study as an artist, it goes without saying that I should understand what art is. Dhlomo (1948:86) tries to give answers to some of the questions when he says:

Art is understanding and expressing the feelings and experiences around you. An artist must come out of himself and enter into the general emotion, thought, and

experience of the people. He must not only be introspective and express himself, but be extrovert and express the feelings and reactions of the people. The African artist cannot delve successfully into the past unless he understands and has grasped the present.

The best understanding of art will enable one to understand the type of work that we are dealing with here. One should also know the role of an artist in the society. It must be clear why an artist differs from an ordinary person in society. One should also know why what is said or written by an artist is worth analysing in a study of this nature.

It is therefore important to have an understanding of the traditional as well as the contemporary view of the celestial bodies. African people had the knowledge and the idea of astronomy that was not associated with formal schooling. In the infant stage of astronomy in Africa these heavenly bodies were used as determinants of time in terms of day and night as well as seasons. They have to do with day and night as well as seasons so are directly involved in controlling our lives because they tell us when to sleep, plough as well as to reap. Proctor (1982:7) says, by means of the stars, the shepherd could note the passage of time during the course of the night with the stars of the Great Bear acting as a clock in the sky. These same stars served as guides to the traveller across the featureless desert and to the mariner at sea. Certain groups of stars, and especially the Pleiades, enabled the farmer

to regulate the time for sowing and reaping grain, warning him of the approaching seasons.

Proctor looks at the stars as determinants of time. The way they are positioned in the sky helps one to determine direction by locating where the north, south, east or west are. The fact that stars usually appear in the same place, makes it easy to use them as direction points or guides. The very same stars could also determine different seasons of the year. Looking at them one could know that it is time to start ploughing as the rainy season is approaching. The sky could be said to be representing the modern calendar. In the case of isiZulu all the months were named after the geographical and behavioural changes that are influenced by the changes in our seasons of the year. The main celestial body that determines the change is the sun. Without it there could be no days nor years. This situation then makes the sun to be one of the important sky bodies that controls, influences and gives direction to people's lives. Other sky bodies like the moon could also be used to determine weather in terms of rain and drought. This one will be explained more fully later on.

Basing on what is said by Proctor it is clear that the sky bodies play a major role in the lives of living creatures. This has an influence in many different cultures as will be evident when we look at the particular culture of the Zulus. When looking at the cultural influence of celestial bodies, Lockyer as cited by Reed (1939:25) proposed that the use of

celestial objects and phenomena in different cultures can be divided into distinct stages. He described his first stage as one of primitive wonder about the sky, and the worship of its objects. He refers to this as the sky of myth and magic, the sky of the ancient stargazers. According to him, evidence of the first stage can be found in the early history of almost every culture. The idea of Lockyer of worshipping sky objects is not new in Africa. According to Willis (1966:46) in most periods the sun god was the principal divine object of Egypt. The world was organised according to two interlocking principles of the emergence and actions of the creator and the daily cycle of the sun through the cosmos. The cosmos was, essentially, Egypt. Each day at dawn the sun god was born from the sky goddess. He attained maturity by midday and aged by evening. At nightfall he entered the underworld. According to Egyptians, there was a correlation between the sky, the earth and the underworld. The sun connected these three entities. The Egyptians also had other gods that were associated with the other sky bodies like the moon and the stars.

The sky and its objects were tied to gods and myths, which served as explanations of the existence, structure, and creation of the universe. The sky myths often became a hidden repository for human knowledge. Lockyer further points out that vestiges of this mythical and magical sky still exist today in subtle and sometimes unrecognised forms in the symbols and language of everyday life. Sky phenomena still influence our lives when they serve as the inspiration

for song lyrics as well as artistic renderings. The sky of myth and magic has also provided the marketing world with impact words and has enriched our language with numerous terms and expressions.

Kunene (1982:191) is also of the similar opinion when he mentions that indeed the greatest African literature aims primarily at celebrating the life of man and all living things in the cosmos. In doing so we are describing the universe through its physical manifestations, the stars, the moon and the sun. In the case of isiZulu, this language is very rich in metaphors derived from the sky bodies. We have proverbs, expressions and terms so derived that are used in our poetry, novels, drama, short stories, essays and folklore materials. Besides looking at the sky bodies as an enriching source for this language and culture, Lockyer also assigned some elements of importance to the sky. Like Proctor, he looked at the sky as a determinant of time. Reed (1939:26) says:

Lockyer's second stage in the development of astronomy involved the utilisation of celestial phenomena to serve the practical needs of culture. No more practical need was served by astronomy than that of the establishment of time and calendar. The sky alone offered the necessary repeating cycles to establish measures of time. The sky is a clock and a calendar. Without the sky, without time, there would be no civilisation.



Lockyer's second stage supports Proctor's idea that looks at these sky bodies as determinants of time. This time factor is seen as an important element in humanity because time plays a major role in a person's life. These bodies can have a multiplicity of meanings to human beings depending on different contexts at different points and times. It is however true that the sky has literal as well as symbolic functions in IsiZulu literature. Different people view these sky bodies in diverse ways. For this reason I will use defamiliarization theory to help understand these different interpretations.

Parrinder (1981:24) suggests that it is not that men and women are so stupid as to worship the material sun, but they admire the power or force behind it. In actual fact most African people do not look at the sun as an ordinary object. When they look at different mysteries associated with the sun, they assume that the sun represents somebody who has a special power that is seen or reflected in the sun. They therefore do not look at it as a literal object but as carrying special significance of a super power or being.

The Zulu people believe that the sun can destroy at some stage and it can also bring life at another. These qualities that the sun has according to their cultural belief are those that belong to God or ancestors. It is also possible that both God and ancestors commission the sun to perform certain duties. In this regard, then, it is possible for one

to attribute to it certain powers. Parrinder (1981:25) says:

At the Apex is the sky, which symbolises the Supreme Power from whom all life flows and to whom all returns.

Though Zulus do not come out clearly and say that the sun is God or that it represents him, they associate it with royalty. In many instances that are still to be covered the sun is seen as the king of the sky. Most tribes suggest a relationship between God and the sun meaning a division of labour under which God is seen as the king of everything on earth and the sun as the king of the sky. The fact that this sun is above both the earth and the underworld places it above and supreme over other parts of the universe. One should note that these different bodies in the sky have their own primary functions. It is left for the literary artist to look for the secondary functions behind each and every heavenly body.

When approaching heavenly bodies from a literary point of view, it is imperative to look at them in conjunction with the earth and the underworld. According to Mbiti (1975:32), though some people believe in the three divisions of the universe as detailed above, African people do not perceive these divisions as separate. They look at them as linked together. These three parts of creation form the whole universe. The heavenly part of the universe is the 'home' of the stars, sun, moon, the wind and the rain, with all the phenomena connected with them such as

thunder and lightning, storms, eclipses of the sun and the moon, 'falling stars' and so on. Most people also believe it to be the abode of God, although they cannot quite locate where he dwells, other than saying that he lives in 'the sky' in 'heaven', or 'beyond the clouds'.

Zulus believe that there is life in heaven as well as in the underworld. They assign heavens to God or *uNkosiyaphezulu* as Mbiti (1975:32) says and the underworld to the ancestors or *abaphansi* (those below the earth/underground). It is therefore not surprising that some African communities regard certain celestial bodies as God's representatives as he is referred to as the Most High who dwells in the heavens so we focus on the possible symbolic representations that are implied. One may take the sun that is associated with life and at times with death. According to biblical culture, which was later adopted by Zulus, the sign of the rainbow is mainly associated with peace. It is seen as a source of redemption after heavy rains. Literary artists can use this both literally and figuratively. The relief or redemption can be both literal and figurative depending on the artist's intention at that point and time based mainly on context.

Almost all the celestial bodies symbolise something according to African belief or religion. These beliefs have been used both in our traditional as well as modern literature. Though African people may vary or have different views regarding beliefs or symbolic

significance associated with these bodies, these people obviously personify these bodies.

### 1.7 THE THREE DIVISIONS OF THE UNIVERSE

The idea of a three-tier creation of the universe is so common amongst Africans that this research need not deal with the universe as a whole. It is enough to focus mainly on the celestial bodies and natural phenomena. Parrinder (1981:33) says the myths tell that God created three realms in the universe: heaven, earth and the underworld. 'Nyane' rules over the sky, a goddess of procreation over the earth and Old Mother Earth over the underworld, that is over the dead who lie buried in her pocket. According to him, God did not merely create the earth and drop it just like that but delegated responsibility to certain people. According to Berglund (1976:33), Zulus believe that there is *uMvelingqangi* (he who appeared first) from whom everything came. They believe that *uMvelingqangi* is not the sole ruler because there is Princess *Nomkhubulwane* who acts as his assistant. *Nomkhubulwane* is responsible for rain, fertility, food and female affairs. On the other hand, there are ancestral spirits who mediate between the great ancestor (*uMvelingqangi*) and the living. It is important to hammer on these beliefs because they form the core of this study. Sullivan (1995:13) says:

The African concept of God the Creator of all life, with mankind suspended between heaven and the underworld, controlling, yet dependant on and interwoven with things seen and unseen, has much in common with pagan Celtic beliefs.

This corroborates that one cannot deal with the heavens only without mentioning the earth and the underworld.

The Zulus have special respect for the ancestors based on the belief that the ancestors communicate with *UMvelingqangi* (God) on behalf of the living. In this case it is the people in the underworld communicating with a person in heaven. In this regard Sullivan (1995:11) says:

In Africa reincarnation was envisaged as an opportunity for the spirit to return to its tribe after a period of time as an ancestor in the other world... the newly dead was expected to play a very important part in the daily lives of the family it had left behind on Earth.

What is said by Sullivan suggests that the person who is well known to the living and is still fresh in their minds is the one who has just passed away. This is also mentioned by Berglund (1976:33), who says the departed person forms a link with those who preceded him and those who are still alive. Beyond respect for their ancestors, the Zulus have a special reverence for the heavens as the presumed dwelling place of the Supreme Being. They respect it so much that they do

not even point a finger at it. If there is a need to indicate it they use a clenched fist, as pointed out by Berglund. They could not even communicate with God directly. Yahweh means "he is" not "you are": Jews were not allowed to address the deity directly either. Sullivan (1995:11) further says, God was a power too great, too holy and eminent to be approached directly by a simple villager, concerned with the daily trivia of tribal life. Only His representatives on Earth, in the person of a divine king rainmaker, the high priest/*sanusi*, or the one whose duty it was to divert lightning could, in times of national crisis, petition the Godhead directly. Lesser mortals relied on the good offices of ancestral spirits, whose duty it was to listen to the prayerful petitions of their earthly relatives and pass the messages on up the phalanx of increasingly important spirits to the Godhead. Any answers, or commands, were 'bush-telegraphed' down the triangle, to be received by those on Earth in the form of dreams, gnosis, divination or omens.

These communications could also be accomplished through the king of the nation himself believed to have been appointed by God to rule on his behalf. The king therefore had his mouthpiece in *imbongi* who through *izibongo* would summon all the previous kings regarded as ancestors to accompany the nation in any given event. *Izibongo* are taken as a prayer that is communicated to the ancestors who present our pleas for God's attention.

Ancestral spirits are responsible for the safety and security of the living members of their respective families and nations in respect of kings and chiefs. The king as the head of the nation is responsible on earth to guard against everything that may trouble his nation. His main duty is to monitor and see to it that important national ceremonies directed to the ancestors are honoured. While the king is responsible for the nation, heads of families are directly involved with their immediate families, seeing to it that the departed spirits of different family members are remembered and given the respect they deserve. The role played by the ancestors in the lives of the living members of their respective families forms a link between those lying below the earth and those still living on it.

#### **1.7.1 The firmament and its components**

I have pointed out earlier that the firmament can be said to be the arch, on which the sky bodies are seen to be hanging. This is the heavenly part of the universe. It is that part where the celestial bodies like the sun, moon, stars are found. Besides these there are other phenomena connected with them like the clouds, rain, wind, rainbow, thunder, lightning and storm. According to Sullivan (1995:9), the traditional theology of the Zulus says the blue which we see and suppose, is a rock that encircles the earth, the earth being inside the heaven, and the heaven ending outside the earth. There is no other earth on the other side

of the heaven. We do not say the sun is on the other side of heaven. If it were we would not be able to see it; it would be hidden like the people who are on the other side whom we do not see. The sun, moon, stars and clouds are all on this visible side of the sky.

This is how the Zulus were thinking of the heaven before the arrival of the whites with their own views. What is much more remarkable is that the Zulus' conception of heaven was similar to that of the Greeks who, according to Sullivan (1995:9), visualised heaven as a blue crystal sphere while the Greeks believed that the Earth was covered by a blue rock.

#### 1.7.1.1      **The sun**

In scientific cycles the sun is not perceived quite like literal artists do. To scientists it is one of the sky objects that are governed by the laws of physics whereas to a literary artist it has qualities of godliness. Kippenhahn (1994:XVI) says:

To modern scientists the Sun is no longer a god, but one of the objects that makes up the physical world. As such, it, and all its parts, is subject to the laws of physics. The light that it sends us is not very different from that of a candle-flame here on Earth, or from the radiation that is emitted by a piece of glowing iron... The Sun is therefore the star that we have to thank for our very existence, and upon whose radiation we will continue to depend in the future. It is so surprising then,



that ancient people should have addressed prayers to it as a god.

The idea proposed by scientists does not in any way damage what is in the literary artist's mind. The scientific explanation or analysis of the sun itself becomes a mystery if not a myth to an unsophisticated person. With or without the scientific explanation the sun remains an important celestial body in the life of everything living on earth. In this regard Kippenhahn himself (1994:XV) says:

Although the Sun is 150 million kilometres away, and its light takes something over 8 minutes (to be more precise, 500 seconds) to reach us, it is still close enough for its heat to enable life to exist on our planet. For us, the Sun is the most important body in the sky.

What is said by Kippenhahn puts it clearly that mankind's life depends on the sun. It also does not remove the possibility of these people looking at the sun as the provider of life, those being qualities mostly dispensed by God. It also does not put away the possibility of having the sun infiltrating most into these people's literature, also bearing their views about it. In this case I feel Kippenhahn(1994:1) comes out with the explanation that makes the sun to be so prominent to people. The sun is just one of the approximately one thousand million stars. There is nothing that sets it apart from any of the other stars. It is however only of importance to us, because it is the star that provides us with life. Together with the Earth, we are bound to the Sun, and since

time immemorial it has supplied us with light and warmth.

Different people come with different definitions of the sun. Scientists define it in a scientific way while ordinary people define it their way. According to Amrine (1991:42), to the non-astronomer the sun is a model of constancy a featureless white globe that has shone steadily throughout human history. But astronomers know the sun to be a nuclear powerhouse in constant turmoil, and it may be far less reliable than we think. The sun is a vast ball of hot gas, principally hydrogen, big enough to swallow up 1.3 million earths.

The sun plays a major role in the whole life on earth. The World Book Encyclopaedia of Science (1995:82) says:

The sun is the nearest star to earth and the brightest object in the sky. It emits electromagnetic radiation of various wavelengths - some of them harmful to life. But the earth's atmosphere absorbs most of these injurious radiation and, in fact, life on earth would be impossible without heat and light from the sun.

The sun brings sufficient light on earth and all living creatures rely on it for survival. It is hard to imagine what the earth would have been without it. It appears that the creator made his own measurements that could determine that so much heat would be sufficient for living things on earth. The entire life in terms of day, night, seasons, rain, plants, animals

and human beings relies on the sun. Seligmann (1971:5) says:

The sun, Samas, carrier of life and light, was likewise ambiguous, bringing sometimes scorching and drought.

Seeing that the sun can provide different things to living creatures on earth, it can then account for many different things and situations. This suggests that literary artists can use the sun to symbolise many things mainly based on its daily functions on earth. According to Shorter (1975:111-112);

For the Luyia of Kenya, the sun is a symbol of blessing... For the Yoruba of Nigeria, beauty in general is best exemplified by all the astral bodies that are in turn symbols of riches and good fortune.

Actually, we cannot look at the sun directly. Shorter here is trying to portray how some African tribes view the sun. They consider what the sun does for them and then associate it with blessing and good fortune. What is interesting here is that these people only look at the positive side of the sun. Shorter does not give us an idea of how they look at it when it brings disaster. This is unlike Zulus who take the positive for goodness as well as the negative for punishment. This is the reason that makes the sun to be seen as being ambiguous in character. This character is not so unfamiliar to the Zulus because they compare it with their personal characters that change according to

situations. It is perhaps this reason that makes them to personify the sun in most cases. The sun is personified or given human attributes of doing certain deeds that really may be done by God. Shorter (1975:114) says:

The Luyia of Kenya address both God and the Sun in this prayer, and it is clear that, while it is part of creation, the Sun is a symbol of God's blessing. This is a purification prayer recited at sunrise...

O Sun,

As you rise in the east through God's leadership, wash away all the evils, I have thought of throughout the night. Bless me, so that my enemies will not kill me and my family; Guide through hard work.

The Luyia people see the sun as having certain powers of cleansing their sins, blessing them as well as securing them from their enemies. The person in fact who has power to do all the above is God. These people are seen to be proposing a close relationship between God and the sun. According to Mbiti (1970:132) the sun is personified by numerous peoples. The personification concept is that it is connected with God's strength, power, toughness, heat, labour, and day. The Igbo see it as the Son of God, associated with good fortune and wealth. He further points out that, a number of peoples make a close association between God and the sun, in some cases reaching a form of identification between the two. It is said the Bushmen pray to the sun for success in hunting and fruit gathering. Probably this means that they

consider the sun to be an intermediary between them and God, or a personification of his activities.

Our evidence shows that different peoples personify the sun, others take it to be a manifestation of God, and others closely associate it with him. Most people regard the sun as the source of life and associate it with good and positive things. The fact that the sun can bring life yet at some stage destroy it, suggests that it is associated with the Supreme power. It is then possible that some people may devote the qualities of godliness onto the sun.

#### **1.7.1.2 The moon**

The moon is a round shaped celestial body that gives light alternating at night with the sun. It breaks the darkness of the night and makes life easy for certain human beings and animals that travel nocturnally. In the African situation the moon is associated with certain beliefs. It is seen to be motherly in character because it takes control of female bodies by determining their periodical menstrual cycle. This is supported by Biedermann (1996:224) who says that the moon is usually thought of as a female, primarily because of its passivity as the receiver of the sun's light, but also because of the similarity of the lunar month and the menstrual cycle. According to him, in most languages and cultures it is feminine.

It also determines certain periods of the year like that of ploughing because it determines rain. The moon not only determines changes it also takes different shapes itself i.e. quarter, half and full moon, depending on the days of the month. To a person on earth the moon takes different shapes during different times of the month. This is caused by the eclipses of the moon. Amrine (1991:43) explains how the motions of the earth and moon cause eclipses that one can refer to as "shadows in the sky". Amrine points out that eclipses of the moon, take place only at full moon, though not at every full moon. They are said to occur when the moon enters the earth's shadow. During an eclipse of the sun, the centre of the moon's shadow passes along a band on the earth's surface up to 272km wide. Within this band all sunlight is cut off for a few minutes, the sky darkens and the stars come out. By pure chance, the moon and the sun appear to be almost exactly the same size when viewed from the earth, so the moon effectively covers the sun during an eclipse of the sun. On the other hand, the earth's shadow is large enough to cover the moon completely in an eclipse of the moon. Sometimes the moon passes through the edge of the shadow and it merely seems to fade a little. In order for there to be a total eclipse of the moon it must enter the central part of the shadow. The World Book Encyclopedia of Science (1995:96) says:

The moon is the nearest celestial object to earth and the only one on which a manned spacecraft has landed. For these reasons, scientists today probably know

more about the moon than any other heavenly body.

After the introduction of Christian religion the moon added a new role in the mythology of the Zulus. In this case they were trying to assign meaning to a person-like shadow that is seen on it. The moon is taken as one of uMdali's (Creator's) creations. It is regarded as the queen of the night. Both the moon and the sun bring light on earth. What is interesting is that there is a difference between the two. The light from the moon is not so strong and harmful like the one from the sun. It is possible to look direct at the moon as compared to the sun with its sharp rays. History proves that it is possible to visit the moon as scientists have done but not the sun that is well known for its heat. The idea of the accessibility of the moon made it possible for the Zulus to create the myth of a woman on the moon. This woman is said to be serving her punishment for disobeying God's command of not working on the Sabbath day. This is believed to be a new myth in Zulu that originated as a result of Christian religion, which has a prohibition against working on the Sabbath day.

Besides having the moon associated with Christian religion as mentioned above, Zulus had their own beliefs that they assigned to it. Some looked at the sun and the moon as the two celestial bodies that dominate the sky. In some cases in their literature the moon is referred to as the king that dominates the sky with his subordinates, the stars. They look at

this from a cultural point of view where the king is never alone. Zulus also look at these two celestial bodies as the eyes that look after them and guide them during the day and the night. They appear as symbols of goodness that fight evil which is represented by darkness. These two work shifts to allow the other one a chance to rest. This idea of the moon being associated with God is not unique to Zulu mythology for there are other African tribes who associate the moon with God. Mbiti (1970:135) says:

There are various other associations of the moon with God. The Balese regard it as God's left eye, the sun being the right eye. The Turu think that it symbolises God. The Watumbatu hold that God's signs are on the moon which should not be stared at for long. For the Nuer, the moon belongs to God and he shines it.

The fact that no one has ever seen God but almost all tribes believe that he is the one who created everything on earth, makes people to think deep and relate him to what he has created. They pick on the sun and the moon which are visible. They look at what they do and what they are able to do and end up associating them with God himself. Some Chinese people also regard heavenly bodies as their gods. This included the sun, moon and stars. Willis (1993:94) mentions that the sun, moon and stars figured prominently among the animistic deities of ancient China, and the sun and the moon continued to be honoured in sacrificial ceremonies down to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Altars to the sun and moon are still to



be found in the Chinese capital, Beijing, although they are no longer used officially. However, the sun was never singled out as supreme deity, and in the supernatural hierarchy recognised by the imperial state both sun and moon ranked after heaven, earth, the imperial ancestors, the gods of grain and soil and Confucius. Most Chinese have sentimental attachment to the moon, and particularly to the full moon, whose round shape symbolises the reunion and completion of the family circle.

In works of art like sculpture, drawing and written literature, artists are believed to reveal what is in their minds and their psychological way of perceiving things. By the same token one can claim that what God created reflects him. Those who suggest that God is his creation or that he reveals himself through it may not be far away from the truth. For it is evident that many African communities hold different views about the moon. Most of them personalise it and regard it to be related to God. Others go to the extent of observing certain religious rituals towards the different phases of the moon. Shorter (1975:119) says:

For the Ngombe of Zaire the moon is a special object of veneration as a symbol of good fortune in a religious system which places an equal emphasis on a direct approach to the Supreme Being, and on an indirect approach through ancestral and other spirits. This prayer takes the form of a greeting to the new moon.

The African people are not directly concerned with the material celestial bodies but more with the power behind them. They consider different states of these celestial bodies to help them to be in a position to speculate. When it is dark and there is no moon they say the moon is dead and they abstain from certain conduct like sex and ploughing. The different shapes that the moon takes in a month, are given different meanings by African people such as the Zulus. The moon is seen as a symbol of redemption as it sustains people in the darkness of the night by bringing about light associated with life. The very same light can also be the symbol of holiness. One may see the moon as God visiting his people during the night, with an intention of saving them from the dangers of darkness. With the aid of the moonlight the fear of evil spirits who are the kings of darkness is dispelled off. If the Christian saying 'God is light' is something one can believe in what prevents us believing that the moon is God's representative that brings light on earth?

#### **1.7.1.3 The stars**

Stars are heavenly bodies that give light in the night together with the moon. From the earth the moon is the biggest object surrounded by the tiny stars that are scattered all over. They appear to be of different sizes and clusters and come out at different times. There are those that come early and those that come late in the night. Unlike the moon that is not always

visible in the sky, stars are always there. The World Book Encyclopedia of Science (1995:56) says:

When we look at the clear, moonless night sky, we can see thousands of small dots of light, almost all of which are stars. The few bright objects that are not stars are the planets of the solar system. There are, however, easily observable differences between the planets and true stars: all stars twinkle, whereas the planets do not (unless the air in the earth's atmosphere is extremely turbulent). And, by looking at the sky on successive nights, the planets can be seen to have moved by a relatively large amount when compared with the apparently stationary background of stars.

From this description it is clear that there are certain objects that Zulus have been referring to as stars which they are not. Zulus do not differentiate among these tiny objects thinking that they are all stars. What matters to the Zulus are the different observations and directions they get from the heavens.

Immediately after sunset stars take over and start shining all over the sky. They are not aware that they are marking time. The meanings that are assigned to these stars are mainly based on culture. The first star that appears is *isicelankobe* (asking for boiled dry mealies). This star marks the time for the evening meal in Zulu society. It is said to be asking for supper eaten by children at that time. *Izinkobe* are also ground and then mixed with *amasi* (sour milk). This is one of the famous staple food among the Zulus.

The second star that appears thereafter is *isilalisabantwana* (cause children to sleep). This is believed to be the visiting time for the ancestral spirits. This star is followed by another star called *inqongqoyi* that marks the 'knocking' of the ancestors. Others refer to it as *indonsakuhlwa* (it draws the night) because thereafter, other stars emerge and cover the whole sky.

There is a special type of stars known as *isilimela* (Pleiades), which only appear once a year, round about the end of the month of July at 10-00 or 11-00 pm. These indicate that people must start ploughing their fields. After the emergence of these stars the bird '*phezukomkhono*' starts singing as an extra reminder to people to get on with ploughing. The Pleiades herald early spring, which is the season for the commencement of ploughing. Stars in this case are used as determinants of time like the other celestial bodies, i.e. the sun and the moon.

After midnight when two days have been divided thereby starting the new one, there are particular stars that mark the beginning of a new day. According to the Zulus, the cock that crows in the middle of the night demarcates between the old and the new day. They call this time *phakathi kwamabili amasuku* (in the middle of the two days). Though other stars are still available on the sky at this time of the morning, there is however a star called *ikhwezi* (Venus) which is a morning star which is bright in colour. The Jews call it Morganstein. People could not wait for the

emergence of *ikhwezi* before they could take long journeys on foot and to start with their daily chores like ploughing and weeding. Khumalo (1998:11) says:

*Ngakho emva kokusikisela izinkanyezi ebudeni bobusuku, kube sekuthi phaspha isimomondiya sekhwezi. Bala kusuke sekusa impela ngaleso sikhathi. Eginisweni abaningi basuke sebeselwe. Yisikhathi sokuphuma kwezipani lesi nokuklama. Omame basuke sebebhezu kwamakhuba, sebeyolukhaphuza baze balukhahlele ukhula.*

Then after the display by all stars in the length of the night, comes the most beautiful Venus. Surely it is towards dawn by that time. In fact many people should have been up by then. This is the time for oxen to start ploughing. Women are on their hoes going to start weeding.

What is said by Khumalo here confirms that the Venus is the star that precedes dawn. It also marks the beginning of the daily chores. One can even say it is the star that starts the new day. Its appearance marks the beginning of all types of daily activities.

Different people hold different views about stars just as they do regarding other heavenly bodies. There are those who look at them as 'ornaments' that are beautifying the sky at night also assisting with their light to strengthen the moonlight. Zulus have certain beliefs about the stars such as believing that children should not count the stars because they will urinate at night while sleeping. Children are afraid of anything that may embarrass them like bed-wetting. The truth was not actually in urinating. Older people feared that when children were counting the stars that might damage

their eyes by straining them. They decided to use something that would dissuade the young ones like urinating.

Mbiti (1970:136) says, some people associate God with these heavenly bodies. The Akan take the Pole star to be God's seat. The Azande, Bambuti, Chagga and Sonjo consider the stars to be God's children; while the Nuer simply take them as belonging to God. For the Gikuyu, stars and other heavenly bodies are God's manifestations. The Bavenda think that meteors indicate that God is travelling by and that both comets and meteors show this. The Shona, for instance, hold that God reveals his presence through meteors among his manifest ways.

This statement by Mbiti concurs with what I have suggested when I was referring to different conclusions people may or do reach when they think about God and his creation. Different people have different conceptions about God, but when most of them think deeply about him, they end up believing that God reveals himself through his creation. The very same beliefs are used in these people's literature. The World Book Encyclopedia of Science (1995:8) says:

Astronomy can still be appreciated on its simplest level as sheer delight in the expanse of the stars and in the prodigality of their distribution.... The great band of the Milky Way has found its place in literature, even though in modern cities we light the streets so well that much of its impact is lost.

Like other celestial bodies, stars are quoted in literature emanating from their habitual use in everyday speech. They serve many purposes like being determinants of time and marking the seasons of the year. Stars are found in almost all genres of literature. Poets reflect on them when they are trying to describe certain behaviour and propose concepts.

#### 1.7.1.4 Thunder and lightning

It is hard to separate thunder and lightning. The reason for this is that when it thunders or there is a storm lightning precedes it and this is one of the fearful natural phenomena among the Zulus. Like many other African people they also hold certain beliefs regarding thunder and lightning. According to Mbiti (1970:139-140) the Herero, Kuku, Lokiya, Suk and Zulu say that God produces thunder. For many, thunder is the manifestation of God or of his power. Speaking metaphorically, the Zulus describe God as 'He who thunders from far off times [the beginning]', and 'He who roars so that all nations be struck with terror'. These titles describe God's eternity and omnipotence. Yoruba people of Nigeria take thunder as a revelation or manifestation of God's anger and power. When it thunders and there is lightning, that poses many questions in a person's mind. One tries to find out about the cause of thunder and lightning but without getting the actual answer. The unanswered questions regarding thunder and lightning make people think deeply about possible causes. These

questions make people to hold different views and beliefs about thunder and lightning. Though they somehow differ in the way they explain this all agree that God produces thunder for thunder and lightning are related. In most cases in *izibongo* thunder and lightning are also associated closely.

The fact that lightning sometimes causes death, makes people fear it. According to the Zulus, when the sky accumulates clouds that show that it may thunder, it is said "*izulu liyahloma*" (the sky is arming itself) so, damage and death are therefore expected.

There is a close association between thunderstorms and that of a king's army attack. This then concurs with what is said by Nyembezi (1983:8) that: *Ziyathanda futhi izimbongi ukufanekisa amakhosi nezilo ezinolaka noma nezulu* (Poets are fond of associating kings with fearful animals or thunderstorm). One will notice that *izaho* (war noise) caused by *amabutho* when they are fighting as they *thokoza* (stab to death) is associated with the noise caused by thunder. The war songs are simultaneous chanted by the warriors. They are many and make a very loud noise which *izimbongi* liken to that of thunder. It is common with regiments to sing and chant war songs before, during and after the war itself to terrify the enemy.

African people may have unsophisticated ideas about God's identity but they believe in his existence. Sullivan (1995:10) puts forward the idea of God in Africa that he reveals himself in all things of nature that he created.



God is of and in Earth, the rain, and in the growing of all things, human, animal, vegetable and mineral. But most of all, God is seen to live in the grass and the grasses which he created as fundamental food for all the creatures he gave life to on this planet. What is said by Sullivan needs attention and consideration. Zulu literary artists usually look at the behaviour of natural things at different times and start to draw their own conclusions. They look at the relationship that exists between them and these celestial bodies. When they fail to give explanations of mysterious things done by these sky bodies and phenomena they then look beyond them and end up saying that God the creator of these things reveals himself through them.

It is generally agreed that God is invisible, so the question is how does he reveal himself to people? As he is said to be living in the heavens, is it not possible that he reveals himself through the celestial bodies as suggested above? What are the meanings people assign to different sky bodies? Are they sometimes used as his servants or messengers as suggested? In this regard Sullivan (1995:70) says, in matriarchal societies, the peoples of the Mediterranean worshipped the moon goddess as 'the Queen of Heaven' after the historic invasion of the sanctuaries of the moon goddess by the sun-worshippers. Sullivan says further that the Queen of Heaven faded from public acclaim in Europe. Not so in Zululand where she continued to be revered under the title of iNkosazana Nomkhubulwane, the direct translation of which is "the Princess of Heaven".

This idea of the Princess of Heaven concurs with what has been said by Mbiti regarding other beings that are said to be living with God. He even pointed out that some are put in charge of different departments in the universe. This is true, for example, with *iNkosazana Nomkhubulwane* as presented by Sullivan (1995:70) where she says; *iNkosazana Nomkhubulwane* was principally concerned with rainmaking and fertility, especially female fertility. In common terms with her northern counterpart, the emanations of her nimbus were the rainbow, mists and rain. Linked to the cycles of the moon and to the procreation of all life, it was *iNkosazana Nomkhubulwane* who visited Earth in the clear white light of daybreak mists and revealed herself to women working in the fields. As she was associated with pregnancy and childbirth, young children were thought to be her particular concern.

Under the very same discussion of *Nomkhubulwane*, Ntombela et al (1997:4) also confirm that she is the one who is assigned the full responsibility of women's affairs. She determines different times that are set aside for certain human activities like that of ploughing, sowing, weeding as well as harvesting. She is aided in this by the fact that she is responsible for the control of rain. They describe her thus:

*Uyinkosazana yeZulu elingaphansi  
 kwelikaMvelingqangi...Uma liduma noma  
 kunesiphepho noma nomvimbi noma nesichotho,  
 nguye oyaye alamule. Kuye kubonakale  
 ngothingo lwenkosazana. Yilona oluqinisa  
 amathemba abantu ukuthi uNomkhubulwane*

*usefikile, usekhona ukubeka isandla ukuze kubekhona ukuthula kuphele isiphepho nolaka loMdali...Uma eke wacasuka uletha isomiso, isichotho noma isangquma, kubhubhe kuphele ukudla emasimini.*

She is the princess of the heaven that is below that one of God...If there is thunderstorm or a continuous rain or hail, she is the one who intervenes. The rainbow sign appears to assure people that Nomkhubulwane has arrived to put her hand so that there could be calm and the end of the storm and the anger of God... If she is angry she brings drought, hail or hailstorm that completely destroy crops in the fields.

What is said by Ntombela and others presents the two sides of *Nomkhubulwane* who is given the human attributes of anger as well as benign intervention. The power to cause trouble as well as stopping it lies with her. This then suggests that according to Zulu belief, God like earthly kings does not rule alone but delegates duties. *Inkosazana Nomkhubulwane* here is mainly associated with the sign of the rainbow that according to the Zulus belongs to her (*uthingo lwenkosazana*). This sign appears to be more closely related with these other phenomena which are said to be *Nomkhubulwane's* responsibility. There is a logical understanding in what is suggested by Ntombela *et al* because the rainbow indeed appears when there is rain or storm. What is remarkable about it is that if it appears the rain or storm stops.

The rainbow sign is taken as a source of life. It normally comes as a blessing to many people in times of floods. Too much of anything is dangerous, this is true,

for example, of too much rain that may cause damaging floods. When human, plant and animal life is in danger because of floods the rainbow signals hope that everything will be all right.

Rain and the rainbow are associated with God. Since rain comes from the sky, many people believe that it comes from God himself. Mbiti (1970:139) says the Bavenda take rain to be God's instrument, and speak of him as "the Master of rain". For the Gikuyu it is one of his manifestations; for the Kaonde it is God's gift; the Nuer speak of him as "falling in the rain"; and the Tiu take it to be an emanation of his divine presence.

What is said by Mbiti concurs with the Xhosa tradition that they refer to their chiefs as, *oZanemvula* (those who come with rain). This is said because they are chosen by God or ancestors to rule his people on his behalf.

In Zulu the rainbow is referred to as, *uthingo lwenkosazana* (a Princess's bow). At times it is seen at the edge of the mist. Rain and mist in Zulu belief are associated with the Queen of rain (*iNkosazana yezulu*) said to be seen on misty drizzling days. Regarding the rainbow Mbiti (1970:139) says:

When the rainbow appears, the Akamba fear that only small quantities of rain would fall, or nothing at all... The Mekan take the rainbow to be a bridge connecting men with God, and their priests communicate with him through it.

Zulus also believe that God has the power to give and withhold rain. During periods of drought they went up high mountains to pray for rain from the Princess of rain. They also kept rainmakers whose duties were to perform rites and pray for rain during drought.

It appears that most Africans assign the heavens to God the creator. Parrinder (1981:33) says, the Kono people, speak of God as the omnipresent and eternal, who lives through all the generations of man, although he is far away. Men can appeal to God for justice and he punishes evildoers with lightning, barrenness or inexplicable death. He further points out that, the Kikuyu of Kenya believe in a Supreme God called Murungu. He is called "Possessor of Whiteness", perhaps because of his association with the sky. One finds in many parts of Africa this connection of the Supreme God and his priests with whiteness. God is the creator of all things. He shows his power in the sun, the moon and stars, in the storm and rain, and in the rainbow. Prayers were made to him by all men at night and in the morning as the sun was rising.

It is difficult to deny what is said by Parrinder that in Africa God shows his power through the sky bodies and phenomena. Where God is said to be positive and full of life these bodies stand for goodness. When he is angry, negative and wants to punish, they will stand for evil. In God's view goodness is rewarded just as evil is punished by using the very sky bodies and phenomena. These multiple duties for which they are used, lead them to be assigned different meanings in different contexts.

Like other African tribes, Zulus, also have their own way of depicting what they see around them.

The Zulus' belief in God as the Lord-of-the-sky (*uNkosiyaphezulu*) concurs with the Christian belief of God as The Most High (*Ophezukonke*). When the Zulus look at the sky, they look at God's dwelling place and his representatives or messengers. Berglund (1976:33) says:

Because the heaven is the dwelling place of the Lord-of-the-sky one must not point at the sky. Not even my child points at me. How can we point at the greatest one? If reference is made to the sky, one can indicate it by lifting one's eyes or by speaking indirectly of it.

This kind of respect given to the sky, is the same as that given to sacred places like mountains and tombs. They are regarded sacred, as the dwelling places for the ancestors or the shades (*amathongo*). A mountain and a tomb are indicated by using a clenched fist or by the head nodding towards their direction.

According to the Zulus' belief, *uNkosiyaphezulu* communicates with his people on earth through thunder and lightning. His manner of communication relies mainly on his temper. When the mood is good thunder will be there but it will not be destructive. When his temper is bad or he has been angered, that will be reflected by sudden and violent storms. Mbiti (1970:130) says:

Practically all-African peoples... associate God with the heavens, sky, or firmament, in one way or another. The Ganda speak of him as God who art [or is] up in heaven. The

Bachwa, Sonjo, Yoruba and Zulu conceive of God as reigning in heaven... The Ashanti consider the firmament to be God's eyes.

It seems true that people do not worship the celestial bodies as such but the power or personality behind them and it depends solely on how God reveals himself through these celestial bodies. He may reveal himself for a good cause or a bad cause. These meanings may be brought out by a literary artist.

### 1.7.2      **The earth**

There is a relationship between the earth and the heavens. The light and heat from the sun, the light from the moon and the stars and rain from the sky are all directed to the earth. This rain and heat from the heaven is the source of life for vegetation, animals and human beings living on earth. The earth's inhabitants cannot survive without the celestial bodies.

The earth and everything that lives on it are somehow controlled by the celestial bodies. It is the sky bodies that determine day and night as well as the seasons of the year. When one looks at the daily behaviour of the earthly inhabitants, there is a strong connection between them and the heavens. The sun can have a twofold function on earth. It can bring life at some stage, death at another and people hold different ideas about it.

Zulu people respect the earth as it will take care of them after death. *Sangomas* respect the earth, in such a way that they walk shoeless so that they can feel the uninterrupted unity with the earth as they touch it barefooted. To the *sangomas* the earth is a holy place where the ancestors are staying. In this regard Kunene (1982:192) says, the earth is the centre, the first world of men. This is demonstrated through the dances that symbolise man's ultimate union with the earth. The earth is man's home, his farm, and his responsibility. This world is interlinked with other worlds outside. But because the world, earth, is basic to man's existence, worlds outside are valued only in so far as they enrich this world. Without the earth it would be impossible to look at the sky because it must be viewed in relation to the earth. Sullivan (1995:11) says:

The peoples of Africa saw mankind at the centre of God's order of things on Earth.... African theology placed mankind within a symbolic triangle, with God the Creator at the Apex. On one side of this triangle were ranged the ancestral spirits, rising in importance from the most recently deceased - and therefore the news approachable - to the very remote folk heroes, or first men who, by virtue of their prowess on earth and the ages that had passed since their death, were assumed to be close to God at the summit.

Ancestors are therefore regarded as go-between messengers. They form a link between God and people on earth. The earth can then be said to be the dwelling place of the living and the dead.



### 1.7.3 The underworld

The underworld is not directly related with the celestial bodies but for the purpose of, giving a complete picture it is necessary to refer to it as well. It is the part of the universe that is found below the earth and even the waters. There is a relationship between the earth and the underworld. According to African belief, there is life in the underworld. *Sangomas* who are undergoing initiation are said to be taken to the deep waters under the world to meet *inkosazana*. It is here where they learn many things regarding their careers. The *inkosazana* is said to be a snake that is represented as a female figure. Junod as cited by Davies (1933:42-43) says:

Some lakes and rivers are believed to be inhabited by spirits, but not in the ordinary fetichistic way, the spirits are connected with the ancestors... Some magicians claim to have gone and stayed some time in the depths: to have 'crossed the sea' is for them a kind of diploma, which gives them the right of exercising their art.

It is believed that under the deep waters even those of the seas, there are certain dry gauges where there is no water. It is here where these *Sangomas* are kept during their period of initiation. Others come back with snakes that will help them when they are working. The underworld lies below the earth, which is between the heaven and the underworld. Sullivan (1995:75) says:

In Greek mythology the great serpent of the waters is represented as a male figure, the god Poseidon... Greek awarded Poseidon a third share of the universe - the rivers, springs, and most importantly, the ocean.

Snakes are common in the mythology of the Zulus. Ancestors come in the form of snakes when they visit the living. Krige (1988:285) says:

When an iDlozi wishes to revisit the world, it does so in the form of a snake. It does not enter the body of an existing human snake, but materialises into one, and there are certain distinct and well-known kinds of snakes that are definitely regarded as spirits.

The underworld is the place of the deceased (*umhlaba wabaphansi*) and is approached mainly with great respect. Krige (1988:284) says:

The amaThongo or amaDlozi live underground and occupy the same relative position there as they did while alive.

In this regard Mollema (1996:6) says:

As animals, the traditional belief in *abaphansi* (those under the earth/ancestors) plays a very important role in Zulu life, which again is reflected in their folktales... All Zulus are aware of the importance of the direct and indirect influence of the *abaphansi* in the affairs of life. The Zulus believe that a person does not die but takes a long journey to the spiritual world, or he passes from the human to the spiritual world of his ancestors. Once in that world he is

transformed into an ancestral spirit and he continues intercourse with the surviving members of his family whom he visits in dreams or in the form of a snake.

The underworld is regarded as the world of the spirits. These ancestors are returned back to this world of the living through the *ukubuyisa* custom. In this case an animal is slaughtered and beer brewed for the big party that is thrown for the invitation of the departed spirit. This then shows that there is a close relationship between the underworld and the world of the living. The belief that there is water under the world has been proven by people who have drawn these waters through boreholes.

## 1.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter is looking at the relationship between man and the sky, man and the earth and man and the underworld. It is clear that the sky and its components play a major role in the life of a living being. In other words the earth and the underworld rely on the sky for rain, light, time in terms of day and night, time in terms of seasons etc. It is due to these reasons that the sky is mostly associated with the Supreme Being. Due to its association with the Supreme Being, people end up assigning supernatural meanings to certain bodies found in the sky.

**CHAPTER 2****LITERARY THEORIES****2.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is dealing with literary theories and approaches. The focus will be on meaning conveyed by celestial bodies and phenomena found in the firmament so meaning will be discussed in detail.

Literary theories should be used in the analysis, interpretation and evaluation of material. In the study of literature, literary criticism functions as a way of knowing and understanding literature. This suggests that we cannot separate literary theory from the activities of reading and critical interpretation. These theories are necessary if we want to find meaning from literature. The text itself has no meaning until someone reads it. To make sense, it must be interpreted.

In literature the mind interacts with the material world around it more profoundly and creatively. It creates relationship between the writer, reader and the material world. The conceptualisation of the human mind making use of the surrounding world ultimately comes out with philosophy, sciences and arts. The outcome of the conceptualised material could be either oral or written. In our analysis we must be aware of the fact that both oral and written language are for communication. That

will lead us to understand and know exactly how Zulus perceive and conceive the celestial bodies and natural phenomena.

## **2.1 THE WESTERN LITERARY THEORIES**

Western literary theories will be used to analyse our literature though they appear not to cover certain elements. We will deploy Russian Formalism Theory concentrating mainly on defamiliarization and New Criticism theory. We will also take a look at Jakobson's theory of metaphor and metonymy and there will be modifications of these theories to suit the cultural elements of the language studied.

### **2.1.1 Russian formalism**

Russian formalism was started in the 19th century from a specific historical ideological and intellectual situation. The group that started this theory emerged as a reaction to positivists and biographical interpretations of the Romanticism era. The formalists' approach is associated with two groups, the "Moscow Linguistic Circle" in 1915 under the leadership of Roman Jakobson and the "Society for the Study of Poetic Language" in St Pietersburg in 1916 under Viktor Shklovsky.

The term "formalists" was initially used derogatively by the opponents of this movement. They were looking at the formalists' main focus on formal patterns and technical devices of literature with the exclusion of social values and subject matter.

This theory came for a specific aim because formalists felt that other scholars had clouded literature with confusion. Jefferson and Robey (1989:27) say:

The form that literary studies had taken during the second half of the nineteenth century, positivism, was, largely based on the genetic approach; critics or rather scholars, concentrated their energies on uncovering the sources and genesis of particular works, and the role of biography, history and history of ideas in these genetic studies obviously reduced the importance of literature itself in literary scholarship. The study of literature had become little more than a loose aggregate of philosophy, history, psychology, aesthetics, ethnography, sociology, and so on, and the formalists felt that any specificity it might have had been swamped by its adjacent disciplines.

Formalists felt that those elements that were being prioritised were in fact secondary and could lead to defective evidence. It was for this reason that the formalists felt that they should direct their efforts towards justifying the independent existence of literary studies. In this regard Eikhenbaum (1965:103) says that formalism was:

characterised only by the attempt to create an independent science of literature that studies specifically literary material.

There was therefore a need for a theory that was going to focus on literature and its literariness. This then called for a unique definition of literature that would differ from the ones used by the former scholars. There were those who looked at literature as an expression of the personality of the author which led to the biographical and psychological understanding of him or her. When one regards it as a window through which you can view the society it then leads to history, politics and or sociology. Formalists then felt that they should come out with a strategy for dealing with a definition of literature that would differ from their predecessors. Jefferson and Robey (1989:27) then say:

The formalist's definition of literature is a differential or oppositional one: what constitutes literature is simply its difference from other orders of facts. The operative concept in this differential specification is *defamiliarization* or making strange (*ostranenie*).

The focus here is mainly on language used in literature. Formalists are interested in the differences that are brought by the opposition between ordinary language and artistic language in poetry. When ordinary words that are used in everyday language are changed and made unfamiliar that brings the differences between ordinary language and poetic language into focus.

The formalists' main objective was to fix their attention on the literary text as a work of art. They aimed at producing a theory of literature that would concern itself with the technical way of how an author uses language in a text. They regarded literature as a special way of using language. Selden (1985:8) as cited by Mulaudzi et al (1992:9) suggests that the formalists' technical focus led them to treat literature as a special use of language, which achieves its distinctiveness by deviating from and distorting "practical language". According to them, formalists differentiate between day-to-day language of communication and language of literature. They assign this to two pioneers of this theory, i.e. Jakobson and Shklovsky. The basic concern of these formalist scholars was to determine the literariness of the text. According to Eichenbaum in Lemon & Reis (1965:107), Jakobson defines literariness as 'that which makes a given work a work of literature'. This literariness is brought about by what the formalists in Russia called *ostranenie* - which means making strange. This refers to a technique wherein ordinary day-to-day expressions, words and devices are changed and made strange or unfamiliar.

It appears that at the time when this theory originated, there was a need for a systematic approach that would distinguish literary works from ordinary forms of communication. Formalists were concerned with outlining models and hypotheses that would determine how literary devices bring aesthetic effects yet distinguishing them from other non-literary communications. They were mainly concerned with literary techniques and conventions that



were used in the construction of the work of art. They felt that defamiliarization should be used as a scientific study of the literary devices or techniques that distinguish literary forms from other forms of communication. According to formalists, imagery used in poetry changes and makes strange or unfamiliar what is familiar in our ordinary day speech. This defamiliarization process makes poetry different from other forms of discourse and this, then, is what is called literariness. I have only used poetry as an example but the process of defamiliarization occurs in literature as a whole.

At this stage it is perhaps necessary to review different writers' ideas of a symbol. Arnold Toynbee as cited by Dillistone (1986:12) says, a symbol is not identical or co-extensive with the object that it symbolises. If it were, it would not be a symbol at all but the thing itself. The test by which the symbol stands is not whether it does or does not faithfully reproduce the object to which it points; the test is whether it throws light on it for an effective symbol is an illuminating one.

Another person who comes with his own definition of a symbol is Erwin Goodenough as cited by Dillistone (1986:13), who defines a symbol as an object or pattern which, whatever the reason may be, operates upon men. It causes effects in them beyond mere recognition of what is literally presented in the given form. Goodenough goes on to differentiate between the denotative meaning and the connotative one. According to him, a symbol

bears the connotative meaning. Both writers concur that a symbol is a powerful instrument to extend our vision, stimulate our imagination and deepen our understanding. A symbol used in the form of a word or an object signifies or represents something greater than what we may perceive. It is interesting though that a literary study like this one deals with similar things like the ones that are suggested by Toynbee and Goodenough.

#### **2.1.1.1 Defamiliarization**

Defamiliarization is a characteristic of Russian Formalism and pertains to both form and content. It is important to mention right from the start that Defamiliarization is not a theory on its own but an aspect of the Russian Formalism approach. Defamiliarization as a theory was introduced by Viktor Shklovsky as early as 1917 in his essay entitled: 'Art as Technique'. It is important to point out that despite its early demise in Russia, Russian Formalism has survived in Europe, Africa and other countries hence its relevance to this study.

Shklovsky was concerned with the fact that people's views on things and relations between them are usually taken for granted. People habitually do not become aware of the way they perceive things, they do not notice things they just become familiar to them. According to Shklovsky, poetic language or literary language disturbs this habitualization and makes people to see things

differently and anew. This is achieved by changing the way you perceive what is familiar and make it to be strange and or unfamiliar. What really matters is how we perceive things and not on how we know them to be. This suggests that whenever one looks at a certain object in literature, he/she must not look at it as an ordinary object but must look for the other meaning that it may have which is different from the ordinary one. This then suggests that an object itself is not important in literary terms but what is important is experiencing the artfulness of that particular object which is brought about by the way it has been used to give meaning in a language. In this case day-to-day language is defamiliarized to renew its actual meaning and to exert more weight behind the words used.

Defamiliarization is not found in all literature. Having said that, it is also important to stress that due to the heavy use of metaphors in African languages, especially isiZulu, Shklovsky's theory is highly relevant to understanding unfamiliar experiences represented by these metaphors. He puts more emphasis on content than on form as is evident when taking an example of isiZulu poetry where the king is referred to as the sun, a star or thunderstorm. The theory of defamiliarization does not look at these objects and phenomena as familiar as we know them in everyday life. Rather it makes them unfamiliar by looking at the relationship between these objects and the praised element. This will ultimately surface with the actual thing that is represented by that particular object thus the theory illuminates the concrete meaning represented

by the symbol. Dillistone (1986:7) is of the opinion that symbols have always been of outstanding importance in human affairs. The unity of a group like all its cultural values should have a symbolic expression. The symbol is at one and the same time a definite focus of interest, a means of communication and common ground of understanding. All communication either through language or other means, makes use of symbols. This is when familiar words or gestures are used to describe objects or events. This involves familiar terms like image, index, icon and simile. Defamiliarization therefore helps to discern any basic meaning of the term used in language communication.

Shklovsky's theory of defamiliarization seems ideal as it shows that literature is not just a mere repository of values and truths but proves that literariness is produced in relation to other experiences. That means literature can be interpreted in various ways. This emanates from the literal as well as the figurative meanings that can be extracted from the literary text. The familiar or ordinary object or idea will give the literal or denotative meaning whereas the unfamiliar or extraordinary one will give the figurative or the connotative one. Shklovsky's theory of defamiliarization and Jakobson's theory of metaphor and metonymy are interlinked. They deal mainly with meaning that is transferred from its familiar object to an unfamiliar one. They also serve as eye-openers that prompt people to see things differently imparting the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known.

### 2.1.1.2 Jakobson's theory of metaphor and metonymy

One should first point out that Jakobson's views on metaphor and metonymy are an extension of the Russian Formalism approach rather than a different theory. He discusses this metaphor and a metonymy from a formalist's point of view. As a psychologist and formalist Jakobson was engaged with clinical observations of psychiatric patients. From this he divided language into two main linguistic axes or poles that he termed metaphor and metonymy. For him the term metonymy strictly means to substitute the name of an attribute for the thing meant. Metaphor, on the other hand, means the application of a name or term to an object although it is not literally applicable.

According to Jakobson, the use of a metaphor is a form of disturbance wherein a word from one linguistic chain or field is transplanted into another in order to heighten the meaning. He suggests that fiction and poetry are more dislocated and thus more metaphoric in quality. Metaphor is arguably a more innovative and productive mode, capable of generating different or new meanings in ways that metonymic language cannot, the latter being more concerned with reinforcing familiar patterns of understanding.

The need to differentiate between a metaphor and a symbol is imperative. According to Heese and Lawton (1986:66), a metaphor is an implied comparison between two fairly specific things and is based on one or more correspondences. A symbol is a representation rather

than a comparison. One should not, however, see these two as separate entities because a symbol may be used metaphorically. The sun is seen as a symbol of kingship. Khathi in Nkabinde (1975:2) refers to the sun as *Nkosi Yomkhathi* (king of the firmament). Khathi is not using the sun as the symbol of kingship in this case but metaphorises it by calling it the king. The meaning of the word king has now been transferred to the sun. Louis the XIV of France was known as the Sun King. It is now the duty of the person who analyses this phrase to look for the relationship that exists between the king and the sun. One can reach this by first looking at the king as a familiar figure and then change it and make it to be strange thereby defamiliarizing it. The mutual relationship between these two objects will come out. Defamiliarization theory thus helps us to understand metaphors used in our literature.

Jakobson's theory was criticised for being too formalistic in emphasis, not taking into account the dimension of language. His critics felt that certain metaphors and metonymy are not fixed categories so that when language changes they lose their innovative force. His concept has however succeeded in showing that literary language rises above normal language. What transpires here is that at the basic level any act of communication has at least two interpretations and misunderstanding might be rife. This then suggests that language has to be handled carefully.

### 2.1.2 New Criticism

"New Criticism" as a literary theory was started in England by I.A. Richards and T.S. Eliot. This theory was later continued in the United States of America in the forties, fifties and sixties hence referred to as the Anglo-American New Criticism. It shares certain similarities with the Russian Formalist theory. In this regard Serudu (1989:13) says:

Both movements rejected the positivistic literary scholarship and called for a renewed attention to literature as literature. Both insisted on the differences between literature and other kinds of writing, and tried to define these differences in theoretical terms; both gave a central role in their definitions to ideas of structure and interrelatedness, and treated the literary text as an object essentially independent of its author and its historical context.

Unlike Russian Formalism, New Criticism was not influenced by biographical knowledge of the author as well as the history. It only looked at the literature's connection to the "real" world and the contribution it may have to everyday life. There are some differences between the formalists and the New Criticism but the latter is mainly proposed in literary circles as a theoretical alternative to Formalism.

New Criticism is no longer popular in Britain after the introduction of European literary theory. It is still heavily used in other areas though where it is felt to be realistic about literature and life.

Jefferson and Robey (1989:74) say:

Like Russian Formalism, Richards' early work turns its back on positivistic scholarship, and calls for a criticism that deals directly with the distinctive properties of literature; where he differs from the Formalists, however, is in defining these properties in terms of human experience and human value. While the other formalists had treated them as objective features inherent in literature itself, Richards' emphasis was on the reader's response to literature and on the evaluation of this response.

Richards in this theory appears to be interested mainly in analysing the process of reading and trying to find ways and means of evaluating the experience brought by it. Richards' approach is an essentially humanistic one as it concentrates on the relevance of art to life. It focuses more on literature and life. He considers the emotions that are brought by poetry or any piece of art. According to Richards, in Jefferson and Robey (1989:76) literature can influence our feelings and actions in the sense that it can tell us 'what to feel' and 'what to do'. It is perhaps for this reason that Richards seems to emphasise the role of the reader rather than the author of the text. One should however point out that by emphasising the experience of reading, Richards does not in any way make a kind of distinction between reader, author and text as portrayed by other literary theories.

Richards' theory suggests that the mental ideas, which the critic/reader creates in his/her mind as he/she



reads the text, are also assumed to be those of the author. Jefferson and Robey (1989:77) say:

Richards treats the text simply as a transparent medium, a mere vehicle for conveying the experience of the author to the reader. He never doubts that it is possible or desirable for the critic to create in himself the mental condition of the author; he only recognises that it is difficult.

Richards appears to be dealing with the theory of communication and of evaluation. This comes out of his framework of the author-text-reader relationship. This framework brings about Richards' symbolism. This is dealt with in what Richards terms "The Meaning of Meaning". In this regard Jefferson and Robey (1989:78) say:

Ogden and Richards, in contrast, stress that words are used to 'point to' things, and that their meaning does in the last analysis depend on the things they are used to point to, their referents; language may be different from reality, therefore, but it nonetheless reflects it.

These scholars are of the opinion that words stand for certain things. Looking at Richards' symbolism Serudu (1989:17) points out that in New Criticism, the meaning of a work is closely linked to the operation of figurative language, a process that occurs when a word or phrase, loses its normal properties and requires a new referential basis.

According to the theoretical framework of New Criticism, metaphors are to be seen as implicit comparison rather than semantic replacement, a view that has its source in Richards' tensile approach in which metaphor is separated into tenor, vehicle and ground. In terms of this model of metaphoric transfer, metaphor involves the perception of similarity in two ostensibly dissimilar things. As a structure of signification, the New Critical approach to metaphor is directly related to a conception of the literary image or cluster of visual, tactile, auditory, olfactory, gustatory and kinaesthetic qualities and association.

What is remarkable about the New Critics is that according to them it is important for the critic to know the history of the words and language used in the text. This must also include the culture in which the text was produced. After certain agreements and disagreements amongst scholars, Americans proposed alternative methods of criticism supported by well-developed literary theories. Scholars like Ransom, Cleanth Brooks, Allen Tate, W.K.Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley succeeded in their active involvement though at times they would differ even among themselves.

The best known theoretical products of the New Criticism are the two important theoretical statements produced jointly by Wimsatt and Beardsley. They argue that a poem should not be individualised to its author but be treated as an object independent of its author's state when writing. Jefferson and Robey (1989:81) say:

The author's experience and intentions at the time of writing are matters of purely historical interests, that do not contrary to the 'intentional fallacy' - in any way determine the meaning, effect or function of his creation.

Jefferson and Robey's argument is in line with what is said by Richards that the author's experience and history should not influence criticism. The text should be looked at as it is, accessible to anyone who has a knowledge of its language and its culture. The intentional fallacy approach restricts the role of the history of the author and his/her immediate environment.

In another approach termed 'affective fallacy' these two scholars challenge Richards' idea of deriving standards of criticism from the psychological or emotive effect of a poem. According to Jefferson and Robey (1989:82):

Wimsatt and Beardsley's view is that a poem is not just a vehicle for conveying feelings, but an independent object with distinctive features of its own. To study the effect of the object rather than the object itself is to put the cart before the horse, since the cause of the effect is to be found in the object, and besides the effects of literary objects vary notoriously from one reading and from one reader to another.

They dispute that the critic must be guided by the effect the poem has on the reader. They opt for objective criticism that will focus on the text than on the reader as the text may not have similar emotions to every reader. These scholars oppose affective criticism as according to them it focuses

more on the emotional experience and reaction of the reader leaving out the actual meaning of the text that should be the core of a critical study.

When it comes to the third theoretical statement of the heresy of paraphrase, New Critics believe that complexity and coherence form an important basis in the analysis of literary texts. They are mainly interested in the structure of the text and the element of interrelatedness. They felt that the author and the reader should be remote from the text so as to apply objective criticism. In this regard it is clear that critics believe that content and form are inseparable. As in the case of poetry, to achieve this, one has to go for the theme, imagery and form of the text.

From this discussion it is clear that some literary critics are somehow at odds with the view of literature as 'experience', a subjective and individual phenomenon, where the effect of feeling counts a great deal. This is in contrast with other critics who would like to see a critic as a disinterested or neutral figure, who examines a literary work objectively.

It is important to make modifications of these literary theories so that they can suit isiZulu language. African languages with isiZulu included do not differ much from other languages especially European ones. However, like other languages isiZulu has distortions caused by the disturbance of the ordinary language brought about by images that are used. This language uses a certain thing, either an object or phenomenon, to mean something

else. The language is not selective as to which object or phenomenon to refer to as long as what it intends explaining behaves in the same manner as that object or phenomenon.

Dealing with isiZulu literature one will have to consider a multiplicity of meaning brought by images that are found in this language. It should be noted that most images used in isiZulu literature are culture-based. To understand culture-based images, one requires good knowledge of Zulu language and cultural beliefs to have a clear understanding of what is meant in accordance with the New Criticism theory. This is important because when these African artists create their literature, they base it on their beliefs, norms and values.

This then suggests that the theory or theories applied must entail a clear understanding of cultural beliefs and language usage in isiZulu. In terms of beliefs, not all images or symbols used in this language can be easily understood by all people. The fact that they are culture-based means that they are not universal in the sense that they can be understood by the whole world. These symbols could be easily understood by African people because they share certain beliefs and cultures. It is however possible that they match or resemble others in the world but this is coincidence not culture.

Ntuli (1984:12) acknowledges concern about the African approach in literature. He points out that we are aware that some critics feel that in assessing African

literature we must use a kind of an African standard and approach because other yardsticks will be inappropriate. Though Ntuli is aware of this concern he, however, puts forward the view that great works of art should have a universal appeal that conforms to general universally accepted precepts. According to him, the universal appeal will determine the universality of that particular work of art wherein the finer peculiarities which are distinctive of the specific culture or environment can be dealt with when the critic proceeds to examine them.

The idea of distinctiveness because of peculiarities as suggested by Ntuli, is also supported by Irele (1971:20) who is of the opinion that, the peculiar modes of sensibility which feature in the African works, and which derive from the African background, of which the use of language, both conditioned by and conditioning the traditional modes of feeling and apprehension, constitutes a distinct social reality.

This modification of theories will produce a balanced result where both African and western literary works will be catered for. This will help those who feel very strongly against a superimposition of foreign categories of thought upon African thought systems. This modification will remove the superimposition that generates distortions of the African world-views.

## 2.2 The cultural element

Though cultures differ according to different groups in Africa most share certain elements. These elements lead to common symbolism that may be referred to as African symbolism. This emanates from the fact that most African nations have not lost touch with their heritage. This common element of images makes African languages characteristically rich in diction. Language, besides being the means of communication, is also regarded as the heart of a people and the nation's culture. Should you then destroy a people's language, you are indeed destroying their culture, history and their sense of being. The confusion in the minds of different scholars regarding which theories can be legitimately used in African languages is caused by the clash between indigenous heritage and a foreign legacy of colonial origin.

Most contemporary theories pay more attention to the stylistic merits of the texts. They do not concentrate on content relation to the most meaningful aspects of humankind like culture. The concept of cultural development and the history of cultural ideas and beliefs are found in our literature. Cultural elements reflected in language, belief systems, customs and other aspects of existence need to be tackled and very much engaged with the literary qualities of isiZulu culture.

Among most African tribes, culture is inherited from the older generation that, through different experiences, has noticed certain deeds and happenings by natural

objects and phenomena. Through thorough observations their behaviour is endorsed and adopted into everyday language or incorporated into daily routine in life. They are later conveyed in language to explain certain circumstances that are called images. This could be well-depicted in Christian circles with Jesus Christ being crucified on the cross for a holy cause and the cross is later taken as a symbol of holiness. A similar practice occurs among Zulus where a white bead string is used by a girl when she is accepting a love proposal from a suitor: at the end the white bead string is a symbol of love.

When Irele (1971:20) looks at the African works of art, he feels that not only is our criticism limited if we do not relate the work to its specific cultural framework, worse it can also be falsified. He feels very strongly that we cannot divorce African literature from African culture. Should we try to do that it will cause improper interpretations that will not be based on culture. This then suggests that an African background and approach are essential in the critical analysis of a language that is based and grounded on culture like isiZulu. In this regard Amuta, as cited by Swanepoel (1990:55), suggests that in an African situation, literary criticism must be predicated on a theoretical outlook that couples cultural theory with social practice.

Swanepoel (1990:48) is of the opinion that there is no reason why African scholars should not work within the framework they prefer, no matter its origin. If literature is indeed universal, literary values too must



be universal. Universal as a matter of fact is seen not to be concomitant with 'Western', and may per definition also include what is typically African. This widens the scope. We must not limit our thinking only to Africa but broaden it, though remaining mindful of certain peculiarities specific to environment.

### 2.2.1 Cultural images

Cultural images play a vital role in showing exactly how this culture-based theory could be approached because they figure so much in literature. They are important because of their strength in the way they stimulate the sense of imagination. These images are the pictures that are drawn in the mind of the reader or listener when he/she hears or reads certain words and expressions.

The way these words are used in a particular context makes one's mind to extend from the ordinary meaning the word may literally have. The reader will create an image in his/her mind of what is meant by that particular word. It is at that point that one can start comparing referent objects with objects meant by the words used. The relationship that may exist between the two words may give the reader a multiplicity of meanings. The existence and significance of an image is determined by the context in which it is used.

Since images appeal to almost all physical senses of human beings, they can therefore be easily understood by

putting them in the socio-cultural setting. This idea supports what is suggested by Kunene (1982:102) who is of the opinion that when these images are localised as to time and place, they reveal cultural traits unique to the people of the area. These images will be arranged according to patterns. I will divide them into different subgroups, according to the situations that they are associated with, i.e. images associated with cultural (traditional) beliefs, images associated with human experiences and images associated with the modern (western) world.

#### **2.2.2 Images associated with cultural beliefs**

These are the images that are mainly associated with African cultural beliefs especially those of the Zulus. Some Zulu ones involve amongst other things witchcraft and ancestor worship. These images depict a lifestyle that could be easily understood by a person who is clear about Zulu cultural beliefs and target celestial bodies and related natural phenomena.

##### **2.2.2.1 Images associated with witchcraft**

Some of the celestial bodies are associated with witchcraft and the use of cultural (traditional) medicine. There is a strong belief among the Zulus that celestial bodies like the sun and the moon are involved

in the prescription of certain *muthi* (medicine) practices. The sun is believed to be used by a suitor to *phonsa* (send love medicine) to the girl he is courting. This *muthi* is sent by using the sunrays which penetrate the girl's heart. This belief has led to a tradition among the Zulus that girls should not come out of their houses when the sun dawns. When they go out to fetch water, it must be before the sun rises or after it has risen. This is done because there is an assumption that boys perform their *phonsa* practices at sunrise. It is said the boys *khwifa* (spit liquid medicine) facing the rising sun while at the same time calling the name of the targeted girl.

It is believed that the boys get these love potions from an *inyanga* (medicine-doctor) who has supernatural powers. In Zulu culture, like in most African cultures, *izinyanga* are known for having powers to direct their medicine towards someone far away and do what is expected of it.

#### **2.2.2.2 Images associated with beliefs**

In Zulu literature there are images that are associated with Zulu beliefs. Mathivha, as cited by Nemukongwe (1995:85), points out that the term myth is very intimately entangled with the hardest problems of thought of religion and early history. In myths an attempt is made to explain the relationship of man to man in his environment and to solve numerous questions

that baffled him. This offers answers to mysteries of life and death, love and hatred.

In Zulu we also have those stories that try to give answers to a mysterious phenomenon like the thunderstorm which features in some artistic works like King Zwelithini's *izibongo* where the bard says:

*Uthekwan' uhlezi phezu kwendlu*  
*Uhlol' izulu ukuduma*

The hammerhead bird is sitting on top of the house  
 foretelling a thunderstorm

To understand this image one must acquaint oneself with the cultural belief regarding this image. The image that is presented here is that of the hammerhead bird having power to predict the thunderstorm for Zulus believe that this bird has such power. This association of the hammerhead bird with the thunderstorm is clearly explained by Kunene (1995:86) who says, closely related to these symbols of the hammerhead bird, the sky and its elements, the hammerhead bird may be used as a symbol of the anger of the sky, together with lightning, and thunder, hurricane and storms. Besides using the hammerhead bird as a symbol in Zulu, the lightning itself is also called *inyoni* (the bird).

In Zulu when a person has been struck by lightning, it is usually said he has been 'struck by the bird' (*ushaywe yinyoni*). To this Kunene (1995:86) further mentions that the belief about the 'bird of thunder'

leads to a chain of association, some of which appear illogical. Almost all the actions that are characteristics of this bird may be described as the actions and qualities of lightning or thunder. This is perhaps associated with the swiftness of the bird hence metaphorized as the creature itself. There is also a belief that if you kill a hammerhead bird that may result in a severe thunderstorm.

Another bird that predicts rain is the ground-hornbill bird (*ingududu/insingizi*). When it sings early in the morning there is a belief that it will rain heavily. There is also a belief that if you kill it the rain will fall incessantly.

Another Zulu belief related to the thunderstorm is that it reflects God's anger. Other Africans too believe that when God is angry he announces through thunder and lightning. Regarding this idea, Maake (1994:234) points out that coupled with these climatic conditions, there are images used to symbolise attributes both good and evil. Storms and hailstorms may symbolise anger, while the sky symbolises protection and benevolence and the rainbow symbolises goodness. According to Maake, all climatic conditions symbolise something, rumblings and lightning instil fear because they are associated with death. The emergence of the rainbow that indicates the end of rain, thunder and lightning is usually associated with goodness. It resuscitates hopes of living and restores strength to those rendered hopeless during the storm.

While still dealing with beliefs, there are ones associated with the moon. According to the Zulus, during the quarter moon people should abstain from certain practices and events. It is also believed that during this time of the month, people should not plough or till the soil in any way because if they do it will provoke a severe drought or hailstorm.

The very same moon is also used to predict rain. It is believed that Zulus are able to read by looking at the moon and say if it will rain or not. When the quarter moon is facing downwards with a round-shaped veil-like shade in its curve, this suggests that it will rain. When the moon is facing upwards with no round-shaped veil-like shade in its curving, this shows that there will be no rain in that month. While different shapes of the moon mark different times of the month they are weather forecasting indicators.

### **2.2.3 Images associated with human experiences**

Human beings are exposed to almost everything in their surroundings and as a result they experience these events, ideas, images and phenomena in different ways. Almost all objects and phenomena in their surroundings influence them in one way or another for good or bad.

### 2.2.3.1 Images associated with diseases

According to the beliefs of the Zulus, there are certain diseases or illnesses that are cured by using things related to celestial bodies and associated phenomena. When young babies are troublesome by becoming restless, they are said to be suffering from *inyoni* (nervousness) disease. If such a disease is not treated when the baby is still young, it will trouble him/her even when old. The kind of treatment that is performed is that the child is taken to a place that has been stricken by lightning (*isishozi*). There enema is administered so that *inyoni* is discharged. In this way *isishozi* acquired a double meaning associating it with death and fear caused by lightning as well as healing and life given to young children.

### 2.2.3.2 Images associated with victory and power

These images are associated with those celestial bodies that have power to conquer certain natural phenomena. One has only to quote the sun whose light conquers darkness. The sun is seen to have power over other celestial bodies and nature as a whole. It has power to destroy everything living on earth by causing drought. On the other hand, it brings life to all living creatures on earth. In short it has power to destroy as well as to give life.

The moon is also associated with power and victory as it conquers darkness of the night. The moon surrounded by its stars symbolises the king surrounded by his subordinates in a Zulu cultural setting. In this regard it is seen as dominating the sky at night and is regarded as the king of darkness as it overcomes it at night. These ideas suggest that in an African situation and specifically a Zulu one for our purposes, these two celestial bodies the sun and the moon may be used as symbols of power and victory in one way or another.

#### **2.2.4 Images associated with the western world**

Western influences have infiltrated African cultures. This has been mainly brought about through Christianity which has imported into Zulus' culture beliefs and images that are biblical or western oriented. One can take as a good example the myth that explains the woman-shaped figure seen on the moon. This is explained using the Christian approach, as I have mentioned above, which says that the picture on the moon is of a woman who disobeyed God's instructions to respect the Sabbath day and to keep it holy. It is alleged that this poor woman worked on the Sabbath day by collecting firewood and was therefore banished to the moon to serve her punishment. This explanation sounds alien to Zulu culture and was brought in through Christianity. For in Zulu culture there is no day of the week set aside so that people should honour God and not do their work. This then shows that there are other images too that are either culture



oriented or biblically oriented that can now be found in the Zulu culture as a result of the infiltration of western influence. This influence is found in most African modern literature and must be considered when analysing isiZulu text.

### 2.3 CONCLUSION

The fact that language is a multiple process means that it also involves other aspects beyond the literary one. Webster (1996:46-47) points out that it would be unhelpful and inaccurate to suggest that literary language is an entirely subjective phenomenon, ignoring the larger social and ideological scope of all discourse.

What transpires here is that literary critics should look at literary language as part of a social structure. Language is mainly used for communicating beliefs, norms, values and ideas of a particular society. It is therefore impossible for literary critics to ignore the social, cultural as well as the ideological value of language. It is for this reason that I have suggested that Russian Formalism and New Criticism should be embraced as literary theories.

## CHAPTER 3

## IN POETRY

## 3.0 INTRODUCTION

Sky symbols are used by *izimbongi* in their compositions though *izibongo* are human creations composed by wise men and women and their works are based on daily experiences. Msimang (1980:2) gives this definition:

Praise-poetry combines the qualities of an ode, eulogy and epic. As an ode it apostrophises the king, referring to his personality and physique, pointing out both good and bad qualities. As an eulogy, it lauds the king for his diplomatic and military achievements. As an epic, it alludes to his history.

Msimang stresses that *izibongo* focus on both positive and negative things that occur in the life of the king. What is also remarkable here is that considering the words that have been used, it is easy to know from that particular passage the deeper meaning. *Izimbongi* rely mostly on their immediate environment for inspiration. They excel in the use of the language that is full of imagery. About it Cope (1968:25) says, praise composition is consciously an art; there is a conscious striving after literary effect to attain a richer, a more emotive, a more memorable use of language. The praise-poems have all the features of poetry. *Ukubonga* (praising) has been a common practice among Zulus since

time immemorial and goes back to the dawn of culture itself in African societies.

### 3.1 POETIC LANGUAGE

It is helpful to differentiate between the language of poetry and that of prose. According to formalists, poetry is differentiated from other forms of literature like prose because of its language construction. Poetic language is mainly characterised by the special kind of language that deviates from the standard rules and norms of everyday language and grammar. One must quickly point out that this poetic language is not only found in poetry but is also present in prose though not to the same extent.

When dealing with poetic language one cannot therefore leave out meaning carried by the words used in the text. Looking at the various linguistic approaches to the study of literature, Nemukongwe (1995:48) identifies three types. He refers to the first one as the morphological level, where the formation of words from smaller units may be studied. The second one is the syntactic level in which sentences may be studied in terms of the construction from smaller units such as words, phrases or word groups. The third one is the semantic level in which different kinds of meaning of sentences are brought by those of their smaller units. Poetic language is seen to be subjected to various degrees of deviations from the said linguistic norms.

Poetic license allows change of regular word orders to irregular ones. Such unusual deviations give rise to striking metaphors that spice creativity in poetry. Millar and Currie (1976:66) suggest that sometimes when we read a poem we get a feeling that although the poet is talking of one thing he is smuggling in something else.

Poetry deviates from ordinary language in the sense that in poetic discourse a word can carry more than one meaning. This could be determined by the way the reader or listener perceives that particular word or phrase. His understanding may be a denotative one bearing a literal meaning or a connotative one bearing a figurative meaning. These are conveyed by using poetic devices like simile and metaphor. The use of metaphor is a dominant characteristic feature of poetic language. Similes and metaphors are ways and means by which poets who feel that language has become stale strive to revitalise it. They are at the root of language and poetry extends its range by using them.

### 3.2 IZIBONGO

*Izibongo* are commonly known as traditional or oral poetry but this does not impose a rigid rule that *izibongo* will always be traditional and yet be oral. *Izibongo* can be both traditional and modern, oral and written as the case may be. That poetry is traditional cannot be determined by its being oral or vice versa for

a poem can be first written then recited or first recited then written down. Lord (1960:5) points out that the need for clarification of the oral process of composition is reflected in the many terms that are used for oral poetry. To no small degree difficulties have arisen because of the ambiguity of terminology and because each school has chosen a different facet of this poetry as distinctive. According to Lord, the term 'oral' emphasises the basic distinction between oral narrative poetry and that which is termed literary epic. But that too involves some ambiguity. He points out that one often hears that oral poetry is poetry that is written to be recited. Oral, however, does not mean merely oral presentation. Oral epics like *izibongo* are performed orally, it is true, but so can any other poem. What is important is not the oral performance but rather simultaneous composition during oral performance. With oral poetry we are dealing with a particular and distinctive process in which oral learning, oral composition and oral transmission merge as different facets of the same process.

Lord further points out that any term that is used to designate oral narrative poetry in an attempt to distinguish it from written narrative poetry must contain some indication of the difference in form. This then cannot be taken as a yardstick that differentiates *izibongo* from modern poetry. Here those praises that were sung for *amakhosi* and commonly referred to as traditional poetry or praise poetry will be referred to as *izibongo*. Most of these *izibongo* used in this study have been extracted from published books. Though they

have been published, they cannot be classified as modern poetry. Modernity and traditionality are determined here by ownership and authority. Modern poetry belongs to a particular person, to which the author or composer has ownership rights. On the other hand, traditional poetry is communal. *Izibongo* may be composed by one person yet recited by different bards. Such versions are ghosted. This is the case with known *izibongo* like those of the present Zulu monarch King Zwelithini and it is well-known that their real composer is the court bard Ntulizempi John Dlamini.

Msimang (1980:59) says:

The bard draws his similes from a wide range of objects including celestial bodies and the other natural phenomena, plants and animals-domestic as well as wild ones.

In *izibongo*, *izimbongi* draw their vocabulary from the three tiers of creation, i.e. the heavens, the earth and the underworld.

What is said by Msimang here, shows that *izimbongi's* scope of composition is very wide. This then makes it possible to draw their symbolism from celestial bodies. Poems mostly mix different objects, phenomena and events mainly because they use their immediate surroundings in their compositions. They use these objects and phenomena to offer their own interpretations, which result in these phenomena and objects having a multiplicity of meanings. If this happens, as in the case of *izibongo*,

it calls for people to be able to differentiate between literal usage and figurative usage. Reaske (1966:108) says:

Many poems are based on symbolic statements. The poet offers something on the concrete level that symbolises something either on the abstract level or on another, unstated concrete level. When we discuss symbolism in poetry, we are concerned with the representation of one world by another.

This statement suggests that in poetry the meaning is usually double, French people say *double-e'ntendre*. You cannot take the meaning at face value and conclude that it means what is meant by the poet. One must first analyse the symbols that are used in that poetry so as to reach the basic understanding that is represented by that particular symbol. Shklovsky's defamiliarization theory thus enables us to analyse the metaphors and symbols that dominate our poetry.

When looking at *izibongo*, *izimbongi* focus mostly on the king or *inkosi's* physique, behaviour, personal experiences, history, social life, political life as well as his environment. Nkabinde (1976:7) has this to say about *izibongo*:

They are a record of a person's achievements, exploits, shortcomings, failures, and his fellowmen's evaluation of him... *Izibongo* extol the brave deeds important achievements of the subject of praise and, therefore, only feature in situations demanding ceremonial use of language.

The very same goals can be attained by using metaphors and symbols. In most cases in *izibongo* achievements like triumph where the king conquers another king is mostly associated with the thunderstorm. In King Shaka's *izibongo imbongi* says:

*Izul' elidum' emva komuz'  
EKuqobekeni  
Laduma lazithath' izihlangu zamaPhela*

The thunderstorm that thundered behind the homestead of eKuqobekeni, It thundered and took away the shields of amaPhela  
(**Izibongo Zamakhosi**, 1983:25)

In this passage the poet does not refer to the actual thunderstorm but to the attack by king Shaka on *inkosi Zwide's* amaPhela regiment. This is taken as one of the brave deeds indeed done by king Shaka since *inkosi Zwide* was feared by most *amakhosi* of that time. When such events are mentioned in *izibongo* they extol the king and show how important he is as compared to other kings or chiefs conquered.

Here I will have to focus specifically on the use of the celestial bodies and natural phenomena in traditional Zulu *izibongo*. *Izimbongi* like to make use of the heavens and celestial bodies in their compositions. What is said by Biedermann (1996:167) is that:

The heavens came to be invested with religious significance because light and life came from above, and these regions



became metaphors for God, or the gods, themselves.

He (1996:168) further points out that:

In this cosmology heaven does not represent something utterly foreign to this world: it is a superior realm, but one mediated by the person of the Emperor and exercising supreme authority over events on earth.

It seems most kings and *amakhosi* in *izibongo* are metaphorised by using the sky bodies.

It is in this process of *ukubonga* that *inkosi* is symbolised as thunderstorm, lightning and celestial bodies. In most cases these celestial bodies symbolise certain behavioural patterns portrayed by certain *amakhosi*. This has caused overlapping in cases where *amakhosi* share similar behavioural tendencies. In this regard Nyembezi (1983:8) says:

*Ziyathanda futhi izimbongi  
ukufanekisa amakhosi nezilo  
ezinolaka noma nezulu*

Poets are fond of associating kings to ferocious animals or thunderstorm.

Nyembezi (1983:16) further says:

*Kanti futhi kuvamisile ukuba  
amakhosi afanekiswe nelanga.*

It is also common that kings are likened to the sun

The king is superior and rules over his subjects. This idea by Nyembezi of *amakhosi* likened to the sun, is further supported by Biedermann (1996:331) who says:

Traditionally, the sun is associated symbolically with KINGS, paternal authority, worldly status, fame, victory, life force, and force of will. The sun and the moon are referred to in the symbolism of FREEMASONRY as the two great lights of the physical world, the images of the first and second supervisors or foremen.

It is however noteworthy that *izibongo* include both praising and criticism. What is beautiful and worth praising is praised. For instance, the rising as well as the setting sun is much used to depict that beauty. Bad things and those that do not warrant praising are criticised. In most cases in *izibongo*, attacks and conquests are described by using thunderstorms. Davies (1992:32) says when giving the purpose of *izibongo*:

The *izibongo* section... also allows him to express criticism, whether of people or social events if he so wishes.

It is then necessary to look at how *izimbongi* use celestial bodies and the firmament in both praising and criticism. One must also look at how thunderstorm and lightning are used in defining attacks and conquests.

For these celestial bodies to serve their suitable purpose they must be correctly used to deliver the actual meaning intended by the poet at that point and time. This is essential since these heavenly bodies may

have different meanings in different contexts. This can be seen in the case of the sun. Light from the sun is needed by plants for the process of photosynthesis. It is the very plants that make our land look green and beautiful. Animals also need the very same light for survival though it can also be dangerous when there is too much of it. Scorching sun is destructive to nature as a whole as it dries out water and destroys plants and animals.

### 3.2.1 The sun

At this stage I should see how the sun, moon, stars, thunderstorm, lightning etc., are used in *izibongo* of Zulu *amakhosi*. This will be based on the relationship that exists between the three divisions of creation to look at symbolism associated with sky bodies. This may depend solely on the way particular people view them. Shorter (1975:111) says:

It is well known that sky symbolism is associated with theistic belief, and many African peoples employ a celestial symbol for the Supreme Being or Creator, be it the sun, the lightning, the rainbow or the sky itself... Sunshine and sky symbolism generally are rather obvious symbols of good fortune, especially among people who depend so heavily on the elements of nature, and the idea of the Supreme Being as the source of benevolence and luck is certainly present in the symbolism... The prayer texts, however, seem to reflect a stronger emphasis on celestial phenomena as symbols of prosperity and good fortune

among peoples whose notion of the Supreme Being is more complex, or who have a multiplicity of power standing in a somewhat ambivalent relationship to the Creator.

Following Shorter it appears to be in line with what has been said before that God is in all nature that he has created. The celestial bodies and mystical forces are associated with the gods proving that African people indeed look at them as symbolising or representing God. This then suggests that one should look closer into Zulu praise poems and see if they also project the same idea of theistic character onto these sky bodies. They may not vastly differ from their African counterparts but perhaps the Zulu approach has its own cultural angle, that of kingship. One should then ascertain the relationship that exists between kingship and the Supreme Being among the Zulus.

Msimang (1988:84) suggests what might be the reason for *izimbongi* to mainly use the sun in their praises, when he says, amongst all the wonders of God, the sun makes a Zulu to think deeply when he looks at it. He suggests that it is perhaps for this reason that *izimbongi* of traditional kings mainly used it in their compositions. From what is suggested by Msimang one can say *izimbongi* used the sun because they were trying to assign meaning and make sense out of it. They then started to relate the sun to something powerful and close to them, their kings. Their power is measured against that of the sun. According to them, there is no celestial body or thing that could be compared to the sun except their kings.

All others are used by *izimbongi* in oral *izibongo* though the sun dominates all of them.

One may assume that *izimbongi* look at the sun as though it dominates the sky. The fact that when it approaches, other heavenly bodies "disappear", may be interpreted as though they show fear or respect. Like earthly (kings) *amakhosi* who manage and secure people, the sun brings life, light and security to people, animals and vegetation on earth. One then tends to believe that it is for this reason that *izimbongi* use the sun symbol for *amakhosi*.

Msimang (1980:72) concurs with the general notion that the sun is widely known as a symbol of the deity. While it is true that to many people the sun symbolises God, it is also true that the king is the supreme representative of God on earth. What is said by Nyembezi therefore is true that in Zulu, *amakhosi* are associated with the sun. When *izimbongi* look at these two worlds they see the sun as dominating the sky much as their kings dominate the earth. According to them, they try to forge common or similar characteristics between these two powerful rulers. They consider the power between the two and start making relationships between them. Msimang also points out that the sun is associated with the hero. According to him, to the Zulus the sun does not represent just any king, but has to be a heroic one.

In *iNkosi uDingiswayo Mthethwa's izibongo*, *imbongi* uses the sun and stars, when he says:

*Ilanga limdondonza*  
*Elaphum' amakhwez'abikelana*  
*NakwaNtombazi nakwaLanga*

The reluctant sun  
 Which rose with the morning  
 stars confronting one another,  
 Both at Ntombazi's and at  
 Langa's  
 (Izibongo Zamakhosi, 1983:6)

In this short passage *inkosi* uDingiswayo is metaphorised as the sun that came out slowly referring to his emergence to power, that he emerged unnoticed. This might have surprised the Ndwandwes and caused them to realize and recognise Dingiswayo's power and chiefdom. The husband (Langa) and wife (Ntombazi) of the Ndwandwe clan are metaphorised as stars. *Imbongi* here uses celestial bodies that are not closely related, except that they have the sky in common. After all, the sun comes out during the day and stars in the night. This proves that there was no relationship between Dingiswayo of the Mthethwa tribe and Ntombazi and her husband Langa of the Ndwandwe tribe. They all lived on earth holding high status in society but not related at all as the sun and stars were even though only distantly. They both supply light and yet are very different in terms of "operating hours" and size.

It is however possible that *imbongi* uses the star symbol for these two people to show their relationship.

Ntombazi and Langa besides their marital relationship, they might have been united against the common enemy, the Mthethwas. *Amakhwezi* are the early morning stars that come before the sun rises. This could mean that these two, Ntombazi and Langa were already existing and powerful when *inkosi uDingiswayo* emerged, took over the throne and strengthened the Mthethwa tribe. To present a clear picture of the relationship between *iNkosi uDingiswayo* and the neighbouring tribes, the *imbongi* felt celestial bodies could be used to depict this. He however emerged strong like the sun compared to his enemies the Ndwandwes who are referred to as less powerful stars.

Msimang (1980:72) when referring to the above *izibongo* portion has this to say:

This is evident from where those who are rivals to Dingiswayo are likened to a mere morning star. This contrastive comparison is even more vivid when we appreciate that in real life when the sun is about to rise, the stars drift to the west and fade away. Although Dingiswayo did not readily show his aptitude (The reluctant sun), it gradually became clear that no one could challenge his supremacy; for the stars can only shine at night, as soon as the sun rises they vanish.

The sun here is presented as having power over other celestial bodies that it conquers. The heroic character of the sun conquering other sky bodies makes the *imbongi* to adopt that for the praises of Dingiswayo. He, like the sun, also conquered

neighbouring chiefs. This heroic deed prompts the *imbongi* to liken Dingiswayo to the sun that is able to conquer the stars viewed by them as the Ndwandwes. As Msimang has pointed out, if you compare the sun and the stars you are comparing different objects. By nature the sun is stronger and bigger than the stars. It is stronger in terms of the light it provides as well as importance. This then suggests that Dingiswayo, according to the *imbongi*'s judgement, held the upper hand when compared with the Ndwandwes.

In King Senzangakhona's *izibongo*, the *imbongi* also refers to him as the sun. *INKosi* uSenzangakhona is one *inkosi* whose *izibongo* were much focused on his beautiful body and behaviour than anything else. The bard says:

*Ilanga eliphume linsizwa*  
*Lithe liphezulu lansansa*  
*Lifun'ukothiwa mizimbazimba*

The sun that came forth shining  
 beamingly,  
 And when it was high it developed  
 its rays, Seeking to supply warmth  
 to many bodies.

(*Izibongo Zamakhosi*, 1983:12)

The sun here is used to depict beauty and behaviour. The *inkosi* is said to be the sun that when it rose, had no rays but when it was up, it developed them.



This could mean that when *inkosi* uSenzangakhona was young, he was beautiful like the rising sun. When in the middle age he developed even more beautiful qualities such that most women wanted to be closer to him.

When the *imbongi* views *inkosi* uSenzangakhona's good looks, he compares them to the beauty and warmth from the sun. People appreciate the beautiful rising sun and the warmth it generates. The *imbongi* then proposes that it is the beauty and behaviour of *inkosi* uSenzangakhona that makes him to be liked by his subjects. His era was characterised by peace and stability. During this period people were mostly engaged on hunting and courting expeditions not fighting like other *amakhosi*.

Msimang (1980:72) gives the following interpretation to this quotation:

Senzangakhona is another one who did not show his true colours at first. For this reason, the bard likens him to a hornless bull (*insizwa*). A hornless bull is hardly a threat to any rival since it cannot gore. Senzangakhona took his contemporaries by surprise then when he suddenly excelled in warfare. Indeed the sun had suddenly sent forth scorching rays.

My interpretation would be that the *imbongi* does not necessarily refer to the hornless bull as Msimang puts it, but to the harmlessness and the good appearance of

Senzangakhona. It sounds impossible that people could sunbath under a dangerous sun. The fact that people were seeking its warmth expels danger from the element of praise.

Overlapping is however a possibility in *izibongo* as *izimbongi* use more or less the same material when they are composing. In poetry there is an overlapping of themes, incidents as well as objects used, to bring different images. They use wild and domestic beasts, small and big animals, celestial bodies, mountains, rivers and vegetation. Since they all draw the components of their *izibongo* from natural phenomena so unsurprisingly there are some overlappings. This symbol of the rising sun has been used in many different *izibongo* of various *amakhosi*.

It is however interesting to note that in most *amakhosi's izibongo*, the sun is used to indicate circumstances depending on the context. In *inkosi uMpande's izibongo*, the sun is used portraying the fact that *inkosi uMpande* ruled alone without any of his brothers who were already dead. Accordingly, *imbongi* refers to him as the sun which is alone in the sky. It is alone yet supreme over nature. To him using the sun is the way of describing *inkosi uMpande's* kingship when he says:

*Usimayedwa njengelanga*  
*Lona limi lodwa ezulwini*  
*Usandasithebeni njengensonyama*

He who stands alone like the  
sun

Which stands alone in the sky

He who multiplies on the  
platter like *insonyama*

(**Izibongo Zamakhosi**, 1983:68)

This may mean that the sun is selfish in such a way that it wants to be alone. *Imbongi* then uses this idea of the sun being alone to reveal that *iNkosi uMpande* was also alone in ruling because *iNkosi uDingane* had killed almost all his other brothers. Ballard (1988:41) says:

Mpande survived the bloody purges of Dingane, who slew most of his brothers in a bid to eliminate any potential rival to the throne.

It is for this reason that *imbongi* refers to him as lonely sun in the sky. Subsequently the loneliness is counteracted as he fathered many children. Ballard (1988:41) says:

Mpande is referred to as *usimayedwa*  
Mpande proved a fertile sire. In his lifetime he married twenty wives and fathered over fifty children, twenty-three of them sons

He is the only Zulu king who is popular and respected for his progeny that kept the name of Phunga and Mageba in existence. It is for this reason that *imbongi* refers to him in figurative language as - *uSandasithebeni njengensonyama*.

It is however interesting to note how other scholars remark about this use of the sun. Msimang (1980: 54) says:

Dingane killed all his brothers except Gqugqu and Mpande. After Mpande had killed Gqugqu, he (Mpande) became the sole survivor of Senzangakhona's male issue... Here we must give the bard full marks for although he was no student of astronomy, he has used the sun image as if he knew that the sun stands alone not because the moon and stars are not there, but because the sunlight overdazzles and outshines that of the stars, let alone the moon which has no light of its own but can only shine in the sun's reflection.

It is clear that the *imbongi* did not believe that these other bodies disappear when the sun approaches but they are outshone. To him when the sun emerges it paves its way to being alone by conquering these other celestial bodies like the stars and the moon. It is necessary to be aware of the culture-based idea of what Zulu kings normally did to their enemies if they wanted to be at peace with their tribes. The common procedure that was followed was that of killing their enemies who appeared to be contesting their authority. The *imbongi* then bases his *ukubonga* on this knowledge of cultural practice. Opposition was hardly tolerated in Zulu cultural circles, the only solution was a fight to the finish to prove who was superior.

*Izibongo* focus on different aspects of the element of praise and it has been displayed that the sun is

mostly used to reflect the manner and physical structure of praising.

It has been mentioned before that celestial bodies are sometimes used as determinants of time and direction. But this device has also been effectively utilised by *izimbongi* in their imagery. Of course, the sun rises in the East and sets in the West. In *inkosi uShaka's izibongo*, the *imbongi* uses the sun to determine these directions, when he says:

*Ngimthand'exosh'uZwide ezalwa nguLanga,  
Emthabatha lapha liphuma ngakhona,  
Emsingisa lapha lishona ngakhona.*

I liked him when he pursued Zwide son of  
Langa,  
Taking him from where the sun rises  
And sending him to where it sets;  
(**Izibongo Zamakhosi**, 1983:23)

Thus, the East can be seen as the beginning of everything and the West as the end. When the sun rises life begins. When it sets most things come to an end or pause. In this passage the *imbongi* refers to *iNkosi Zwide's* defeat by King Shaka. The East in this case stands for the beginning of Zwide's rule while the West stands for its end. It is however a fact that his defeat by King Shaka brought to an end the chieftdom of the Ndwandwe tribe. The *imbongi* opted to use the sun's trajectory in relating this history.

The *izimbongi* also use the sun to determine time. The rising sun can have different meanings in *izibongo*. It may mean the actual morning time as well as the early age of the element of praise. In *iNkosi uDinuzulu's izibongo*, the bard says:

Umphangela      langa      lingakaphumi  
 kwaNdunu  
 Lithe liphuma  
 Laliphuma ngezingazi zamadoda.

He who rushed before the sun rises  
 at kwaNdunu  
 When it rose  
 It rose with men's blood  
 (**Izibongo Zamakhosi**, 1983:106)

In the literal sense the *imbongi* is referring to the actual morning time (a.m.) This battle was fought before the sun actually rose, hence the *imbongi* says by the time sunrise came people were already dead or bleeding. Under the theory of defamiliarization one will have to change the mundane time of day and make it unfamiliar. Figuratively, what could be meant is *iNkosi Dinuzulu's* early age when he attacked *iNkosi Zibhebhu*. When *iNkosi uDinuzulu* fought *iNkosi uZibhebhu*, he (Dinuzulu) was very young, only 20 years old. It is perhaps for this reason that *imbongi* says he rushed before the sun rose, meaning that he rushed before he reached full strength and only acquired it after "bathing" in men's blood. In short the rising of the sun here stands for *iNkosi*

uDinuzulu growing strong after conquering iNkosi uZibhebhu in the battle of KwaNdunu.

In iNkosi uShaka's izibongo, the imbongi uses more or less the same words as in iNkosi uSenzangakhona. What differs is the context in which they are used. This is found in the bard's wise dictum when he says:

*Ilanga eliphume linsizwa  
Lathi liphezulu lansasa  
Ilang'eliphandl'elinye  
ngemisebe  
Ngoba liphandl'elaseMthandeni*

The sun that came forth  
shining brightly,  
And when it was high it  
developed its rays,  
The sun that eclipsed the  
other one with rays  
Because it eclipsed that of  
Mthandeni

**(Izibongo Zamakhosi, 1983:12)**

It is the king that is made unfamiliar in this case. He has two legs, two arms, a head and the body, yet he is suddenly made into a round shiny object. The *imbongi* refers to the sun that came out without rays and later overpowered that one of Mthandeni with its rays. In this case king Shaka is referred to as the sun. It is said when this sun rose it had no rays but later developed them. One may assume that they mean that in his early

age *iNkosi* uShaka had no fearsome or brave signs. He developed these signs when he reached his manhood. In this passage both *amakhosi* uShaka and Phakathwayo are referred to as the sun. *INKosi* uShaka is said to be the sun that eclipsed the one of Mthandeni (*iNkosi* Phakathwayo of the Qwabe tribe) with its rays. This is said because *iNkosi* uShaka overpowered and conquered *inkosi* Phakathwayo. The sun has been used metaphorically in King Shaka's praises. Cope (1968:5) says:

Shaka became the ruler of many other tribes... By 1820 he had made himself master of Zululand. Some chiefs, like Phakathwayo son of Khondlo, chief of the Qwabe tribe, challenged his authority and were destroyed.

These two figures of power are seen as behaving like the sun in the eyes of the *imbongi*. They are above their subordinates and have power over them as is the case with the sun over mankind and nature as a whole.

In this regard Msimang (1980:72) says:

Before Shaka's advent, some kings like that of Mthandeni could be likened to the sun, but when Shaka came he 'outshone' them.

This statement suggests that before Shaka's rise into power, Phakathwayo of the Qwabe tribe was very popular and well known like the sun. When Shaka became the king, he became more powerful and popular than Phakathwayo thereby overtaking him in terms of popularity. It was not long after Shaka had taken over



that he became one of the famous kings among the Zulus. It is perhaps for this reason that the *imbongi* tells his story by using the sun. The *imbongi* felt that the sunrays could draw a clear image of the whole scenario that took place between Shaka and Phakathwayo. Looking at these few extracts, it is clear that the sun has been mainly used as a symbol of power of one king over other kings. In this regard one can refer to Msimang (1980:72) who says while it is true that to many people the sun symbolises God, it is also true that the king is the supreme representative of God on earth. This is perhaps the reason why Louis XIV, the king of France called himself the 'Sun King'. It is then true that in traditional Zulu *izibongo* the sun symbolises supremacy. This symbol could be referred to as a universal one based on the cultural practice of kingship.

In *izibongo* of King Dinuzulu, the king is likened to the sunrays. In this regard the *imbongi* says:

*UDlothovu kabhekeki*  
*Ufana nemisebe yelanga*  
*UDlothovu onjengebhubesi*

Dlothovu is unlookable  
 He is like sunrays  
 Dlothovu who is like a lion  
 (**Izibongo Zamakhosi**, 1983:107)

In this quotation the *imbongi* does not refer to the sun directly but to its rays though the sunrays are

conceived as the sun itself. What is said by the *imbongi* here proposes common features between the sun and a lion. They both share the element of supremacy. The lion is the king of the jungle and rules over other animals as the king over human beings and animals. They are both a symbol of dominance. In this regard Biedermann (1996:209) says that the basis for the association between Leo and the sun is presumably the lion's strength, its golden-brown colour, and the ray-like mane of the male. Like the eagle also, the lion was believed to be able to gaze directly at the sun without blinking. The lion's "masculinity" enabled the animal to serve as a consort for great goddesses. The sunrays are so bright that it is impossible to look at them. According to traditional Zulu custom you do not look into an elderly person's eyes. It is even worse in the case of *amakhosi* who strengthen their dignity by using *izigqabo* (medicine that makes one to look dignified). It made them so awesome that one shrank from looking directly into their eyes, especially when they were angry.

King Dinuzulu is said to have been so awe inspiring that subjects could not look at him. Maybe it was due to his facial appearance and hairy countenance that made him awesome. It is for this reason that *imbongi* associates awe inspiring looks with sunrays as well as a lion. It is believed that if your eyes face up to those of a lion it feels provoked. In this case the *inkosi* is associated with fearful things, the sunrays and the lion. This may perhaps reflect the behaviour of the *inkosi* under certain circumstances like when he is angry, with his

eyes burning with fire. This image is also found in the Bible in the book of Revelation:

and his eyes were like blazing  
fire...

His face was like the sun shining in  
all its brilliance.

(**The Holy Bible**, 1995:292)

This image seems suitable for kingship as in the book of Revelation it refers specifically to the Son of Man.

Msimang (1980:53) suggests that, Dinuzulu must have been very overbearing and awe inspiring, so that his rivals could hardly confront him. They would shy away as if from the rays of the sun. What is noteworthy here is that besides light from the sun that is a natural phenomenon, the *imbongi* also uses a lion which is a dangerous animal. He further points out that, while the rays of the sun are only overpowering, the lion does more than overpower: it kills. Accordingly, the analogy between the natural phenomenon and animal life is highly apt because of the binding common feature, namely, the potentiality to mete out injury and death.

The sunrays sometimes can have a different meaning as is the case in *iNkosi uDinuzulu's izibongo*. The *imbongi* says:

*Ingweny' edlel' okhunjini*  
*lomfula*  
*Ngaphezulu isab' ukuhlatshwa*  
*yimisebe yelanga*

The crocodile that eats in  
river...

Above water it fears sunrays

(Izibongo Zamakhosi, 1983:120),

According to the *imbongi*, the sunrays stand in here for soldiers and policemen. Since the sun epitomises kingship and supremacy, it is a supreme irony of life that colonisation turned the tables elevating the police and soldiers above the king who feared them. *INKosi uDinuzulu* skulked in Ceza forest as a refuge where he could not be found by the white policemen and soldiers he was running away from. The sunrays have been used metaphorically for the soldiers and policemen in this passage.

*Kwakuyindawo ephephile leyo  
lapho ayengenakutholwa  
yimisebe yelanga - amasotsha  
namaphoyisa*

That was a safe place  
where he could not be found by  
sun rays soldiers and police  
(Izibongo Zamakhosi, 1983:120)

The discussion on the sun shows that *izimbongi* assign their own meanings to it. They not only look at it as an ordinary natural object but also regard it as symbolising something. The sunrays as well are not only viewed as a natural phenomenon. The sun with or without rays is an indispensable symbol to Zulu poets. The absence of sunrays makes them to assign a different meaning to that particular sun compared to the one with

rays. It is very interesting to note that the state of the sun depicted in poetry mostly characterises different praises.

### 3.2.2 The moon

The moon is another celestial body found in *izibongo* though not so frequently as the sun by a longchalk. In *iNkosi uMathenjwa's izibongo*, the *imbongi* says:

*Bhamuza lenyang'um'iphum'emafini*

A fully round-shaped moon  
approaching from the clouds  
(**Udondolo**, 1994:40)

The moon is regarded as harmless and a rising full moon is a beauty to behold. In this case the *imbongi* depicts the attractions of *iNkosi Mathenjwa* by likening them to a full moon on the rise. This heavenly body is then used to describe or allude to the physical character of *inkosi*. In other words the *imbongi* uses a metaphor as defined by Jakobson. A full rising moon is a symbol of beauty and there is no stage when you cannot look at it. It is perhaps because of its very "calmness" and "harmlessness" that *izimbongi* do not use the moon much in their praises. In most cases, *izibongo* involve harsh, rough, difficult, painful and war-like situations. So they opt for worrying times like thunderstorms, eclipses or the scorching sun. There are very few instances where the *imbongi* focuses on the benign side of the element of

praise. On the contrary, where the sun is used in *izibongo* it is not reflecting a happy situation, the sun is alone in heaven (King Mpande) or the sun has been eclipsed by another one (King Shaka).

Why has the sun been used more than the moon by *izimbongi*? The answer to this question lies with the aims as well as the situations around which most *izibongo* are created. The differences are brought by different characteristics these two bodies have. The moon's light is mild, whilst that of the sun can be fierce.

### 3.2.3 The stars

Stars are some of the celestial bodies that are also used in *izibongo*. In *iNkosi uMpande's izibongo*, he is referred to as a star when *imbongi* says:

*Inkwenkwez' ephum' izilwane zabikelana  
Kubikelan' iKhwezi neSilimela*

The star that came out and animals  
informed one another *iKhwezi* and  
*iSilimela* informed each other

(*Izibongo Zamakhosi*, 1983:64)

The actual meaning of these stars has been used figuratively for the *imbongi* here does not really refer to the actual stars but to human beings. This is easily

seen, by looking at the personification used by the *imbongi* for these lines announce history of how *iNkosi uMpande* took over the throne though most people were not expecting him to become a king. This must be why *imbongi* refers to him as a star that came out and animals were pushed into alarmed discussion. By animals here *imbongi* means Boers to whom he also refers as stars (*iKhwezi* and *iSilimela*). Later in the very same stanza the *imbongi* points out that it must be reported to Maphitha and Tokotoko that Zulu people were not the cause of the battle. The *inkosi* was the cause because he gave cattle to the Boers to bribe them to protect him, may be an unusual incident in the history of the Zulus.

Stars are not used for harmful purposes. It is however noticed that the brightness of these celestial bodies at their height is taken to allude to the colour of the white people. In the case of *inkosi uDinizulu* both the sun and the stars have been used to refer to them.

#### 3.2.4 Thunderstorm and lightning

In most *izibongo* where thunderstorm is used, it refers to war or an attack. War can and thunderstorm might cause people to die. So thunder may instil fear. Battles are metaphorised as thunderstorms as in that of *Ndondakusuka* where the *imbongi* refers to it as the thunderstorm:

*Izul'elidum'eNdulinde phezulu  
Lazithath' izihlangu zamadoda*

Thunderstorm that occurred at the top of  
Ndulinde

It took men's shields

(**Izibongo Zamakhosi**, 1983:96)

This was a battle between Prince Cetshwayo's Usuthu regiment and Prince Mbuyazi's Izigqoza regiment. This battle fought on Ndulinde mountain hence the *imbongi* refers to it as the thunderstorm that occurred in that way. When there is a storm many things are washed away and that is why the *imbongi* says at the battle of Ndulinde men's shields were taken away unfairly.

Very similar with the battle of Sandlwana, in iNkosi uCetshwayo's praises the *imbongi* says:

*Izul'elidume phezulu kweSandlwana,  
Umbane lawuhlab' eMankamane*

Thunderstorm that occurred on top of  
Sandlwana

It threw its lightning at Mankamane

(**Izibongo Zamakhosi**, 1983:103)

Here the *imbongi* refers to that very battle of Isandlwana. Though the battle was fought at Sandlwana yet people as far away as Mankamane were affected. This



hints at why the poet metaphorises everything by using the thunder that occurred at Sandlwana and sent its lightning to Mankamane. It is more likely that the use of guns during these battles accounted for *izimbongi* to associate these battles with the thunderstorm from the noise made by the gun as well as the fire that comes out of it when shooting. The imagery of the thunderstorm dominates *izibongo*, as it is found in most of them. In King Dinuzulu's *izibongo*, the *imbongi* says:

*Umashesha njengezulu*

*Ephikelele kwaNdunu*

The swiftest one like the  
storm

As he rushed towards Ndunu.

(*Izibongo Zamakhosi*, 1983:106)

In this stanza the *imbongi* uses a simile where King Dinuzulu's speed is compared to that of lightning. The swiftness of the lightning that is used here depicts how fast King Dinuzulu was on his dashing attack at the battle of KwaNdunu. Msimang (1980:53) observes that the simile in *umashesha njengezulu* is definite in the sense that it alludes to a historical event. There are two aspects to this storm image; speed and the devastating effect. The bard depicts the lightning manner in which Dinuzulu pursued and crushed his enemy, Zibhebhu. Besides the futility of attempting to outrun the approaching storm, the image also

underlines the defencelessness of those who are overtaken by it in the open veld.

The swiftness of King Dinuzulu is shown when the *imbongi* uses the fastest natural phenomenon, lightning to depict it. In this regard the *imbongi* is trying to portray Dinuzulu's quick eyes when he says:

*Uliiso lifana nonyazi lwezulu,  
Sengathi elengwe,  
Sengathi elengonyama.*

The eye that is like lightning  
Like that of a leopard  
Or a lion

(**Izibongo Zamakhosi**, 1983:107)

In this simile again, the *imbongi* uses both natural phenomena and animals to explain the character of the king. Msimang (1980:53) explains that the extract uses the natural phenomenon *unyazi lwezulu*, as the base and develops it by reference to the eyes of the fierce beasts of prey, *ingwe* and *ingonyama*. This means that he was not only awe inspiring, he was also a potential danger. Both animals that have been used here, the lion and the leopard, have sharp and fast eyes that enable them to see their enemies and targeted prey quickly. Both these animals are fierce and have been used by the *imbongi* to emphasise just how dangerous King Dinuzulu was.

The praises of King Dinuzulu mostly use the thunderstorm and lightning. The *imbongi* in this regard is focusing on both his physique as well as his prowess as a warrior. The *imbongi* says:

*Izul'elidum'emuva komuzi  
waseNkalakuthaba  
Lazithath'izingane  
zikaMaphitha zonkana  
Lazithel'eMkhuze*

The thunderstorm that occurred  
behind Nkalakuthaba homestead  
It took all of Maphitha's  
children  
It threw them into Mkhuze  
river

(*Izibongo Zamakhosi*, 1983:107)

It is obvious that the *imbongi* does not refer to the literal thunderstorm since it does not have hands that can take children and throw them into the Mkhuze river. One has to look for an unfamiliar thing or situation that may be represented by the thunderstorm by using the defamiliarization approach. This thunderstorm represents a person. After the Battle of KwaNdunu King Dinuzulu followed Zibhebhu's *impi* as it ran away. This is the attack that is said to have taken place behind Zibhebhu's homestead of Nkalakuthaba for which the thunderstorm is a cypher.

It is also possible that the people of Zibhebhu never even saw King Dinuzulu's regiments but only heard the war songs and chants accompanying the attack. A war attack resembles a thunderstorm that occurs unexpectedly.

Another portion where the thunderstorm is used is found in King Mpande's *izibongo* where the *imbongi* says:

*Umakhalimande njengezulu*  
*Lona limakhalima*  
*limandindizela*

He who warns and then strikes  
 like the thunderstorm  
 which thunders and rumbles  
 (**Izibongo Zamakhosi**, 1983:66)

Rumbling thunder does not come unnoticed, rather it warns people about possible danger. Rumbling thunder invokes the behaviour of King Mpande, a person who used to warn with mild menaces. The *imbongi* has a special purpose in choosing the thunderstorm out of all other natural phenomena because it is the only one suitable to reflect what he thinks about King Mpande: so the metaphor used here is relevant to depict Mpande's character. Msimang (1980:53) says:

The simile is indefinite in the sense that it depicts Mpande's nature in the warning that he is going to strike; just like the

thunderstorm that does not gather its clouds in vain. This shows that once Mpande is on the warpath, he is going to inflict a crushing defeat on the enemy.

It is also possible that the *imbongi* bases this metaphor of rumbling thunder on the character of king Mpande. He first pretended to be foolish so as to survive his brother Dingane. The very same hopeless Mpande became very dangerous later to the extent that he even crushed his brother Dingane at the battle of Maqongqo. This might be the reason why the *imbongi* used the image of rumbling thunder that takes long and when real thunder strikes, it inflicts a crushing blow. Msimang (1980:75) notes that in all imagery used, everything relies solely on the *imbongi* who is weaving those words. He notices consistency that is used by other *izimbongi*, when he says:

Certain bards tend to be consistent, like Dinuzulu's bard who is inclined towards using similes of thunderstorms in describing his subject.

This exquisite choice of words is determined by the ability of that particular *imbongi* in composing. One also agrees with Msimang (1980:75) that the choice of each and every single image in *izibongo* stems solely from its appropriateness.

*Izimbongi* use these sky bodies and phenomena to give different meanings in *izibongo* text. It is important that people should be able to analyse these celestial

bodies used in *izibongo* so as to grasp the correct meaning. It is also important for proper analysis to have cultural knowledge based on these celestial bodies and phenomena. That it is necessary to achieve understanding of the cultural aspects involved in *izibongo*.

### 3.3 MODERN POETRY

Modern poets use heaven to explain most of the things that happen on earth. *Izimbongi* use everyday occurrences to relate what is happening in our daily lives in a poetic manner. What is remarkable here is that they use the sky to reveal their joy, sorrow, hopes etc.

One should salute the poets for the improvements evident in modern poetry. Unlike traditional poets who only make passing references to these sky bodies in their poetry, modern poets award them more centrality. Some even go to the extent of entitling their poems after these sky bodies. In such cases the whole poem then is symbolical. Clouds are a symbol of disaster, the moon for life and hope, the sun for life, hope, superiority and disaster, the rainbow for hope and redemption; the thunderstorm for abnormal behaviour and disaster. I will now show how individual sky bodies, especially the sun, feature in modern Zulu poetry.

Modern poets certainly do use some of the traditional and universal symbols and this has been evident since the beginning of Zulu modern poetry in 1935. The reason thereof is because our modern Zulu poetry has been widely affected by foreign influences like English poetry. Inheriting from English, our poetry took on board other English concepts in symbolism.

### 3.3.1 The sun

To exemplify those who wrote about the sun, I will look at the following poets i.e. Vilakazi, Makhaye and Ntuli. These poets are outstanding for exploring the relationship between God and the sun. Dr Sosobala Mbatha's interview will be used though not as a poet but to emphasise certain points. I will start with Makhaye in his poem entitled: *Isimanga*.

*Ngingeke ngiyeke ukukholwa  
 (Ngingeke ngakholwa nawukuyeka)  
 Ukuthi njengoba ungaziwa simo,  
 Ungaziwa mbala  
 Ungaziwa budala  
 Ungaziwa bunjani,  
 Uyilihlo likaNkulunkulu,  
 Ungumeluleki wempilo yonke  
 Yesintu, yezilwane, yemvelo;  
 Wengamele abantu,  
 Ubuka izilwane  
 Unonga uhlaza.*

I won't stop believing  
 I won't believe in stopping

That as your structure is  
 unknown  
 Your colour unknown  
 Your age unknown  
 Your being unknown  
 You are the eye of God  
 You control the whole of life  
 That of people, animals,  
 nature  
 You supervise people  
 You look after animals  
 You mix greenness

(Izimbongi Izolo Nanamuhla 2,  
 1988:25)

In this poem Makhaye presents an interesting description of the sun. This poem has a twofold meaning, as the sun has been used as a symbol of God the creator and the sun as a senior celestial body. He regards the sun as supreme over the whole of nature, as God is over his creation. The description he gives of the sun that of no known colour, age and the being, is similar to that of God, as no one can say what he looks like and how eternal he is. Makhaye gives the sun some attributes of God as he presents the sun as God's eye.

Makhaye here is trying to define a mysterious object that he himself does not understand. What he boldly pronounces is that this object is God's eye that controls the whole of life, that of human beings, animals, nature and vegetation. This particular heavenly force is responsible for everything on earth.

Indeed it is true that the sun is the source of life for everything that lives on earth, human beings,



plants and animals. All natural phenomena like the weather, rain, wind, seasons, day and night are determined by the sun. Without the sun there could be no life on earth. It is perhaps for this reason that Makhaye associates it with God when he says it is God's eye. What is known about the sun is that it was there since the beginning of time. God Himself is said to have been there since the beginning of time.

Makhaye is supported by Ridpath (1987:31) who says, all plants need air and sunlight to grow. Plants use energy of sunlight to break down the gas carbon dioxide in the air. The plant takes in the carbon dioxide for its body and releases the oxygen into the air. Most of the oxygen that animals and people breath comes from plants. This scientific explanation shows the dependency of nature on the sun.

In his analysis of this poem Msimang (1988:96) says:

Nelanga alichazayo ungathi akulona leliya  
 abethi liyintombi yakwaZulu. Leli  
 yisimanga sezimanga; leli yihlo  
 likaNkulunkulu. Uthi akathathi ilanga  
 njengophawu olumele uNkulunkulu nje! Yizwa  
 lapho esethi: Ungumeluki wempilo yonke  
 yesintu, yezilwane, yemvelo!" Ingathi  
 iBhayibheli lithi nguNkulunkulu owadala  
 zonke lezi zinto? Kepha ngengxenyane  
 loluphawu lunazo izimpawu ezinika impilo  
 ngakho yisifengo esikhetheke kahle lesi.  
 Njengoba esho uMakhaye ethi, 'Unonga  
 uhlaza', ososayensi bayasitshela ukuthi  
 umbala oluhlaza ezimileni uvela kulo  
 ilanga. Ngaphandle kwalo ungebekho umbala  
 oluhlaza, ngaphandle kohlaza, izilwane  
 nabantu kungephile. Ilanga masivume-ke

*ukuthi lenza umsebenzi kaNkulunkulu,  
liyisandla sikaNkulunkulu, liyihlo  
likaNkulunkulu.*

The sun he is describing appears not to be the one he referred to as a Zulu girl. This one is a surprising one; it is the eye of God. He does not take the sun simply as the symbol of God. When he says: you weaved the whole life of the people, animals and nature. Why, because the Bible says God created all these things? Partly this symbol has the qualities of giving life therefore its a well chosen symbol. As Makhaye says, you mix the greenness', yes scientists tell us that the green colour of vegetation comes from the sun. Without the sun there would be no green colour, without vegetation there would be no people and animals. We must therefore agree that the sun does God's work, it is his hand, it is his eye.

The description given by Makhaye suggests that the sun holds similar but subordinate power to God, that of creating and killing. He assigns supreme power to the sun and gives it some God-like qualities. The association of God with the sun as offered by Makhaye concurs with what is said by Dr Sosobala Mbatha.

*Ilanga thina zinyanga sithath'ukuthi ilanga  
leli silifanisa njengeso likaNkulunkulu  
elibheke yonke into lapha emhlabeni ngoba  
thina siyakhuluma nelanga njengoba  
silithatha njengeso likaNkulunkulu  
silithatha njengesiqu sakhe. Kufana nokuthi  
noma ngaliwe yintombi ngiyayikhafula  
ngiyibize lapha elangeni, ilanga  
lizoyithinta lapho ikhona ibuye...  
Izinyanga zithatha ngokuthi ilanga yilona  
eliphethe umhlaba jikelele.*

We *inyangas* take the sun as God's eye that looks at everything on earth. We speak to the sun as we take it as God himself as well as his eye. When I have been jilted by a girl, I spit and call her from the sun, the sun will touch her wherever she will be and she will come back... *Inyangas* believe that the sun controls the whole world. (Mbatha 1998, interview)

This idea by Mbatha is supported by Makhaye where he says:

*Ngingeke ngiyeke ukukholwa  
 Ukuthi uyiliso loMdali  
 Ukuthi ungamandla ezulu:*

I won't stop believing  
 That you are God's eye  
 That you are the power of  
 heaven  
 (Izimbongi Izolo Nanamuhla 2,  
 1988:25)

The Zulus' idea of the sun being God's eye is further supported by other Africans of the same opinion. Bushmen pray to the sun for success in hunting and fruitgathering. The Luyia of Kenya believe that the sun has the power of washing away their evils. They all associate it with God because what they believe the sun can do is mostly assigned to God, like giving blessings, security and good fortune.

The fact that God is said to be omnipresent is reflected in Makhaye's poem where he says:

*Wena ongaziwa noma ungenhla,  
 Ungezansi, ungaseceleni,  
 Noma emasangweni ezulu-  
 O langa, O langa,*

*Mfihlo yamazulu*  
*Mfihlo ebonwayo*  
*Izimfihlo zonke zingabonwa,*  
*Wena obusa izilimela*  
*Amagumbi omane omhlaba;*  
*Wena obusayo*  
*Phezu kwesihogo*  
*Ngesandla soMdali*

You who are unknown whether  
 you're above  
 Below, on the side,  
 Or at the gate of heaven  
 Oh sun, Oh sun  
 Secret of heavens  
 Open secret  
 All secrets being hidden  
 He who rules the stars  
 On the four divisions of the  
 world  
 He who rules  
 Over hell  
 Through the Creator's hand

**(Izimbongi Izolo Nanamuhla 2, 1988:26)**

If traditional healers assign power to the sun as other literal artists do, this means that the Zulus believe that the sun has power over nature. It is interesting though to note that all these people come with different ideas about the sun. They all look at it as a mysterious object that governs over nature, all four seasons, in all four directions of the earth.

According to Makhaye, this sun is all over the corners of the earth, as is God. To him it is not known exactly where the sun is or whether it is at the gates of heaven. To him the sun governs over all seasons. He also believes that God has granted the sun power over death and hell. Makhaye's idea of using the sun to

describe God seems to be clear in this stanza. The sun is actually seen to be above, unlike God who is said to be above but no one has seen or proved that. From the Christian point of view God is said to be everywhere. It is perhaps this idea that influenced Makhaye in explaining about the sun. The sun covers 'a certain secret which is God who is the secret of the heavens as, according to the Zulu belief, God is believed to be dwelling above the sky. This might be the reason why Makhaye opted for the sun as one of the celestial bodies to use to symbolise God. Biedermann (1996:330) says:

Sun the daytime star is naturally the most prominent of all heavenly phenomena. Countless religions associate a sky god with the sun, and there are countless names that designate this sun god as the destroyer of DARKNESS.

What is said by Biedermann is also found in Makhaye's poem where the sun champions over darkness. The darkness here appears to be more than the ordinary darkness of the night. It appears to be referring to death, whereafter the righteous and sinners will be separated. The sun then is a symbol of security as it saves the earth from that everlasting darkness which is death.

*Wena ophephisa umhlaba  
Onobuhle obulukwa nguwe  
Ebumnyameni baphakade  
Phambi kwabangcwele,  
Phambi kwezoni,  
Phezu kwamangcwaba...  
O langa, O langa lobuhle,*

*Wen'osusa amathunzi amnyama*

He who saves the earth  
 With the beauty made by you  
 In the everlasting darkness  
 Before the righteous  
 Before sinners  
 Over the tombs  
 Oh sun, Oh beautiful sun

He who removes shades of  
 darkness  
 (*Izimbongi Izolo Nanamuhla 2,*  
 1988:25)

The sun is credited with the power of saving the earth from darkness analogous to Jesus Christ, who was sent to save the earth from sin. God is then seen as having power to bring light even to the dead. This God who is referred to as the sun of beauty removes all shades of darkness which involve sin, death, grudges and any type of evil you may think of. Literally it is true that the sun saves people from fear of darkness by bringing light. In this case the poet appears to dig deeper than the ordinary understanding of the sun and darkness. Those two have been used as symbols of goodness and evil or life and death. This sun gives light to all types of people both good and evil as does God. God is God for all people irrespective of whether they are sinners or are righteous.

The whole poem invokes God while the sun is seen as God's helpmate. Msimang (1988:96-97) says:

*Empeleni noma singaze siyifunde yonke le  
 nkondlo akukho namunye umugqa ongasenzi*

*sicabange ngoNkulunkulu... akungabazeki  
 ukuthi yonke inkondlo igcwele umoya  
 wokumangala ngalesisimanga sezimanga. Lokhu  
 kumangala kwenza ukuba yonke imicabango  
 yembongi igeleze kuhle kwamanzi, ize  
 ilandelana, yeqana, ngoba akuvumi ukuba  
 athule, kungavumi kufanele ngoba ngeke  
 ayeka ukukholwa ukuthi ilanga ngempela  
 nguNkulunkulu... Lapho kugcizelelwa ukuthi  
 uNkulunkulu akakhethi bala lamuntu,  
 unguNkulunkulu wabangcwele nabayizoni.*

In fact even if we may read the whole poem there is not a single sentence that makes us not to think about God...

There is no doubt that the whole poem is full of amazement about the amazing thing. This amazement makes all the poet's thoughts to flow like water, coming in a sequence, overlapping as he cannot be quiet, which is true as he cannot stop to believe that the sun is God... This emphasises that God is not selective. He is God of all, the righteous and sinners.

This may perhaps be reality, that the sun symbol is a universal one though at times it involves contradictions. Even so most peoples associate the sun with the Divine power. Buchanan-Brown (1996:945) says:

The symbolism of the Sun, as multivalent as the reality of the Sun, itself provides a wealth of contradictions. When the Sun was not a god, for many peoples it was a manifestation of the godhead (celestial epiphany). It could also be conceived as the Supreme Deity's son or the rainbow's brother. Semang Pygmies, Fuegians and Bushmen regard it as the Supreme Deity's eye, Australian Aborigines as the Creator's son, kindly disposed to mankind... the Sun may also be regarded as

what makes fertile, yet at the same time  
as what burns up and kills.

What is said by Buchanan-Brown is corroborated by Zulu traditional healers who see the sun as God's eye overseeing the earth. Poets like Makhaye also say that the sun is God's eye. Other poets like Ntuli come with this association between the sun and God.

In personification the sun is sometimes associated with beauty. Beautiful women are referred to as *olangaphumasikothe* (sun arise and warm us). A beautiful woman is compared to a beautiful and warm rising sun. At this point and time in the morning, the sun is nice, warm and one could look at it without its rays affecting eyesight. When one asks why these women are associated with the sun, the answer then requires a formalist approach of defamiliarization. It should be clear if one contemplates the relationship that exists between the sun and the women. When one changes this familiar situation of the warm rising sun and makes it to be unfamiliar it refers to the youth of these women. It is only at a tender age that these women could be metaphorised for the sun as *olangaphumasikothe*. Such images enrich our poetry as far as poetic diction is concerned.

Let us proceed to look at D.B.Z. Ntuli's poems. It will be interesting to get Ntuli's perception of the sun, as Msimang (1988:85) points out that, between 1935 and 1980 not a single poet wrote extensively about the sun except



him who produced four poems. These can be used as a good yardstick to measure his ideas, views as well as opinions about the sun. Here is one of his poems entitled:  
*Ngingulanga*

*Bani! Bani!  
Kl! Kl!  
Amehlo onke avaleka  
Ngokuzwa ulaka olungazelwa  
siphethu  
Bathi bayawaphakamisa!  
Hawu! Ngubani lo osefini,  
Omi njengesigxobo  
Esengame wonke umhlaba?  
Umi yena akathi nyaka,  
Ugxamalaze ngemilenzekazi,  
Wasonga izandla esifubeni  
Kodwa ikhanda alibhekeki  
Ngokubenyezela  
Komqhele osagolide,  
Amehlo akhe ahlaba umhlaba  
Osalila ngamaphimbo*

Flash!Flash!  
Kl! Kl!  
All eyes were closed  
When they lift them up!  
Oh! Who is that on the cloud  
Standing like a pillar  
Standing over the earth?  
Standing alone motionless,  
Stretching his legs  
Folding hands on his chest  
But his head is impossible to  
look at the flashing of the  
golden crown  
His eyes are focusing on earth  
Which is lamenting in voices.

(**Invunge Yemvelo**, 1984:45)

The title that Ntuli gives to his poem shows that he honours this sun as an object that must be respected. This person who is standing like a pillar is over the

whole earth. He is said to be standing alone with his legs stretched apart looking down upon the earth.

Msimang (1988:85) has this to say after reading Ntuli's poem:

Lokhu kuchazwa kwelanga kusenza sicabange  
 ngokuchazwa kukaNkulunkulu ezincwadini  
 zika-Eksodusi, eBhayibhelini. Amakholwa  
 azokhumbula ukuthi kwabakhona  
 ubungqingqingqi nobuklaklakla ngenkathi  
 uNkulunkulu ezibonakalisa kuba-Israel  
 entabeni yaseSinayi. Ngenxa yenkazimulo  
 yakhe behluleka ukumbheka, baphenduka  
 babaleka. Kuzo futhi izincwadi zika-  
 Eksodusi siyatshelwa ngoNkulunkulu  
 owayehola abantwana bakwa-Israyeli eyinsika  
 yefu emini. Lemigqana nje embalwa  
 iyasitshela ukuthi lapho ebheka ilanga  
 okaSompisi ubona uNkulunkulu luqobo.

The way the sun is described makes us to think about the description of God in the book of Exodus in the Bible. Christians will remember that there was rumbling and flashes when God revealed himself to the Israelites on Mount Sinai. Due to his glow they could not look at him instead they turned and ran away. Again in the book of Exodus we are told about God who led the Israelites in the form of a cloud pillar during the day. These few lines tell us that when Ntuli looks at the sun he sees God himself.

This comment by Msimang emanates from the personification used by Ntuli in this poem. He looks at the sun as if it is someone who is standing like a pillar over the earth. He personifies the sun, taking

its rays as the legs, the folded hands and the head which is the sun itself that cannot be looked at. The fact that in the Bible God said "let us make man in our image, in our likeness" (The Holy Bible 1991:3) makes the poet to imagine this sun as a human image. This then suggests that the poet sees the sun as the human God himself. This emanates from Ntuli's description as he sees the sun as wielding supremacy over the earth as God is above all creation. This is further supported by the Zulu belief in uNkosiyaphezulu (King of heavens) who is believed to be above the earth.

It is however true that this person referred to in the above stanza is a king as proved by a golden crown. Thus one can say God is the king of kings. The golden crown used by the poet confirms that this sun is seen as God the king of all creation who looks over the earth. This is echoed in the last lines of this poem which say:

*Umhlaba wonke uyamvevela  
Sakukhuleka  
Ngoba ungqongqoshe esentabeni*

The whole world is shivering  
Like saluting  
Because the honoured one is on the mountain.  
(**Imvunge Yemvelo**, 1984: 46)

This supports the notion as people salute only persons of high authority. In Zulu culture, it is a monarchy, that enjoys this privilege and the sun bears the qualities of kingship or godlike powers.

In another poem entitled "Ilanga Eliphumayo" D.B.Z. Ntuli presents more or less the same idea of the sun being God or having divine qualities but here with a human side. One notices that this poet is very fond of personifying the sun and it is fair to ask: why does he assign human attributes or qualities to the sun? In answering this question one may look at how poets use certain objects to stand for other things in poetry. On the literal level the poet will actually speak about a particular object yet an attentive person realises that the object really stands for something else. Basing on what is said by Millar and Currie it is important for the person who reads the poem to perceive the other meaning intended by the author. That can be achieved by looking at the reason that makes Ntuli personify the sun. He compares it to a human being metaphorically. In this regard Msimang (1988:88) basing on Ntuli's poem says:

*Sesiyabona kancane manje ukuthi kukhona  
okumelwe yilanga kulenkondlo. Kungahle  
kube limele uNkulunkulu luqobo....Lapha  
sitshelwa ngoNkulunkulu wokukhanya  
noNkulunkulu wothando (ohamba evula  
abantu bakhe amehlo ukuze bambone bamazi).*

We realise now that there is something represented by the sun in this poem. It may be standing for God himself...Here we are told about God of light and God of love (who opens his people's eyes so that they can see him and know him).

What is said by Msimang emanates from the poem itself where Ntuli says:

*Langihangula ikhoza lakho  
Nkanyo yafuthi,  
Kwaxega amadolo kimi  
ngawa phambi kwakho*

Your flame burnt me  
You Everlasting Light,  
My knees became weak and  
I fell down before you.

**(Izimbongi Izolo Nanamuhla 2,  
1988:27)**

Here the poet refers to the everlasting light that is like God the everlasting one. Further more he knelt down which is an act of respect. The word "everlasting" holds the divinity while the kneeling is a universal symbol of worship, respect and honour. In most African cultures with Zulu included, the act of kneeling as a symbol of respect is not new. Women kneel down when they speak to their husbands and elders of the family or when they bring them food. It is also common that children kneel down when they speak to older people. The most important one is that people kneel down when they speak with their king. This does not end with Africans as this is also happening in Christian religion, where christians kneel down when they pray or speak to God. This is also done when they see the picture of Jesus Christ. This posture of kneeling can also be interpreted as a symbol of humility, where people humble themselves before one whom they respect such as a person of high status and recognition. Ntuli further says:

*Khanyisa unomphela Langa kulelolizulu,  
Nabangakavuki uze ukhanyise kubona,  
Baphaphame, baxhopheke, bajule  
ngobunzulu,  
Bokukhanya Nokuqhela kwakho Langa  
kubona.*

Shine forever in that heaven, shine even to those who are not yet awake. They must wake up, be blinded, think deeply on the depth of light and your distant sun from them.

(**Izimbongi Izolo Nanamuhla 2**, 1988:27)

The way the poet appeals to the sun for light shows that this light has got power to influence people to think deeply about it. It is clear that the light referred to here is not an ordinary light but the light that can make changes in the life of a human being on earth when he/she gives himself or herself time to think about this light of the world. The poet appeals to God for knowledge which he (Ntuli) refers to as the light brought from heaven. He uses the sun to stand in for God. The defamiliarization approach shows the relationship between the two because God is also said to be in heaven above. He is also said to be bringing light to the world and to the souls of those who are in the darkness of sin. The sun stands for the figurative meaning intended by the author and not the literal one.

This light may also stand for Christian faith, purity or innocence that come from God in heaven. The poet appeals that even those who have not yet seen this

light, who have not yet accepted this faith, who are still asleep in darkness, who still lack knowledge, who are still steeped in evil, must receive this light of life. They must wake up and be blinkered not to see evil again but think deeply about God's mysteries such as light as well as the distance between him and his creation, the distance between good and evil. It helps God to monitor his creation by looking at it from above. Msimang (1988:88) analyses this passage as follows:

Okuphokophelwe yimbongi akukhona nje  
 ukuthi ilanga likhanyise kepha wukuba  
 livule amehlo ukuze abantu babone.  
 Yisifengo lesi ngoba nje nje, ilanga  
 alikwazi ukuba ngeminwe yalo emide  
 lingavula abantu amehlo. Alinayo kwaminwe  
 leyo. Bazothi bangawavula amehlo benzeni  
 na? Bazokwazi ukuthi iLanga lijulile  
 nokuthi futhi kunesizathu esenza liqhele  
 kithina. Sesiwabona kancane manje ukuthi  
 kukhona okumelwe yilanga kulenkondlo.  
 Kungahle kube limele uNkulunkulu luqobo.  
 Nguyena owakhetha ukuba abekude nathi  
 ngenxa yokuthi sigcwele izono nobubi.  
 NoSathane owayeseduze noNkulunkulu kwathi  
 ngokugcwala kwakhe inkohlakalo nezinkanuko  
 ezimbi uNkulunkulu wamlahlela emhlabeni  
 ukuze abe kude naye. Uyanxusa uMphemba  
 kulenkondlo ukuba uNkulunkulu kuthi  
 ngokuhlaba (ngolaka) kwakhe, sixhopheke  
 (sizishaye, simazi, simazise) ukuze  
 sikufune ukukhanya kwakhe (khanyisa  
 unomphela).

What is aimed by the poet is not only that the sun should shine but it should open eyes so that people should see. This is a figure of speech because the sun cannot open people's eyes with its hands. It does not have hands. What are they going to do

after opening the eyes? They will know how deep is the sun and that there is a reason that makes it to be a distance away from us. We now realize that the sun represents something in this poem. It may be standing for God himself. He is the one who chose to be a distance from us as we are full of sins and evil. Even the Devil who was next to God because of his behaviour and bad desires was thrown unto the earth by God so that he could be away from him. Mphemba pleads in this poem that God for his flashing(anger), be blind-shined (repent, know him, respect him) so that we can seek his light (light forever).

In this analysis Msimang suggests the reason for the distance between God and his people. The light mentioned here is a symbol of goodness and the night is a symbol of evil though we must sleep in it. This light that is going to enlighten our souls is like a candle light brought into a dark house. After seeing this light those in the house will always need it, they won't allow it to fade away.

What I have indicated and what Msimang suggests, is supported by Millar and Currie (1976:69) who say:

Symbols may be precise but they may also remain vague and inexact, triggering off your imagination, suggesting significance rather than making clear-cut references... Most symbolic words are also in themselves part of the imagery of the poem and can be looked at for the part they play as images, apart from their contribution to the lexical meaning.



In the case of the sun being a symbol for God, one may identify common characteristics. The sun is a huge distance away from the people as is God himself. It is inaccessible as no one has ever set foot on it just as no one has ever visited or seen God. Christian belief has always been that God reveals himself through signs and this may still be the case today.

It is common knowledge in literature that a poem can talk of one thing whereas the author is suggesting something else indirectly. Ntuli's poems refer to the sun whereas at a figurative level they refer to God. These different levels of difficulty for symbolism, suggest that there are those that are easy to grasp and those that are difficult. This can also stem from cultural variety so Msimang calls for local as well as universal symbolism.

When one considers Vilakazi, who is a pioneer in the writing of isiZulu poetry, it is apparent that he did not write directly about this theme of the sun. When reading his poetry, however, it is apparent that he did mention these celestial bodies in passing. There is a lot that we may pick up from his poetry regarding these bodies, how he actually viewed the sun and other celestial bodies. The pioneers' work shows that Christian belief had a major influence in their thinking as well as perception of the sky. Vilakazi (1982:79) in his poem, "UNokufa" says:

*Ngibona nelanga lisaphuma  
Liqhakaz' ihlobo nobusika*

Ngigutshuzelwe yil' uphahla  
 Lwezinkanyez' ezicwebezela  
 Nom' ubusuku bona bumnyama,  
 Zikhombis' amandla kaJehova  
 Nawalab' abancikene naye

I see the sun rising  
 Being bright in summer and in winter  
 I'm covered by the roof  
 of shining stars  
 Even when the night is dark  
 Showing God's power  
 And those close to him  
 (**Inkondlo KaZulu**, 1982:79)

At face value one can say that Vilakazi has indeed been influenced by Christian religion because he mentions Jehovah in this stanza. On the other hand one can also say that he based this on his Zulu cultural background viewing Jehovah from a Zulu cultural context where the king is never alone but has attendants surrounding him. According to him, these celestial bodies not only reveal Jehovah's powers but also those of the other forces with him. According to Vilakazi, the sun is always there all year round like God who is always available for us. When he looks at the stars that bring light in the night, he witnesses God's power and that of his subordinates. These stars are God's representatives through whom he reveals himself on earth.

In the poem 'Inkelenkele YaKwaXhosa', Vilakazi (1982:60) gives another image of the sun when he says:

Ilanga lakhwel' umango walo  
 Liyilokhu lisinekile njalo  
 Imisebe yalo ehlabayo.  
 Lazi konke okwehlakalayo

*Nokuzovela phinde lithi vuya,*

The sun moved on its route  
Smiling all the time  
With its sharp rays  
Knowing what was happening  
And what would happen but did not say a thing,  
(**Inkondlo KaZulu**, 1982:60)

In this passage Vilakazi personifies the sun. He gives it human attributes such as smiling, knowing as well as speaking. Vilakazi might not be looking at the sun as a literal object but assigning it a figurative meaning that makes it able to do all these things that he suggests it was doing. This leads one to suggest that Vilakazi here refers to God who is omniscient. Vilakazi says that this sun knew what was happening at the time. But only God is able to know things that are still going to happen in our lives.

Vilakazi (1982:23) associates the sun with royal status. This is found in his poem entitled, "Woza Nonjinjikazi" when he says:

*Ngiyalibona lelilanga  
Eliphelezelwa ngamafu  
Akhanyis'okwensimb' ebomvu  
Ivutha phakathi kwelahle  
Linendingilizi yomqhele  
Ocwebezelis' okwegolide  
Lawobabamkhul' eAfrika.*

I see the sun  
Accompanied by the clouds  
Lighting like a red iron  
Burning between the coal  
It is having a round crown  
Shining like gold  
Of our forefathers in Africa.  
(**Inkondlo KaZulu**, 1982:23)

The sun that is mentioned by Vilakazi in this passage is associated with two objects that are closely related with kingship i.e. the crown and gold. Both the crown and gold are universal symbols for kingship. According to Zulu belief *uMvelingqangi* (God) is referred to as the king of kings. I suggest that Vilakazi had the idea of the sun as representing God. I also suggest that the symbol used by Vilakazi here is Eurocentric in character but influenced by his mixed cultural background. It is possible that he imported a foreign symbol for a cultural purpose.

It is interesting to see that even though Vilakazi did not write directly about the sun he offers different ways of invoking the sun. He gave us the version of the sun as a symbol of kingship in the above discussed poems. In the poem entitled, '*UShaka KaSenzangakhona*' (1982:47) he presents another version of the sun as a destroyer when he says:

*Sekukade wabehlula  
Wena lang' eliphumile,  
Kwasala konke komile.*

You have long defeated them  
You, sun which came out,  
And left everything dry.  
(*Inkondlo KaZulu*, 1982:47)

The destruction that is caused by the sun according to Vilakazi may have two meanings. When there is a scorching sun it destroys everything that is living. Both the sun and king Shaka share the common practice of

destroying. Defamiliarization theory claims that the symbol of the destructive sun refers to the destruction caused by king Shaka who destroyed all other nations that fought against him.

As mentioned under izibongo, the sun is also associated with beauty and Vilakazi makes that link. In the poem entitled, "*Isenanelo Eminyakeni Engamashumi Amahlanu*", Vilakazi (1982:82) says:

*Laph' ilanga lisenzansi  
Linjengezintomb' ezinhle  
Zihlabumshungu ntambama,*

When the sun is at the horizon  
It is like beautiful girls  
Walking in a group in the afternoon,  
(**Inkondlo KaZulu**, 1982:82)

The simile that is used by Vilakazi where he compares the sun with the beautiful girls is common in Zulu. According to the Zulus, the sun is very beautiful when it rises and when it sets. Zulus base this beauty on the fact that at this stage the sun is possible to bask in it and feel its warmth. Girls also have the beauty as well as the physical and the spiritual warmth that they can provide to a male. Besides that their beauty blossoms in the afternoon when it is no longer shining bright on their faces.

It is interesting to note the metaphorical use of these sky bodies in Vilakazi's poetry. He puts it directly that he will believe that his father is dead only when the whole world has disappeared. In this passage, taken

from the poem "Sengiyokholwa-ke" Vilakazi (1982:35)  
says:

*Sengiyokholwa ukuthi sewafa  
Uma ilanga nenyanga sekwafa,  
Kwawel' enhlabathini yamagade  
kwashabalala ungunaphakade*

I will believe he is dead  
When the sun and the moon have died  
And fallen on earth  
And disappeared forever  
(**Inkondlo KaZulu**, 1982:35)

Vilakazi announces that he will believe that his loved one is dead only when the sun and the moon are also dead, after they fall onto the earth and disappear forever. One may suggest that the death of the sun mentioned by Vilakazi means the end of his own life. This implies that he will believe this after his own death if he happens to meet up yonder with his beloved one. Vilakazi refers to the disappearance of the sun and the moon, something that is quite impossible to accept will ever happen according to the belief of the Zulus. He refers to this because he himself does not believe that his relatives are dead.

I suggest that Vilakazi was not lacking the scientific knowledge that one day these sky bodies will indeed disappear but he wanted to emphasize his point. He was only ribbing the Zulu notion that if something cannot be accomplished one swears by the sun that it may fall down and be picked up by fowls. This idea of the disappearance of the sky bodies is supported by

Ridphath (1987:40) that one day the sun will disappear. He suggests that there will be some changes in the sun. More energy will be made inside it and it will start to grow unceasingly. It will turn into a big red giant that will burn big and bright in our skies. The earth will become too hot for any plants or animals to live on. As the sun gets bigger and hotter, the oceans will boil. The earth will be scorched, like the planet Mercury. When the sun swells up to its largest, it may even be big enough to swallow the earth. In the end, the sun will cool down and fade out. This will take billions of years to come. The earth will have disappeared with its sun. This then indicates that what is said by Vilakazi might happen. The only difference is that when Vilakazi was saying it, he was not referring to the actual disappearance of the sun that has been shining with a steady light for the past 4600 million years. Everybody will agree that its great age has allowed plenty time for life to develop on earth. At the end then everything will come to an end. This will be the destruction of the whole life and the end of the earth.

In another poem Vilakazi shows that these sky bodies may represent changes that occur in the life of every human being on earth. It is true that on earth things are not always good or bad but they always alternate. To say this, Vilakazi uses these natural phenomena of light and darkness in his poem entitled, "*Umcabango Wasekuseni*". Vilakazi (1982:31) says:

*Ziyadlul'izinto zonke,  
Akukho busuku bumi  
Kumelwe kuphum'ilanga.*

All things pass by  
There is no permanent night  
The sun should rise  
(**Inkondlo KaZulu**, 1982:31)

In nature there is nothing that is static. These natural phenomena were meant to alternate. The night gives a chance to the day that begins when the sun rises. Each new day on earth starts at dawn. This is when the rising sun appears in the east. During the day, the sun moves across the sky. From noon it sinks towards the west. It appears to drop over the line where the earth and the sky seem to meet, the horizon. This image of the alternation of the day and night has different meanings that need to be retrieved by using methods like the defamiliarization approach.

In this passage Vilakazi uses the alternation of the day and night to depict that life is always changing. It is not always dark as light eventually comes. The fact that people witness this natural phenomenon almost daily, makes it easy for them to associate with it. It is perhaps for this reason that nature plays a major role in our poetry. The sun that the poet is referring to, has been used as a symbol of hope. This may also mean that after bad or sorrowful experiences that are represented by the night, one may still hope that life may bring further good experiences heralded by the approaching sun.



That these sky bodies are at times associated with God also transpires in Vilakazi's poetry. His Christian experience might have influenced him in this instance. For instance, he is fond of using the biblical account of how the world will come to an end during the second coming of Jesus Christ.

When Vilakazi looks at the heavenly bodies he associates them with God who since creation is looking after the earth. To him the shining of God's eyes is one and the same with that of the heavenly bodies. Here Vilakazi predicts that one day the earth and the heavenly bodies will disappear. Isaiah 13: 9-10 supports this by saying; "the day of the Lord is coming- a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger - to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners with it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light." This then leads one to believe that Vilakazi is mainly influenced by Christian religion in his contemplation of the heavenly bodies.

In the previous discussion I have mentioned that the sun is also referred to as one of the stars in the sky. Vilakazi then refers to the sun as God's star always looking after the earth below. The sun has been personified for it is said to be opening its eyes above and also has the human attributes of heeding people's grievances. According to Vilakazi the stars are stoically waiting for the day when the earth will melt. Here Vilakazi gives an imagery of God whose eyes are sharp like spears. It is not possible to look directly at the

shining sun as the rays affect the eyes as a blazing spear would. This poet believes that at the end of it all everything will be destroyed. To him the power of destroying nature still remains with God who created it. This is why he refers to God as "Mhlayonke" (all the time)- He who has been present all time. God was, is and will be present at all times because His destruction is not foretold.

It is however important to note that there is a shift from praise and appraisal found in our traditional *izibongo* to mainly protest and dissatisfaction prevalent in our modern poetry. These modern poets have their own approach to cosmology though influenced by foreign concepts. One should have a clear understanding of this change otherwise confusion may arise over the three types of symbols as distinguished by Msimang (1980:72) namely: the traditional or universal symbol, the local and the private symbol. Our traditional African literature is mainly based on local symbolism peculiar to that particular society. Symbolism that is wide in context is mainly used in modern poetry.

In this regard Millar and Currie (1976:67) point out that:

A much more difficult problem arises when a poet invents a symbolism of his own or invests existing symbols with his private meaning.

By existing symbols they refer to the local as well as universal symbols that are not only known to the poet

but to other people as well. By local symbolism we refer to that which may only be known to a particular culture or group of people sharing a common way of life. This will be foreign to those who are not used to that particular culture or philosophy, of life. Universal symbols spill over across different cultures. Millar and Currie (1976:66) give a few symbols that are universal in the following extract:

There are numerous symbols drawn from nature. A rose is a symbol for beauty, fire for physical passion....Water (think of baptism) is the symbol of life-giving power, the desert of sterility...Whiteness is traditionally associated with purity and innocence, yellow with jealousy and cowardice, black with evil or sorrow. The moon because of its changing shape and appearance has been used to mean inconsistency.

One may agree with Millar and Currie as these universal symbols are found in Ntuli's poems especially those about the sun. The light from the sun is associated with whiteness that stands for innocence that the poet pleads for from God. On the other hand, he pleads for the sun's light to wake people from their sleep i.e. he pleads for God's purity and innocence to save people from evil abroad in the darkness of the night.

In most of our examples God is mostly metaphorized as the sun and this appears to have been successful in most poems selected. Millar and Currie (1976:62) have this to say on this aspect:

To be effective, the metaphors, or similes, of poetry have to be fresh, vivid and original. In a good metaphor the terms of the comparison must not be too close together. The similarity must not be too obvious, but on the other hand the metaphor, or simile, will fail in its object if the distance between the two terms is too great and the similarity between them is too difficult to spot. The good metaphor delights us by being apt in the context in which it occurs, and by making us see relationships we had not seen before but which we recognise as being there when brought before us.

This is true of the metaphors and similes analysed here and almost all of them are based on the sun or reveal the relationship between the sun and God. The comparison between the sun and God is not tight and yet the similarity between the two is still obvious. When you take a thorough look at these two phenomena you realise at the end that they are somehow related or that one can stand for the other.

A variety of modern poems use the sun while some are even entitled after it, and others mention it as a reference. IsiZulu poetry relies solely on how the poets perceive the sun and these poets also show how the sun is related to man on earth. Different poets, though, have different perceptions about the sun. Some look at it as a symbol of life, a symbol of redemption, source of hope, symbol of superiority as well as a cause of disaster. Unsurprisingly it arouses mixed feelings. The poets react to the sun in a variety of

ways sometimes even mixed in one poem. Therefore, critics need a wide scope of the understanding of meanings that may be inspired by the sun according to Zulu belief and understanding. The understanding of imagery used in poetry could be the only key that may unlock the world of understanding different meanings brought by the sun.

### 3.3.2 The moon

Vilakazi, pioneer that he was in Zulu written poetry did write directly about the moon in some poems and also made passing reference to it in others. In his second book "*Amal' ezulu*" he (1980:14) wrote directly about the moon in his poem entitled "*Inyanga*", where he says:

*Wen'omuhle ebusuku  
Laph'abanye bemathunz'amzizi...  
Obab'omkhulu bakubon'uphuma,  
Ugqolozela umhlaba kanje,  
Uphuphis'abalel'ubuthongo,  
Ufunz'izimbongi ngamazwi,  
Ziwagephuze zikhihliz'amagwebu...  
Nami ngifunze Nonyezi,....  
Phezulu, ngikubone uliqand'elimhlophe,  
Ngikhothame. Ngabe ngiyakwanga.  
Pho!*

You who are beautiful at night  
When others are mere shadows...  
My forefathers saw you rising  
Looking directly on earth  
Causing the sleeping ones to dream  
You feed poets with words  
They recited with more strength...

Just inspire me you moonlight...  
 I look up, and see you being a white egg,  
 And bow, I wish I could kiss you,  
 But then!  
 (**Amal' ezulu**, 1980:14)

In this regard Ntuli (1984:109) points out that whatever interpretation we make, it is clear that whenever the poet looks at the moon, its full significance dawns anew. He becomes aware that it is not just an item of nature, but it has power to inspire. The poet has a combination of reverence and affection for the moon.

In this poem Vilakazi praises the moon recommending it for the light it provides at night. He appreciates its beauty and recounts that he watched it when it was rising from the sea. The moon that he sees is the very one that was seen by his forefathers also staring at the earth. He feels the moon inspired earlier bards into praises and appeals for the same inspiration. In polluted cities where he lives he cannot see this moon clearly. But his vivid imagination helps him to remember the countryside where he could appreciate nature in the form of forests, rivers, sounds of oceans and the green cane fields. When he remembers all this he then looks up to the moon, kneels down and feels like kissing it but it is too far from him.

Vilakazi shows such respect to the moon. The act of kneeling from the cultural point of view shows that for in Zulu cultural circles it is in fact associated with kingship. In his poem entitled "NgePhasika" Vilakazi

(1982:1) speaks about the quarter moon that reminds people about old stories.

*Lenyang' engiyibona yethwasa,  
Ihlephukile phezu kwamahlombe  
Entshonalanga, laphaya enzansi-  
Isikhumbuz'izindab'ezinkulu ezindala...  
Sikhunjuzwa wen'uthwabaza  
Emhlabathini wezwe lakithi-  
Wona lona waBantu abamnyama*

The moon that I see developing  
Being broken on top of the shoulders  
In the west down below  
It reminds us of old important stories...  
We are reminded of you travelling  
On the soil of our land  
The very same one for black people  
(**Inkondlo KaZulu**, 1982:1)

The moon reminds Vilakazi that Jesus Christ once lived in this world. He chooses the moon because it was there since creation and might have actually seen Jesus Christ. Vilakazi even ends up suggesting that the moon is Jesus Christ himself who once suffered in this sinful world. He then ends up appealing to this moon to provide light that will combat darkness enveloping the world. Moonlight differs from ordinary light and is the kind sent to overpower the darkness of sin in this world. In Christianity, the person with the power to redeem sin on earth is Jesus Christ who died for men's sins. Vilakazi (1982:2) says:

*Inyang' iphumil' umthal' uqhakazile  
Inyanga nguwena, izinkanyezi zomthala  
Yizona zinyembezi zakho nezami,  
Wen' owazula, udingiswa zwe lonke.  
Khanya usus' umnyama phezu kwaMhlaba!*

The moon is out the milkyway is bright  
 The moon is you, the stars of the milkyway  
 Are your tears and mine  
 You who wandered being banned all over  
 Shine and remove darkness over the world!  
 (Inkondlo KaZulu, 1982:2)

When Vilakazi looks at the moon and the stars, he believes that they are God or an extension of him. As the moon is able to bring light to the world at night chasing away darkness, analogously God is able to eradicate the darkness of sin that is contaminating mankind. This moon is used as a symbol of goodness that can save the world from sin being a celestial body that has power to light the world. It stands for goodness while darkness stands for evil.

In the poem entitled "Nayaphi", Vilakazi(1980:16) is mourning the death of his brother Mandlakhe and his wife Nomasomi and does not believe that they are really dead but are still going to come back. He has gone up and down looking for them with no success, stayed waiting until the moon came out, asked it about them but it denied having seen them. He even asked the woman who is carrying firewood on the moon but she turned her back without answering:

*Inyanga iphume ngiyibona,  
 Ngahlunga ngamehlo ngiyibuza.  
 Yathi ayizange inibone.  
 Ngakhwic'imikhono ngabuya.  
 Nenkosikaz'ethwel'izinkuni  
 Phakath'endilingeni yenyanga,  
 Ngayiqhweba ngayibuza.  
 Yangifulathela othulini lonyezi,*



The moon came out while looking at it  
 I sifted with my eyes asking it  
 It said it didn't see you.  
 I folded my arms and came back.  
 And the woman who is carrying firewood  
 Inside the round moon  
 I signalled at her and asked her  
 She turned around in the dust of moonlight  
 She waved and proceeded ahead  
 I kept quiet and bowed my head down  
 (Amal'ezulu, 1980:18)

There is no place where Vilakazi has not looked for these two beloved people. He looked all around the earth and then went up to the sky to inquire from the moon to see if it had any idea about the whereabouts of these two. He probably opted to inquire from the moon which is supposed to know everything as it keeps watching the earth all the time. He relies heavily on the moon and when it denies having seen them he loses hope as is shown by the act of folding his arms. He also bowed down his head in another gesture of confusion and despair.

In the poem entitled "Ngombuyazi ENdondakusuka", Vilakazi (1980:56) also refers to the moon.

*Ngiqwashile phakathi kobusuku,  
 Ngalunguza ngezimbobo zomhlanga,  
 Ngabon' indingilizi kanyezi,  
 Ngaphakathi kwayo ngabon' umfazi  
 Ethwel' inyanda yezinkuni.  
 Naye ngambuza, wanek' izandla,  
 Wangikhomba phambili kwaMthala,  
 Nakhona ngafika ngabon' ozinkanyezi.*

When I was up in the middle of the night  
 I peeped through spaces in-between the reeds  
 I saw the round moon

In the middle of it I saw a woman  
 Carrying a bundle of firewood  
 I also asked her and she denied  
 She referred me to further up the milkyway  
 When I arrived I also saw the stars.  
 (Amal' ezulu, 1980:56)

In this poem Vilakazi is also looking for something, namely, Mbuyazi's bones after the battle of Ndongakusuka. He has searched for them in the river asking for them from the crocodiles, and also looking for them in the veld.

In tackling difficult problems Vilakazi consults sky bodies as the last resort where he might get assistance. When he looks at the moon he believes that the woman on it will help him but this wretched woman also denies knowledge of Mbuyazi's bones and sends Vilakazi further up the milkyway. When he has tried all normal procedures he ends up inquiring from the moon and the stars for when his earthly knowledge is exhausted he opts for the sky and inquires from God himself or his acolytes. Vilakazi thinks the moon should know and if it does not it means that he meant it to represent something other than omniscience in all these poems.

### 3.3.3 The stars

Vilakazi is also seen using the stars in his poetry as he did with other celestial bodies. In the poem entitled "Impophoma YeVictoria" Vilakazi (1982:19) says:

*Kaning' ikhwezi likaMhlayonke  
 Selokhu lavul' amehlo phezulu,  
 Lakuzw' ububula njengempisi  
 Nezinkanyezi zesibhakabhaka  
 Ezikhanyise zilind' imini  
 Yomyalo wengelosi laph' umhlaba  
 Uyakudazuluk' uncibilike,  
 Uvulekele phezu kukaThixo,  
 Namehlo akh' ahlaba njengomkhonto.*

Many a times God's star  
 Still opening its eyes above  
 It heard you cry like a hyena  
 And the stars of the sky  
 Lighting awaiting the day  
 For the angel's instruction where the  
 Earth will break and melt  
 And open above God  
 Whose eyes blaze like a spear.  
 (**Inkondlo KaZulu**, 1982:19)

He refers to this "Ikhwezi" as God himself, who is listening to people's pleas and grievances. To him the shining of God's eyes is the same as that of the heavenly bodies especially the stars. Here Vilakazi is of the opinion that one day the earth and heavenly bodies will indeed disappear by melting down. Isaiah 13: 9-10 supports this idea as mentioned earlier by saying that the day of the Lord is coming - a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger - to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not shine. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not beam.

In summary, Vilakazi was mainly influenced by Christian religion in his contemplation of the heavenly bodies.

Their personification can also be a clue leading to the figurative aspect of the stars. This image of the star suggests waiting for the day on which God's creation will come to an end. This signifies that the star was there before and it is still going to be there until the end of the world as God himself. What is interesting in this poem is that Vilakazi harps on about the disappearance of the earth but does not say a word about the stars. Since they are God's agents they will be there forever. He refers to God as 'Mhlayonke' (he who will be there all time) and means that God was, is and will be present eternally.

But in another poem entitled, "Phezu Kwethuna LikaShaka" Vilakazi (1982:66) says:

*Siyababaza simangala  
Ngokuqhakaza ezulwini  
Kwekhwezi lilandel' iNdosa  
Ikhwezi lifana noShaka  
Yen' obikezel' ukusa  
Nokusa kwa leth' ukufunda  
Imfundo yaleth' inkanyiso*

We exclaim and wonder  
About the shining on the sky  
Of Ikhwezi followed by iNdosa  
Ikhwezi is like Shaka  
Who predicts dawn  
Dawn that brought education  
Education brought light  
(**Inkondlo KaZulu**, 1982:66)

Now Vilakazi is looking at the stars *ikhwezi* and *indosa* and concentrates on their sequence of appearance. The first one *ikhwezi* is the star that predicts dawn and is followed by *indosa*. These stars bring light to the world

for they emerge after sundown bringing their own starlight until it is again brought by the sun rescuing the world from darkness. People could see and know some of the things perpetrated under cover of darkness. When we adopt another view of this light we find that Vilakazi is not referring to the ordinary kind. In this very poem he suggests that *ikhwezi* could be likened to Shaka who, according to the poet, predicted the dawn of the mind. This means knowledge and new skills of fighting taught by king Shaka to the Zulu army. He was actually exposing them to new ideas. Ntuli (1984:64) is of the opinion that, apart from seeing Shaka as a link there is appreciation of the metaphorical use of the morning star and dawn. Vilakazi sees Shaka as a link between the "dark age" of the Zulu nation and the era of enlightenment. He suggests that this was the beginning of education where new knowledge is imparted to people thereby enlightening them. The mind that has not received new knowledge and ideas according to this poem is still stagnating in ignorance. The agents of light in the sky are metaphorised for those that bring education which brings light to the people. When the person is educated he/she can see what is good for the people and what is not.

In the poem entitled "Sengiyokholwa-ke", Vilakazi (1982:34) says:

*Sengiyokholwa ukuthi sewafa  
Um' ukukhala kwezinyoni zaphezulu  
Nobusuku obuqhakaz' izinkanyezi zezulu  
Um' inkwezane yokusa nezinkanyezi  
Ezikhanyis' umnyama njengonyezi*

*Sezanyamalal' ungunaphakade*

I will believe he is dead  
 When the singing of the birds of the sky  
 And the night shining with the stars of the  
 sky  
 And when morning stars and the stars  
 That light darkness like moonlight  
 Have disappeared forever.  
 (**Inkondlo KaZulu**, 1982:34)

In this poem he is mourning the death of his father and is trying to ignore reality disbelieving the death. He then posits impossible things, according to Zulu cultural belief, will enable him to believe and accept his father's death. He says he will accept it when life has disappeared. A person who speaks about the disappearance of the singing birds and the stars that bring light at night is actually referring to the end of life. Imagine the type of life we could live if there were no light from the sky and no singing birds. It would be as good as dead and suggests that Vilakazi is saying he will only accept this when he himself is dead. In the very same poem he refers to other natural objects like mountains, rivers, ice, dew, sun and moon. He says he will believe that his father is dead when all these objects have disappeared forever. Vilakazi bases himself on the cultural approach and as a Zulu like all other Zulus does not believe that the sky bodies will ever disappear. One of the proverbs that they use for something they believe will never happen says:

(*Ilanga*) *Lingawa licoshwe zinkukhu*

It (the sun) may fall down and be picked up by fowls.

Zulus believe that like God who is there forever (uSimakade), these sky bodies are also there forever.

In his poem entitled "Cula Ngizwe", Vilakazi refers to the stars as having love and being capable of waiting because they wait patiently for *ikhwezi* to emerge heralding dawn. Vilakazi (1982:36) says:

*Imfihlo yothando olusha  
Olufana nolwezinkanyezi  
Zilinde bonk' ubusuk' ikhwezi  
Elibik' ukusa*

The secret of new love  
Which is like that of the stars  
Waiting all night for *ikhwezi*  
Which predicts dawn  
(**Inkondlo KaZulu**, 1982:36)

Vilakazi tells about the patience of the stars waiting for dawn and their behaviour when it approaches. He says they voluntarily retreat leaving dew behind which is later dried by the sun. The light from the stars is nice and very romantic as compared to that one of the sun, which wakes up nature from the death of night.

### 3.4 CONCLUSION

Sky bodies and associated phenomena, the sun, thunderstorm and lightning are seen to be playing a

major role both in *izibongo* and modern poetry. But in *izibongo* the moon and the stars are used but not in a broad manner like the sun, thunder and lightning. What one notices is that its usage of the sun is not the same and it is not deployed for the same objects as in modern poetry. In *izibongo* the focus is more on the physique, character and behaviour of the earthly kings. In modern poetry the sun is portrayed as representing the Supreme Being or power. In most cases the sun is presented as being mysterious to understand for it is mainly associated with God. It is seen as a saviour under certain circumstances like death and darkness associated with sin. Modern poetry puts clearly the prominence of the sun among all heavenly bodies for it tears the darkness of the night apart rescuing the whole world from everlasting darkness equivalent to sin. The light that can save human kind from everlasting death or sin, shines from God. The sun in modern poetry brings us the idea of God as opposed to *izibongo* where it merely portrays the character of kings.

Moreover, the celestial bodies are much used in the furtherance of our culture and history through poetry. It is important not only to look at them just literally but also to understand their figurative meaning as perceived by poets. This constitutes proof that our language draws heavily upon the firmament and celestial bodies.



**CHAPTER 4****IN PROSE****4.0 INTRODUCTION**

Traditional and modern prose is now examined to ascertain how earlier and modern men view the celestial bodies and natural phenomena in the particular sphere of riddles and proverbs. The way they use them they divide them into two parts. I am interested in establishing how they relate the heavenly bodies to their real lives. Our literature reflects our philosophy of life, which embraces our thinking, beliefs, social life and history.

It is interesting to note that these celestial bodies are not confined to certain genres but are found in almost all genres of literature. In modern prose and drama they bear symbolic characteristics just as in *izibongo* and modern poetry.

**4.1 TRADITIONAL PROSE**

We are not tackling the whole of traditional prose but will concentrate on two aspects thereof i.e. riddles and proverbs. These two aspects of our lore mainly use celestial bodies. What transpires here is that these

bodies are seen as symbols because one may be able to extract certain meanings out of them. In unearthing them one should be aware of the literal as well as the figurative meaning. With symbols there can be no literal translation without losing their intuitive character for in most cases symbols are used metaphorically in Zulu.

In riddles and proverbs the language used is brimming with metaphors, usually of the descriptive type. This may be represented by a form of simile used in describing reality or external phenomena and to capture it one must recognize the symbols as well as the referent objects.

#### 4.1.1 Riddles

Due to overlappings found in riddles this section was impossible to divide into subsections. Riddles are a game mainly used for amusement as well as testing ingenuity. They use language in a metaphorical manner that calls for one's broader understanding of the surroundings. They stimulate one's imagination, observation capacity and develop language. This is so because their language is figurative and full of images. Maphumulo and Mathenjwa (1994:8) support this when they say:

*Ukusebenzisa ulimi olunotho  
ngezifengo  
oluseziphicaphicwaneni, kusiza*

kakhulu      ekulolongeni      ulimi  
 lobunkondlo      kubantwana.  
 Iziphicaphicwano lezi ziyafundisa  
 futhi zenza labo abazidlalayo  
 basabalale ngomqondo benabele  
 cishe kuyo yonke imikhakha  
 yempilo, lokho okugcina kunothise  
 ulimi lwabo.

Using language that is full of figures of speech as in riddles helps in developing poetic language in children. Riddles are educative and make those who play them to be broad in their ideas extending to all spheres of life which enriches their language.

The language used in riddles needs deep interpretation. Riddles themselves challenge the mind, thereby posing exercises of intellectual skills. They combine both recreation and education, recreational in the sense that those involved in them do it as a competitive game and educational because they teach them about their surroundings including the firmament above them.

Riddling as a guesswork game deploys the tactic of hiding the truth from the person who is asking the question. In disguising it riddlers may use anything at their disposal. In most cases there is a relationship between the first object and the referent object used in the riddle. This means that riddles use the common rule of reflection where there is a metaphorical transference. This common rule of reflection as propounded by Urban and cited by Shibles (1971:36) comes out clearly in riddles where words are mostly used metaphorically for an object other than the ostensible

one. This rule of reflection is very common in riddles for the purpose of hiding the truth.

Regarding celestial bodies, it is noted that they are mostly metaphorised, by assigning them gender, qualities. This relies mainly on the intuitive relationship that the riddler may see between one object and another then transfers the word for the first object to invoke the second. A good example can be a riddle that says:

**Riddle:** *Ngikuphica ngomakoti wami othi uma efika  
athandwe yiwo wonke umuntu, athi  
angahlalahlala bambalekele, kuthi uma  
esezohamba esevalelisa bamthande futhi.*

I riddle you with a bride who when she arrives she is loved by many people, after staying for sometime they run away from her, when she is about to leave they love her again

**Answer:** *Yilanga uma liphuma abantu bayalithanda,  
uma selishisa bayalibalekela, kuthi uma  
seliyoshona balithande futhi.*

It is the sun when it rises people like it, when it is hot they run away from it, and in the afternoon they like it again

The sun in this riddle is compared to the bride; indeed the the sun is the bride. This means that the riddler

has transferred meaning from the original object initially meant to the next that is not the original meaning. This transference of meaning results in a metaphor.

In this riddle there is a metaphorical transference in the word bride. In this riddle the word bride does not stand for the newly wed woman. The first object here is the sun and the second one is a newly wed woman. The relationship that exists between these two, is that they are both loved by the people more especially when they are both new. When the sun gets high up people run away from it because it gets hot. Similarly, when the in-laws get to know the bride very well the love they had for her at first palls. This may be based on cultural patterns that she has to follow like respecting her in-laws. When she perceives their nature she reacts by standing up to them. She shows her true colours like the sun when it starts to show its colours by developing rays generating heat.

It is interesting to note that the sun and the moon are associated with kingship in riddles as well. They are seen to be dominating the sky and hovering and ruling over the whole earth. They are seen as a symbol of supremacy by nature and the rest of creation as supported by the following riddle:

**Riddle:** *Ngikuphica ngenkosi yami ethi uma  
iqhamuka bonke abantu bayo bakhothame.*

(I riddle you with my king who when he appears all his subjects kneel down).

**Answer:** *Yilanga namazolo* (The sun and dew)

When the sun appears and its heat starts warming the earth, dew that is on the leaves falls down and evaporates for it cannot tolerate the heat from the sun which is too much for it. This also happens to certain leaves unable to tolerate the sun and its heat and they wilt. This also happens to other creatures, the more they are exposed to the heat from the sun the more they get tired. These reactions of dropping down, wilting and getting tired are interpreted in riddling as bowing before the sun. In Zulu life, as elsewhere, when the king appears people salute him, bowing their heads and kneeling down, as a solid symbol of respect and honour. The above riddle is depicting people showing respect to their king and what it means is that dew stands for the subjects that bow to super power.

When people are looking at the sun and the moon, it is indeed possible that they associate them with God. The fact that in their riddles they are mostly assigned the qualities of kingship shows that to earthly human beings these two celestial bodies stand supreme. They appear to be ruling in turns, with the sun then followed by the moon. Though they are both assigned kingship, the sun is however regarded as being stronger than the moon. This might be the reason why the sun is assigned manhood and

the moon feminity. The following riddle depicts that these bodies are indeed ruling:

**Riddle:** *Ngikuphica ngamakhosi ami amabili abusa  
ngokudedelana*

I riddle you with my two kings that rule  
in turns.

**Answer:** *Yilanga nenyanga* (It is the sun and the  
moon).

This riddle stems from a Zulu cultural belief that two rulers cannot govern one place at the same time. According to the Zulu belief, they must alternate to avoid a clash. The sun is the sole ruler that dominates the sky during the day. It is the only powerful sky object visible during that time. The whole of nature, human beings, plants and animals depend on the light and heat it supplies. Without its light there could be no life and the earth would be dark. After sunset the moon takes over dominating the sky and providing light on earth. Without the light from the moon life would be difficult for the nocturnals. After the sun the moon takes over ruling over the sky and earth. For an ordinary human being these two heavenly bodies rule the sky and the earth in shifts.

The following riddle points to the female gender of the moon:

**Riddle:** Ngikuphica ngesikhukhukazi sami  
esihamba ebusuku namachwane aso.

I riddle you with my, hen that  
travels at night with its chicks.

**Answer:** Inyanga nezinkanyezi (Moon and  
stars).

A hen is a much bigger fowl than its chicks. What is important here is the size, the hen is bigger while chicks are smaller. These chicks may follow, flank the hen. These characteristics are the same with those of the moon and its stars. The moon is bigger than the stars that are smaller and positioned around it.

The moon is given the female qualities of a hen which is associated with security, warmth, motherliness and loving. The first objects in this case are the hen and its chicks. This riddle is seen to be representing the moon and the stars.

The following riddle is another case where the moon and the sun have been given gender qualities.

**Riddle:** Ngikuphica ngensizwa yami engadinwa  
ukuchanasa ihamba emgudwini owodwa,  
kuthi emva kwesikhashana ibisinyamalala,  
bese ilandelwa yintombi nayo ihambe  
kulowo mgudu. Bobabili abavami



*ukuhlangana ngaphandle uma intombi izwe  
kuthi ayiqunge isibindi ilinde insizwa  
kancane.*

I riddle you with my young man who does not get tired of travelling on one route and after some time he disappears, he is then followed by a lady who also travels on the same route. Both of them do not often meet except when the lady has decided to wait for the gentleman for a while.

**Answer:** *Yilanga nenyanga* (The sun and the moon).

The sun appears in the east during the day, moves across the sky and from noon sinks towards the west. After sunset darkness comes and then the moon rises in the east. It moves on the same track across the sky towards the west where it also sinks. These two sky bodies do not usually meet except during certain times of the month where the sun appears before the moon has set. The fact that the sun is stronger than the moon gives it the characteristics of a male and the moon for its gentleness is given attributes of a lady.

Observation and sound understanding of the metaphor used in this riddle helps one to formulate a link between the signifier and the signified. The natural succession as depicted in this riddle, constitutes a system of signification. Guiraud (1975:33-34) says:

Natural succession constitutes a system of signification based on the homology between the signifying structure and the signified structure. Homology is a structural analogy: the signifiers have the same relation among themselves as have the signified.

In short, there should be a relationship between the two objects employed. The co-ordination of these common elements that form the relationship helps to educate us about our environment and helps us to understand the behaviour as well as reaction of certain natural phenomena at certain points and times. Riddles therefore help us to explore our world daily.

Personification and the human attributes of gender that are given to the sun and the moon appear to be apt. Proposing the femaleness of the moon, other people concur that it is indeed a female. This chimes in with that story of a woman who was punished for working on a Sunday. They argue that through maternal sympathy the moon open-heartedly welcomed the deserted woman, gave her warmth, security and shelter. It was an act of female solidarity. The moon is also regarded as calm and benign because it allowed the U.S. astronaut Neil Armstrong and his crew to set their feet on her. One dares not think of their fate if astronauts tried to visit the sun! For it is not friendly but terrifying and is even feared by other bodies which can hardly tolerate it whereas the moon is in harmony with the stars. In

summary, riddles are not only meant for amusement and test of wit for they also show how Zulus develop their views and concepts about the whole universe.

#### 4.1.2 Idioms and proverbs

Like riddles, idioms and proverbs also use language in a very metaphorical manner. They are full of symbols that require deep understanding before one can appreciate their actual meaning and this includes celestial bodies. In this study I will only focus on the usage of the celestial bodies in idioms and proverbs.

##### 4.1.2.1 The sun

Whenever the Zulus were weaving wise words using the sky, they would relate that with something on earth. This can be found in the following expression:

*Akukho mbethe waphika nelanga*

(Dew cannot compete with the sun)

The sun is in the sky and the dew is on earth. Had it not been for the fact that the sky and the earth are related, our forefathers would not have made a

comparison between these two entities. The sky reflects on earth.

Other idioms and proverbs show that sunshine is regarded as an obvious symbol of good fortune. This occurs more specifically among people like Zulus who depend on elements of nature. The following proverb depicts this:

*Wolibamba lingashoni (ilanga)*

(Stop it not to set (the sun)).

This is a proverb that warns about the danger that may be brought about by darkness after sunset. This proverb suggests that when light which stands for goodness is gone, evil will take over. This is because according to the Zulu belief the activities connected with witchcraft take place at night.

Traditional Zulus did not have the scientific knowledge of the movement of the earth around the sun but through careful observation they could notice different positions the sun took during different seasons of the year. This has been presented in a proverb. Nyembezi (1990:33) points out that we are all aware that the sun during certain seasons of the year, assumes different positions with relation to the earth. This apparent movement of the sun is due to the revolution of the earth round the sun. In winter the sun is farther away from certain places of the earth and in summer it is

nearer. This lateral movement of the sun in the sky has caused Zulus to come out with an idiom that says:

*Uhambela nxanye okwelanga lasebusika*

(He moves laterally like the winter sun).

This queer behaviour of the sun observed by Zulus is now associated with people who will avoid coming to homesteads for reasons known to them and opt to follow paths that are a distance away. This moving away from the people is like the action of the winter sun that moves a distance away from other places.

Zulus, however, looked at these sky bodies as objects that will be there forever and believed that their disappearance is something impossible. This has obvious links to Vilakazi who had the same belief that these bodies will never disappear. The impossibility of these sky bodies especially the sun dying in the face of the earth, is seen in the following proverb:

*(Ilanga) Lingawa licoshwe zinkukhu*

(It (the sun) may fall down and be picked up by fowls).

This proverb is suggesting something that will never happen if one considers the heat from the sun and think

of what may happen on earth when it falls down. Zulus believe that the sun was there before everything came into being and it will remain there forever.

The earth and its inhabitants are below the sun and other celestial bodies. The highness of the sun is seen as having an influence in the life of the Zulus. They regard themselves as basking in the sun. This emanates from the following expression:

*Ngaphansi komthunzi welanga*

(Below the shadow of the sun).

A shadow is a cool and nice place to sit in when the sun is hot. This then implies that even though the heat produced by the sun is measured in terms of distance, it takes to reach us, the whole amount does not reach the earth that is 150 million kilometers away from the sun. The heat that reaches the earth is so cool that Zulus regard the earth as the cool shadow of the sun in which they dwell. This is borne out because the earth is cooler than Mercury that is the hottest planet near to the sun.

In Zulu culture, the sun is mostly associated with beauty. This is why Zulu people when they are being poetic address their beautiful ladies as the sun i.e.

*Langa lami (my sun)*

*Langa lomphefumulo wami* (the sun of my soul)

*Langa lenhliziyo yami* (the sun of my heart).

These people associate the warmth they get from their loved ones with that of the sun as their hearts and souls feel warm when they are with them.

This association of the sun with beauty is also found in the following expression:

*Imvunulo yabulala ilanga*

(The attire killed the sun).

Literally speaking the attire cannot kill the sun so this expression is used figuratively. A beautiful attire is so attractive that people will stare at it and forget about the beauty of the sun. The allure of the attire overshadows that of the sun when a person is clothed in goodly attire that puts the sun "into the shade" although the sun is said to be beautiful when it rises and sets.

The idea of the sun being lovely when it rises and when it sets is associated with its mild heat. Old and sick people like basking in the sun at dawn or dusk. This has resulted in the following idiomatic expression:

*Wotha omabili (amalanga)*

(He basks in both (suns)).

This refers to the morning and the afternoon sun. Old aged people like basking in the sun warming themselves. Their positions change with the changing position of the sun. It is here where a lot of gossiping occurs, hence King Shaka's praises:

*Uteku lwabafazi bakwaNomgabhi  
Betekula behlezi emlovini*

(Joke of the Nomgabhi women  
Joking while sitting at a basking  
place).

These Nomgabhi women were enjoying the warmth of the sun and then started mocking Shaka as a possible king to be of the Zulus.

That the sun is seen as the source of life and when there is daylight one feels secure and free to roam around with no danger, can be found in the following saying:

*Indlondlo yaluka selibalele(ilanga)*

(The old mamba moves about when it (the sun) is warm).



The fact that a mamba is a cold-blooded animal means that it is not comfortable and secure when it is cold. The warmth of the sun here is seen as providing life and enjoyment to those creatures imprisoned by darkness and cold. The sun here is seen as having redeeming power.

Zulu proverbs and idioms also show that the sun stands for or is a symbol of life. When one is no longer going to see the sun it means that the person's life is approaching its end. The following idiom shows this:

*Libheke (ilanga) uligcine*

(Look at it (the sun) for the last time).

These words were commonly uttered when kings were passing a death sentence. The disappearance of the sun or light from the sun meant the end of life. This is why in some instances when a person has passed away it is idiomatically said:

*(Ilanga) Limshonele or Lishone naye*

(It (the sun) disappeared for him or it disappeared with him).

The setting of the sun, therefore, at times is used symbolically to mean death.

Another idiom that indicates an abnormality says:

*(Ilanga) Lishonele nxanye*

(It (the sun) has set off course).

Nyembezi (1990:107) explains this saying as one used when a person is in unusual difficulty, such that neither the setting nor the rising of the sun is much of concern to him. To such a person matters are way out of control.

Positions of the sun and their effects at times determine time. At about eleven in the morning when the sun starts heating up strongly, herdboys are expected to bring back cattle for milking (*zibuy' inhlazane*). It is also usually at this time when women come back from the fields to start other household chores. During the season most ploughing duties are adjourned at this time. During the day when the sun is directly overhead, people are then taller than their shadows and it is said:

*Kusemini bebade (kunezithunzi zabo)*

(Its midday they are taller (than their shadows))

Looking at the sun and also at shadows people can tell what time it is.

In the afternoon the rate of the heat of the sun decreases as it is no longer overhead but is hovering over the mountains before going down in the west. During this time the sun itself becomes beautiful and pleasant to bask in. People themselves look their best at this time of the day.

At this time the sun is bidding daytime a farewell because it is about to sink in the horizon. Zulus comprehend that it is now going to sleep like a tired child who has been busy all day long and now seeks the mother's lap. They then put this in an idiomatic way and say:

*Seliyozilahla kunina (ilanga)*

(It (sun) is going to relax with its mother).

#### 4.1.2.2 Thunderstorm

These idioms and proverbs are based on the sun and other sky phenomena that include thunderstorm. When a very painful incident or tragedy has occurred this is likened to the striking of lightning that occurs unexpectedly. To explain this they use the following proverb:

*(Izulu) Selidume ledlula*

(It (thunderstorm) has thundered and subsided).

After a heavy storm and thunder the fright and fear in people's faces is obvious for they even heard the sounds of thunder at a distance. After tragedy these people have been mourning.

However, this proverb has lost its original meaning because Zulus now use it after any occasion or event. It could be for tragedy but also for any joyous happening. What remains common is that both joyous and tragic events unsettle people and preoccupy them. When it is all over they take it as if the thunderstorm that has been worrying their minds is now over.

The swiftness of lightning is a well-known thing for it comes unexpectedly and all of a sudden it is over. Most unexpected happenings are explained in Zulu proverbs by thunderstorms. The following proverb is another example:

*(Izulu) Libulele umuMbo lasa*

(It(thunderstorm) killed one of the Embo tribe and cleared off).

Nyembezi (1990:112) explains this proverb by saying that it describes short but sharp trouble, usually quite unexpected and the individual involved does not come out unscathed.

On the other hand, as mentioned in *izibongo* kings are sometimes associated with storm. In this regard when Nyembezi (1990:112) looks at the following proverb he says:

*(Izulu) Lidume ladla umunga*

((The thunderstorm) It thundered and struck *umunga* tree.)

The Zulu kings were greatly respected, and were commonly likened unto big and ferocious animals like lions, leopards, elephants, etc., or they were likened unto a storm. If angry, the king would be regarded as a threatening storm for if in his anger he ordered the death of someone, that would be equated with lightning striking a tree.

Zulus thus learned that it is not easy to predict life. Even if they knew some of these natural phenomena like lightning they could not know where it was targetted. The following proverb then came into being:

*(Izulu) Lithatha osemamo limphonse emnyango*

(It (lightning) takes the one at the back of the house and throws him at the door).

Just as it is impossible to predict where exactly the lightning will strike, so no one knows what the future has in store for them.

#### 4.1.2.3 Weather conditions

Besides the sun other sky phenomena are also used in Zulu idioms and proverbs based on observations Zulus have made of different behaviour at different points and times. In this regard Zulus observe that for rain to occur there should be some clouds thus a proverb:

*Imvula isuka efini*

(Rain starts from the cloud).

For anything to happen there must be a definite cause just as clouds bring rain. The natural phenomenon that takes place in the sky is seen in relation to what occurs on earth.

Sky phenomena in proverbs are also used to convey the behaviour of people. When a person is angry, anger is associated with destruction. The following idiom is thus used:

*Izulu lihlomile*

(The sky has accumulated clouds)

When the sky has accumulated clouds there is a likelihood of imminent storm and danger that should be anticipated from either lightning or floods resulting in tragedy. This resembles when a person is angry there is always a possibility of aggression. Clouds here stand for danger.

At the other extreme, when anger fades away from person's face that is idiomatically expressed as:

(Izulu) Licwethule/Lise            nasebukhweni  
bezinja

(It (sky) is clear even at the home of  
the dogs' wives).

This is a clear sky with no clouds at all. This idiom means that the sky is absolutely clear so far as is known. Dogs do not marry and as such they do not strictly speaking have wives of their own. This then means that the place where dogs' mates come from is unknown. Figuratively, this expression describes a person who has been angry and is happy once more. In other words, the bright sun has emerged again and it stands for laughter and joy.

Zulus assign certain beliefs to natural phenomena like light and darkness brought by the presence and absence of the sun. Light is associated with life, goodness and happiness while darkness is associated with witchcraft,

fear and death. This belief comes out in the following proverbial expression:

*Tokolo themba, amathunzi ayewukela*

(Tokolo cheer up, the shades of evening are falling).

This proverb is clearly explained by Nyembezi (1990:127), who confirms that there is a common belief among the Zulus that wizards possess a creature called *utokoloshe*. It is supposed to be a water animal without hair, save for a small tuft on the nape of the neck. It is said to be invisible to elderly people, but always visible to children with whom it plays sometimes. It is alleged that it shows itself to children even during the day.

This expression may be far-fetched as it does not feature the sun directly but has something to do with its presence and absence. Ordinarily the witches perform their unacceptable practices under the cloak of darkness. Thus, during the day the *Tokolo* must be kept locked up as the master is not bold enough to move about with it. But as the shades of evening begin to fall, the master is, once more, free to move about, and *Tokolo* is released from his confinement and inactivity. Furthermore, *Tokolo* may only be fed at night, thus understandably, it always looks forward to nightfall as its time of escaping from hunger and confinement.



In some cases I will use terms which are not directly referring to celestial bodies but are the end-results of behaviour by such sky bodies and phenomena. Zulus are very fond of using darkness and light in describing certain situations in life. The following proverb is used when the situation is fraught with risk and the right solution to opt for is pulling back rather than forging ahead:

*Kuhlwile phambili kusile emuva*

(It is night ahead, it is day behind).

This proverb shows a contrast between darkness brought about by sundown and light brought by sunrise. Parallelism is used in this expression to depict the elements of danger brought about by darkness and safety brought by light.

Idioms and proverbs are used in order to enrich our language by putting the message in an obscure manner that could not be easily understood by a person who is not proficient in the language. The imagery used here involves the earth and the sky and proves that you cannot merely discuss the sky while leaving the earth in limbo.

#### **4.1.2.4 Time**

Before the arrival of white people with western calendars and watches, Zulus were solely dependent on

the sky to ascertain all the different times of the year. They relied on heavenly bodies for time to sleep, to wake up, to prepare their meals, to start ploughing, to start sowing, to start harvesting, to cut grass for thatching and rethatching huts, to fetch water, to take out cattle for grazing and to bring them back. This shows that for almost all their daily chores they had celestial reliance.

Amongst these bodies it is the sun, moon and stars that are quoted. The sun is the major determinant of time during the day while stars are mainly used during the night. According to the Zulu belief, these sky bodies are also used to demarcate the new day from the old one. The new day starts at midnight after the rooster that announces the new day has crowed. This time is known as the midtime that separates the two different days (*phakathi kwamabili amasuku*). One crows immediately before midnight and another immediately after. Number one reports that yesterday is about to end while number two announces that tomorrow has started. This is the traditional way Zulus used to mark time by using natural objects and animals. They were using these objects and animals as timekeepers because they did not have electronic watches. The time mark ups like those that register the middle of the night were in position long before western influence started influencing our people.

It is important to mention some of these things because they have a role in the cultural understanding of the Zulus. When the new day has started there are those predawn stars that appear to reassure people that dawn

is coming. When light is looming in the horizon it shows dawning and the sun will soon rise. There are certain cultural stipulations that have to be followed during some of these times. The rising sun chases away the darkness of the night that has been covering the earth. The appearance of the sun kick-starts life because it marks its renewal. During this time the sun is beautiful with its mild heat and many people enjoy basking in it at this time. This is an important time to which Zulus assign much value. According to them females, especially young girls should fetch water before the sun rises and should not be out of doors after that. There is a prevalent belief that their suitors practice tricky medicines at this time and send their bewitched (*iziphoso*) messages through the rays of the emerging sun. Equivalently, boys should not continue sleeping until the sun rises because the bull will urinate on them and they will become weak men. They should wake up before sunrise to prepare cleansing mixtures if they want to impress girls.

#### 4.2 MODERN PROSE

We will now turn to Zulu modern prose, especially short stories, essays and novels. The main aim is to ascertain if these literary artists still assign any meaning to these natural phenomena as is done with poetry and traditional prose. I will start off by concentrating on those quotations where these celestial bodies and those other natural phenomena have been mentioned.

#### 4.2.1 The sun

In the short story entitled: "Isivumelwano noSathane" by Nxumalo the author presents the sun in a twofold manner. He presents the literal sun as a determinant of day and night. On the other hand, this sun stands for life. The main character in this story is in deep trouble because he did not keep his promise. He was warned that if he failed to recruit other people and not bring back the money he took, Satan would come and make him his slave. This evening in question was the day when Satan was going to come and fetch him in the middle of the night.

*Leli langa elaliphumile wayengazi noma wayesayophinde alibone yini liphuma ngakusasa. Ukhala kakhulu nje ethi, "E'... E'...", emehlweni akhe kuhleze kuthi shalu okufana neduku elimnyama. Kushaluze kushaluze kudedelana izikhala kuze kube sengathi useyakwejwayela.*

(The sun that had come out, he did not know whether he was going to see it rising the following day. He cries loud saying, "E'...E'...", in his eyes a black cloth has been flashing. It flashes in turns leaving some gaps as though he is getting used to it).

(**Emhlabeni**, 1989:24).

The apprehension of this person is caused by the fear of Satan coming to fetch him. The light from the sun and the black cloth that obstructs sight symbolise much in this story. Just as the presence of the sun is the

symbol of life and health and its disappearance is the end of it, so the black cloth symbolises death. The fragmentation in-between the flashing cloth suggests that it will not be a sudden death.

*Ngesikhathi efuna ukudlubulundela, ilanga lithe cobho ngale kwezintaba, wayefuna ukuyolibamba. Kodwa noma wayengaba inyani enamandla wayengeze afinyelela khona, uma efinyelele wayengeke akwazi ukulibamba. Kanjalo nengubo yobumnyama eyayisilandela wayengeke ayivimbe.*

(When he wanted to escape, the sun was touching on the other side of the mountains he wanted to stop it. But even if he would have been a powerful bird he would have not reached it. If he had he wouldn't stop it. And also the blanket of darkness that was following, he could not stop it).

(**Emhlabeni**, 1989:25).

Here the author uses the natural phenomenon to explain his story. This irreversible health situation proves that it is impossible for the sick person to survive. To me this shows that the situation is insoluble. Failing to keep up with the sun prophesises that he has reached the end of his life. The power to stop the black blanket of darkness was beyond him for had he been able to arrest the sun, he could have gained strength to survive. The sun here stands for life and the black blanket symbolises death. What prompts one to suggest that the black blanket symbolises death is that even if the patient in this story was going to be Satan's slave, he had to go via death to reach hell. The twelve o'clock hour is the one that was feared by the patient because

Satan told him that he was going to come and fetch him at that time. On that night everything was dark because it is said there was neither moon nor stars in the sky. Their absence explains that there was absolutely nothing that could save the patient's life on this hopeless night.

That the sun is taken as representing life and death is further confirmed in Ntuli's story entitled "Uthingo Lwenkosazana" where Mpiyakhe says:

*Suka eduze kwami Qolotha. Leyo mithi  
isiyosiza abanye. Elami ilanga  
selishonile.*

Move away from me Qolotha. Those medicines will help other people. My sun has set.

(**Uthingo Lwenkosazana**, 1989:10).

The sun that is referred to is not the mundane sun, but is life itself. When he says his sun has set, he means that his life here on earth is over. Mpiyakhe uses this image of the setting sun because when the sun sets life comes to a stand still as if everything is dead. The night comes with its darkness and silence.

Mngadi (1979:37) in his novel entitled: "Imiyalezo", says, when he discusses the factor of time:

*Yebo zahamba izinsuku. Laphuma lashona  
ilanga, lona lawenza umsebenzi walo  
njengokufisa komdali wemvelo. Leli langa  
elabe lichanasa nje likekela*

esibhakabhakeni esasivama ukuhlala  
 siluhlaza cwe, sipholile, lavama  
 ukudabula emafini, labuya lasondela  
 ngasokhakhayini lomhlaba, lahlaba phezu  
 komhlaba, lana izulu lawabolisa  
 amahlanga. Laphuma, laqondana nalo  
 ukhakhayi lomkhathi, lashisa kwahlaba  
 isikhumba, latinyela ngemisebe yalo,  
 lavusa ufasimbe okwabayilona olwaphenduka  
 umhlwehlwe wamalezulu. Laphendula  
 lahloma, layithumela imibani ezweni,  
 labubula phezu komhlaba.

Yes days went by. The sun came out and  
 set, it did its work according to the  
 will of the creator of nature. The sun  
 was freely moving on the sky which was  
 usually blue, being cool, it normally  
 went through the clouds, it came closer  
 to the roof of the earth, it shone over  
 the earth, it rained causing mielie  
 stalks to decompose. It came out direct  
 to the roof of the firmament, it burnt in  
 such a way that the skin felt it,  
 stinging with its rays, raising up smog  
 that turned to be a fatty sheet of the  
 horizon. It changed and became dark, it  
 stroke lightning on earth, it thundered  
 over the earth.

(Imiyalezo, 1979:37)

The passing by of the days, is determined by the rising  
 and setting of the sun. Besides this function the author  
 also mentions that the sun serves another purpose, that  
 of providing light and heat. When the heat from the sun  
 reaches the earth it causes evaporation which later  
 changes into clouds that form rain. Rain causes  
 vegetable matter to rot into compost which forms food  
 for plants that germinate. The sun lies behind all  
 different types of weather conditions and is invoked to

symbolise different situations in life even personal behaviour.

Unlike genres like short stories, a novel has a long time frame as has the sun. Shabangu in his novel "Imvu Yolahleko" puts forward the primary function of the sun, also burdened with secondary functions where he says:

*Izinsuku azifani kumuntu wonke. Ilanga  
liphuma mihla nje liyimbulunga eletha  
ukukhanya lithwele ubuhle nobubi,  
injabulo nosizi, ukubibitheka  
nokumoyizela*

Days are not the same for everybody. The sun comes out daily being a round object bringing light that carries good things and bad things, happiness and sorrow, hurt and smile.

(**Imvu Yolahleko**, 1966:57)

It is true that the sun does not change but is the same sun everyday and serves its purpose of bringing light. What does change are mixed daily happenings and experiences that occur to different people. People say the sun carries good and bad things, joy and sorrow as well as crying and laughter. It can arouse joy when it brings good fortunes and sorrow when it brings misfortunes.

It helps at times and yet at other times it does not. But it is stupid to blame the sun because days themselves are not the same. Today could be a good day and tomorrow, a bad one. In this case then when the sun emerges to start a new day it opens a window of



opportunity to new happenings and incidents, hence a Zulu proverb:

*(Ilanga) Alishoni lingenazindaba zalo*

It (sun) does not set without its incidents.

Shabangu starts another chapter as follows:

*Lalishisa ilanga likhipha inhlanzi  
emanzini ngalolu suku kwazise ukuthi  
kwakusehlobo wawuthule cwaka nomoya.  
Lalishisa ngempela yize ukuthi  
kwakusemini yasekuseni ilanga  
lingakafinyeleli esicongweni sekhandu.*

The sun was very hot taking the fish out of the water on this day since it was summer time. The wind was quiet. It was really hot even though it was still in the morning before the sun could rise up high.

**(Imvu Yolahleko, 1966:90).**

Shabangu expresses that the sun was very hot on this particular day. The fact that he mentions repeatedly how hot the sun was shows that there is a certain message that he intends to get across. He stresses that it was very hot so that one could easily imagine that people would not roam around aimlessly. The quietness of the wind shows that life was not tranquil like on normal days. This scorching sun mentioned by the author stands for the problems that were faced by KaMabuza. The scorching sun is used to illustrate the hardship people of eMapulatini were experiencing. Shabangu is very fond of using the sun to demarcate

time and predict forthcoming incidents that will be taking place as the story unfolds. He introduces chapter 23 as follows:

*Lase lishonile ilanga. Selilengela ukuyoshona kwaba sengathi limile phezu kwezindunduma ezingasentshonalanga kusengathi liyangabaza ukuyozifihla lidedele ubumnyama nemisebenzi yobumnyama isine enkundleni ngoba iphambene nokulunga; kanti cha lalizihambela nje lona ngokujwayelekile lingagqize qakala ngezehlakalo eziza kamuva seliwuqedile owalo umsebenzi.*

The sun had set. When it was about to disappear it appeared as if it was standing on top of the hills that were in the west, as though it hesitated to hide itself giving a chance to darkness and its works to take over the scene as it is against goodness, but it however proceeded the normal way like in all instances not considering events that were going to happen after it had finished its work.

(**Imvu Yolahleko**, 1966:129).

The fact that the sun had set means that darkness was approaching. The author feels as though the sun was hesitant to disappear leaving darkness and evil works to take over combatting goodness. There was actually nothing wrong with the sun which was on course oblivious of what was going to happen thereafter. When the light of the sun dimmed something evil was going to occur. But it had to wait because it could not happen during light of the day when people could witness it. The fact that it should not be seen by the

public shows that it is against the law. Darkness of the night hides all sort of evil not exposed to the eyes of the public. The sun is seen as an eye of goodness overseeing any type of evil.

The disappearing light and the approaching darkness show that goodness disappears and evil takes over. This sequential natural phenomenon explained by Shabangu is somehow figurative. Daytime and the sun stand for goodness while the night and darkness stand for evil. This is true because when you read the whole chapter you find that Tholie and his friend Sambo were involved in a criminal offence of housebreaking that night. This incident then stands for evil represented by darkness in the introduction.

At the end of the story Shabangu also uses the image of the setting sun to end his story. According to him, every new day that is marked by the emergence of the sun has new experiences one day after another. Here Shabangu says:

*Nantiya ilanga lanamuhla lihamba  
endleleni yalo yemihla ngemihla,  
akuzukuphela sikhathi esingakanani  
liyozilahla ngale kwezintaba - ngokushona  
kwalo, lidwebe umncele wokuphela kwalolu  
suku nezindaba zalo... kusasa liyokusa  
ilanga liphenqe elinye ikhasi kuleli  
bhuku elikhulu eliyimpilo sifunde thina  
ngabanye ngabanye okulotshwe kulo.*

There is today's sun moving on its daily path, not much time will pass by before it throws itself on the other side of the mountains - by its disappearance it will

put a line demarcating the end of that day and its stories... The following day the sun will turn a new page on this big book of life, so that we, one by one could read what is written on it.

(**Imvu Yolahleko**, 1966:155)

The sun as the determinant of time also serves other purposes. Besides bringing light it helps us to witness different incidents that occur in life. From this variety of experiences you then choose those that gratify you the most. In other words, the presence and the disappearance of the sun differentiates between good and bad things. The changes brought by day and night divide life into different episodes. There are those that are good and those that are bad. These changes make the author to look at life as though it is a book with many pages. Each and everyday to him is like a page where one should read the different experiences, incidents, behaviour and happenings that are written on it. By so doing life will give you a lesson and you will know how to cope on earth.

The setting sun marks the nightfall as well as the events and incidents that took place on that day. Its end marks the end of what has been taking place in Tholie's life. When the new day approaches it will come with new things not the old story that we have already heard. In this regard the setting sun also means the end of Tholie's life after he was given a death sentence. Tholie's execution closes the whole story like the setting sun.

When it comes to these celestial bodies, space and time, Martin and Martin (1979:69) basing their ideas on the African continent suggest that, of course, this conceptualisation of spatial organisation seen as a whole is intentionally schematic. Its only aim is to give a rough idea of the conceptualisation of geography. In point of fact each African people introduces other factors into its way of orienting space in order to situate themselves in the world. Such sidereal elements as the Pleiades are retained virtually all over the continent, undoubtedly because of being close to the line of the solstices and in immediate proximity to the ecliptic. They mark the qualitative change of nature in the two hemispheres in the manner of the sun when it reaches the limit of its declination. Other constellations enjoy the same attention, such as Orion, Ursa Major, the Milky Way and, for the southern hemisphere, the Southern Cross and Canopus. With the help of these elements the African combines the characterisation of space, time and validity thus locating himself within an area and duration. Still, it is the sun with its two movements that can constitute to African eyes an absolute system of reference registering itself as the sole generator of pertinent spatial determinations.

Many people not only the Zulus tried to build relationships between their own world and the heaven above. This is supported by the idea put forward by Ntuli (1994:115) in his essay entitled: "*Isibhakabhaka*", where he gives the different perceptions of the sun when he says:

Yimininingwane ngelanga eyenza ukuba  
 umqondo ube nenzululwane uma uzama  
 ukuqondisisa ngalokho eliyikhona.  
 Kwakhona nje ukuqhela kwalo emhlabeni  
 umqondo awukwazi ukukuqondisisa kahle....  
 Nalabo ababengayazi le midanti kwakuthi  
 uma bephakamisa amehlo bezama  
 ukuligqolozela, behluleke, bafikelwe  
 ukuthi lesi simanga singuNkulunkulu.  
 Umuntu angazisola abuye nganeno lezo  
 zizwe njengamaGibithe namaGriki ngoba  
 zase zizizwela ukuthi impilo yomuntu  
 osemhlabeni yeyeme kanjani elangeni.  
 Khona nje ukuqhela kwalo, ubukhulu balo  
 nokushisa kwalo kuyikhona ngempela  
 okufanele ukuba kuyivumele ibe yilokhu  
 eyikho impilo yasemhlabeni wethu.

It is the details about the sun that make  
 dizziness in the mind when one tries to  
 understand about it. Even its distance  
 from the earth makes the mind not to  
 understand it clearly... even those who  
 did not know these details, when they  
 lifted up their eyes, trying to look  
 direct at it they fail and conclude that  
 this mystery is God. People should not  
 completely blame the nations like Greeks  
 and Egyptians because they felt how the  
 life of a person on earth depends on the  
 sun. Even its distance, its size, and its  
 heat are the things that allow life to be  
 what it is on our earth.

(**Isibhakabhaka**, 1994:115).

What is said by Ntuli is true because many people  
 believed and still believe that the sun is God. Ridpeth  
 (1987:8) supports this idea when he says long ago, many  
 people thought that the sun was a god. The sun seemed to  
 have magic, life-giving powers. In the middle of the  
 winter, the sun kept low in the sky. Days were short and

cold. Living things died. In spring, when warmer days returned, plants burst into life again. This passage confirms how mysterious the sun is. It points out that many people in the world tried to reach a conclusion in defining the sun but they ultimately failed. When they were trying to analyse it they failed and ended up suggesting that this mystery is God. Most of them based their suggestion on what they observed, the way life on earth depends on the sun. The sun is seen as the provider of life on earth.

#### 4.2.2 The moon

The life of the people on earth does not only rely on the sun, it relies on the moon as well. It plays a major role in demarcating the year round into different months. These Zulu months are named after the general happenings that are taking place in nature at that point and time. Old people irrespective of the fact that they had not done astronomy could look at the moon and predict the future such as whether there would be rain or not. This could also determine that they must now start ploughing or not. In Khumalo's essay entitled: "Inyanga" where he is analysing the moon, he says:

*Abadala bakwazi ngisho ukuyifunda inyanga  
iphezulu ukuthi ihlola umoya, ihlola  
isomiso, ihlola imvula. Ungamuzwa ethi:  
Lizona noma kanjani. Athi nansi inyanga  
inesizingelezi. Yibika elikhulu lemvula.  
Nempela ngeke lwedlule olulodwa, ezimbili  
lingayishayanga. Yiso-ke lesi siphiso  
sobunyanga esinemfihlakalo emangalisayo  
nengaphezu kokuqonda komuntu. Bafunda*

*izinto ezisekusithekeni kumuntu nje phaqa.*

Old people could read the moon high up and say if it predicts wind, drought or rain. You can hear him saying: It will, definitely rain. He will say there is a circular sign on the moon. This is a great indication that it will rain. Definitely not more than one or two days will pass having not rained. This is the gift of the moon that is having a secret that is beyond man's understanding. They read things that are hidden to an ordinary human being.  
(Ingulule, 1994:48).

The mysterious understanding of these celestial bodies does not end with the sun for the moon is also difficult to understand. According to Khumalo, the mysterious nature of the moon is beyond man's understanding. This then suggests that if an earthly person cannot understand this object only God the creator is able to do so. This is the reason why these people who are trying to analyse these objects and fail, end up concluding that these objects are God himself.

#### 4.2.3 Weather conditions and natural phenomena

In certain instances in modern prose weather is also used to define the mood of a certain character. When he/she is happy bright sunny weather is usually prevalent. On the other hand, when he/she is angry, authors usually use an overcast, rainy or stormy weather



to explain the condition of the character. In C.S.Z. Ntuli's essay entitled: "*Kuyokuqoqa Ukuhlwa*", it is said:

*Nanguya uBaba ohlangothini lwakhe. Liguqubele. Angibuze ngesankahlu ukuthi ngivelaphi ngalesi sikhathi. Asho isandla sakhe siye oswazini olwaluvele phansi kwesicephu sakhe.*

There is my father sitting on his side. It is overcast. He forcefully asked me where I had been. His hand advanced for a light stick that was visible under his grass mat.

(**Izizenze**, 1990:148-149)

In this case the sentence *Liguqubele*, is used idiomatically to describe *Baba's* mood. The idiom used here tells the whole story about the frame of mind of the father. Overcast weather is not nice at all. In most cases it disconcerts people because it may rain and bring storm at any time and moment. In other words, it is an unpredictable situation resembling an angry person who cannot be predicted with certainty.

In traditional circles darkness is closely associated with witchcraft, also with death. What people fear the most during the night are evil spirits associated with witchcraft and dangerous animals. For this reason *izinganekwane* were narrated in the evening to warn as well as instill caution into the young ones. There is, however, a shift when it comes to modern literature where darkness further invokes evil and crime.

This idea is further supported by D.B.Z. Ntuli (1982:67) in his short story entitled: "Emajikeni AkwaNdundulu" where he says:

*Ngithi ukungabaza. Umuntu akasazi noma  
uma eba nobubele usuke ezidonsela  
uhoshahosha yini. Kodwa kungenzeka  
kungabi yisigebengu lesi. Kungaba  
ngumuntu engimaziyo odinga usizo  
ngempela. Mhlawumbe angaze avelelwe  
yingozi uma ngimshiya kulo mnyama.*

I hesitated. You can no longer be sure, you may intend helping and yet put yourself into trouble. It may happen that this is not a criminal. It may be a person I know who is desperate for help. Perhaps he may be in danger if I leave him in this darkness.  
(Amawisa, 1982:67).

This hesitation shows that it is not easy to be certain in darkness. Darkness hinders sight so that one cannot be sure of everything that he sees at night. You may assume that this is this whereas you bring yourself into big trouble. This is also troubling because you may leave a person because of uncertainty about the identity and yet you expose that person to any type of danger. The night is feared because it is during this time that dangerous animals like lions, snakes you name them go out freely to hunt for their prey. It is also at this time when criminals feel free to go about because they cannot be easily identified. The cover of the night becomes a good cloak of every evil. They feel comfortable to perform their misdeeds in the darkness at night.

In older days people only feared dangerous animals and witches at night but this has now changed because most criminal incidents also occur at night. These include robberies, hijackings, rapes, murder, housebreaking and many other dirty criminal practices. This has instilled more fear into people. Today you can hear people saying "Gone are the days where you could run to another human being for security at night, a human being like yourself". This is all caused by the unfaithfulness that has been shown by people especially at night. You cannot classify people because even those that you trust can surprise you.

This combination of darkness and criminals is also found in the very same short story where it says:

*Kanti nokuma nje sekusebusuku  
angikujabuleli ngoba ngingazi noma  
ngizothi ngiyama kanti sengima eduzane  
kwabafana bangenze isilo sengubo.*

And stopping during the night is something I do not like, as I would not know whether I will stop next to the criminals who will do me some harm.

(**Amawisa**, 1982:68).

The fear of darkness has made people to be afraid of stopping anywhere. What transpires here is that people no longer fear only dangerous animals but human beings as well. The boys, that are mentioned in this story are not well-behaved boys as one may perhaps think but dangerous criminals. This is the reason why this person

fears these boys because they may cause him some grievous harm.

The increasing rate of crime and criminal offences that occur at night instil a lot of fear into ordinary citizens. The shift that is found in modern literature and mundane experience shows that fear of the night moved from fear of witchcraft and dangerous animals to fear of criminal offences caused by human beings.

In another short story entitled: "Siyaphi", in the book "Umthala" (Gule 1994:77) the idea of the night being associated with witchcraft and crime is confirmed. The introduction used in this story says:

*Sekuhlwile, nezulu liyabhenguza lishaya ashubisa umnkantsha ingani phela inyanga kaNtulikazi. Nabantu basheshe bangene emibhedeni yabo balale. "Ngiyathokoza Senzo ukukuthola ukhona lapha ekamelweni lakho ngalesi sikhathi. Sekujwayelekile ukuba wena njalo ukusuka ngehora leshumi kuze kube intathakusa unyamalale lapha ekhaya. Lokhu kuyasimangalisa ukuthi zindlela zini lezi ezihanjwa kwesikabhadakazi na? Thina sazi ukuthi abantu abaguduza ubusuku abathakathi noma izigilamikhuba ezithile".*

It is already dark, the weather is cold and windy as it is already the month of July. People go to bed early. "I am happy Senzo to find you present in your room at this time. It is now common that you disappear as from 10p.m. until dawn. It is surprising to know where you go at midnight. According to our knowledge it is the witches and certain criminals who travel at night."

(Umthala, 1994:77).

In a Zulu setting, the night was traditionally taken as a quiet time for sleeping and relaxation. To be found travelling at night raises some suspicions. This is because this time is known to be the preferred scenario for the witches and criminals. Besides these, this time is "open season" for different animals hunting for their prey after daytime confinement. Among those dangerous animals that may be found abroad in the night are some actually associated with witchcraft like owls and baboons.

The fact that this passage starts by mentioning that it is already dark predicts some danger that may occur. The bad cold weather conditions also intensifies the problem because it shows that the setting is abnormal or unstable like in a windy situation. The fact that people went to bed early helps towards an undisturbed night. Senzo's father points out that it has become a habit that Senzo disappears during the night and when light or dawn is about to come he returns. This on its own arouses suspicions that there is something that he is engaged in which he does not want people to see. The fact that this takes place at night leads one to wonder if this might be an acceptable thing.

This anti-social behaviour prompts his parents to worry about what he is up to at night. Senzo's father articulates that to his knowledge people who travel at night are witches and criminals. The belief his parents

have is that there is no good thing that can be done at night. The use of the plural "thina" (we), suggests that this conviction is not confined to his two parents only but shared by the community and even the Zulu nation as whole.

The new version of the night being associated with fear, death and criminals has developed during the time of violence in our country and owes a lot to urbanisation that brought in criminality.

In another short story entitled: "*Uthingo Lwenkosazana*", Ntuli also uses the sky:

*Aphakamise amehlo. Izulu lide lithi  
khifikhifi, kodwa laphaya ekudeni  
kusekhona uthingo lwenkosazana oluphuza  
ezansi emfuleni uSomjadu.*

He raises his eyes up. The rain is drizzling slowly but at a distance the rainbow that drinks down in the river Somjadu is still visible.

(*Uthingo Lwenkosazana*, 1989:1).

The weather indicates that there is confusion or an unclear situation that needs to be cleared up, but looking at the rainbow raises hopes that the situation will be resolved. This drizzling rain stands for hatred, jealousy and dispute between Mpiyakhe and his brother Sinqindi. The rainbow means the situation is not insoluble. It symbolises that the dispute between the two brothers will be resolved. Hope may foretell a better future because it usually arises after heavy storms and is usually followed by the sun which is a

symbol of life. This suggestion concurs with the following passage that is found in the very same short story:

*Izulu lathi ukuphenya kancane. Ilanga lize likhanyise laphe ekhona... Nayo leyo nkungwana esentabeni uCijojo, inhle kakhulu namhlanje... Ha, nantuya uthingo lwenkosazana kungathi luzofiphala kancane manje: kodwa bonke ubuhle bemibalabala yalo busaphelele.*

The weather starts clearing up. The sunlight reaches the spot where he is... Even the small mist on mountain Cijojo is more beautiful today... Oh, there is the rainbow which appears as if it will disappear slowly but all its multicoloured beauty is still complete.

(**Uthingo Lwenkosazana**, 1989:2).

The bad weather that is clearing up is giving a chance to the sun to appear. When the sky has been overcast life has been dull and lifeless but when it clears, life revives. In other words life is regained. The sun that is shining where Mpiyakhe is, brings back life that has been in the doldrums. The beautiful mist that he sees on Cijojo mountain, is not shrouded with confusion. The fact that he can observe its beauty shows that it does not stand for bad omens or darkness. The rainbow still in complete colours predicts that the bad times will soon be over. The season of confusion, grudges and disputes represented by the mist will be supplanted by joy and life brought by the sun recapturing the sky.

The total assembly of colours in the rainbow symbolizes the fullness of life. This rainbow has not disappeared meaning that this person (Mpiyakhe) is still going to live.

This forlorn hope of the setting sun (of death) is revived in this story by employing the rainbow that restores hopes of life. The author uses a parable to counteract that of the setting sun when he says:

*Aguqe ngamadolo, athi ukugaqazela aye  
ngasemnyango lapho ewaphonsa phandle  
amehlo akhe, abone laphaya ngaphesheya  
sekukhona olunye uthingo lwenkosazana.*

He kneels and crawls towards the door. When he looks outside, he sees another rainbow across.

**(Uthingo Lwenkosazana, 1989:12).**

The emergence of another rainbow gives a double assurance that the sick person will recover. Rainbows normally appear after heavy rain or storm and this is a sign that the rain is over. In this case this rainbow heralds that the period of trouble which is the period of sickness is over and reassures that the patient will recover.

In Ntuli's story entitled: "Iziqongo Zezintaba" it is said:

*Lashona ilanga. Umnyama usuqala ukugcwala  
yonke indawo. Kodwa uma ubheka le  
ezindaweni eziphakeme kusekhona umbala*



obomvu okhombisa ukuthi lisabonakala khona ilanga.

The sun is setting. Darkness has started to cover the whole area. When you look up to the higher places there is a red colour that shows that the sun is still available that side.

(Uthingo Lwenkosazana, 1989:52).

It is well known that sickness is worse at night. According to Zulu cultural belief this is associated with their view that witches practise their witchcraft at night. This then suggests that their *muthi* also becomes more potent at night. Sick people normally do not like the night, they would rather prefer daytime. The setting sun in this case is an indication of doom to the sick person in this story. This coming darkness comes with pain, fear as well as death. The red colour on the horizon shows that the sun is still available to some people and distances them somewhat from the terminally ill.

In the very same story it is said:

Kugale intwabi. Abatshela uMaMpungose ukuthi nakuyise intwabi yaqala ngazo lezi zikhathi, lathi liphuma ikhwezi kwabe sekumanele... Kuphakathi kwamabili manje...Zakhala izinkukhu...UMaMpungose bese ethi omunye akabheke ukuthi ikhwezi alikaphumi yini. Abuye loyo athi seliphumile seliphakeme. Ebusweni bukaMaMpungose kubonakale ukumamatheka, kodwa kube kugeleza nezinyembezi... Manje sekuyasa phandle... Waphumela phandle. Uma ephakamisa amehlo, abone iziqongo zezintaba sezinokukhanya. Izinyoni

*seziqala                      ukuhlabelela.                      Wabheka*  
*empumalanga. Laphuma ilanga.*

Then started the hickup. MaMpungose then informed those in the house that to his father the hickup also started at about this time and when *ikhwezi* emerged he was already dead... It is midnight now... The cocks then crowed... MaMpungose then ordered somebody to look outside if *ikhwezi* had emerged yet. He came back and said it was out and up. MaMpungose's face blossomed with smile but with some tears falling... It was dawning outside... She went out. When she lifted her eyes up, she saw the high peaks of the mountains having some light. Birds had started singing. She looked in the east. The sun then emerged.

(**Uthingo Lwenkosazana**, 1989:59-60).

The gist of this story centres around time frames and they are marked by using natural phenomena. The fact that it is midnight demarcates between two things i.e. the end of the night and the beginning of dawn. In other words, midnight time differentiates between death and life in this story. The crowing of cocks marks or indicates dawn bringing light. Cocks in other words report the coming of a new day coming with hopes of life and survival from the dangers of darkness (death). Likewise, the emergence of *ikhwezi* before the death of MaMpungose's child indicates that she will not experience what happened to her child's father. On the contrary, the emergence of *ikhwezi* brings more hope of life. The smile that covers MaMpungose's face is a positive sign of joy. To other people the tears in this story may arouse mixed feelings though they are only tears of joy. On the other hand, these tears can be seen

as washing away all bad things that happened to MaMpungose earlier, like the death of her husband. They also remove the evil done by MaMpungose's child, that of denying her before his school mates. These tears, therefore, wash away all previous grudges and wrong doings. They are going to start again on a new page altogether. During the night life is gloomy but after dawn it starts afresh when birds start singing thanking the new day. The rising sun revives the earth and its inhabitants.

These celestial bodies here serve as determinants of time but at the same time they have a figurative meaning. The first *ikhwezi* serves as a time marker during which MaMpungose's husband passed away. The second *ikhwezi* stands for life: the fact that it is up shows that MaMpungose's son is not doomed. The emergence and rising up of *ikhwezi* brings hope to MaMpungose. Dawn means that darkness, fear, death, despair and sickness have been conquered. The light at the top of the mountains proclaims life. To MaMpungose the light that appears on the mountains is a symbol of hope about her son's life. The birds have been subdued but now they start singing. Their chorus resounds that everything in this house starts anew. The new life will start afresh as well as the new love between mother and son. The emergence of the sun marks the beginning of a new day in life.

Martin and Martin (1979:67) say the East is identified with life, health, well-being, prosperity, the west with sickness, evil, bad luck, and death. Each morning the

Abuluya turn towards the East to solicit the help of the divinity throughout the coming day. The Abure, Aladian, and Abidji describes that as what is beneficial about the East, while they associate the west with sickness, disorder and evil. Both the introduction and ending of this short story is interesting. It is inverted in the sense that it begins with the setting sun and ends with the rising one. This sequence contrasts starkly because the setting sun symbolises the end of life or death whereas the rising one symbolises the beginning or birth of a new life.

In another short story entitled: "Isithembu" Ntuli (1986:76&86) has used *ukuhlwa* (nightfall) as against *ukusa* (dawning). He starts with a negative atmosphere and ends with a positive one, as *ukuhlwa* brings about confusion, instability, fear and negativity whereas *ukusa* (dawn) brings peace, harmony, stability and goodness. The significance of *ukuhlwa* and *ukusa* used by the author here is two-fold. Literally it means the two actual natural phenomena whilst figuratively it means darkness or confusion that will cover Rev Mthembu's mind and cause misunderstanding between him and his daughter Nomusa. But the opposite actually happens for *ukusa* clarifies the mind of Rev Mthembu, brings him peace with himself, peace with his daughter, stability at home and finally it brings them all a brighter future. The story that starts with chaos ends with splendid order.

The state of the sun as the determinant of weather plays a major role in the life of the Zulus. This experience is noticed in their daily greetings where they mostly

make mention of it. This has been incorporated into introductions in story books where some of the authors invoke the weather. Shabangu (1966:20) in the book entitled: "Imvu Yolahleko", says:

*Kwase kuhwalele. Izindlu zase zibonakala ziyizithunzana ngenxa yobumnyama.*

It was already dark. You could see shades of houses because of darkness.  
(**Imvu Yolahleko**, 1966:20)

In this introduction the darkness only indicates the evening time and the time factor is very important in prose, for incidents must be relevant to that particular time, place and condition. The different changes and cycles that are brought by the sun result in weeks, months and years. Novels have a licence to start when the character is still young and end when he/she is old. All this relies mostly on time to develop the plot. In the above-mentioned novel Shabangu (1966:25) says:

*Zahamba izinsuku zadedela izinyanga zasina enkundleni; lafika ihlobo nokuzamazama kwalo lazikhohlisa qede lashiyela ubusika nezibhengubhengu zabo; iminyaka ngeminyaka yaphothuluka phansi kwembokodwe yokuqhubeka kwezikhathi...*

Days passed by giving a chance to months that danced on the stage; then came summer time and had its time giving a chance to winter and its blowing winds; years and years went through the grinding stone of progressing times.  
(**Imvu Yolahleko**, 1966:25)

Though Shabangu does not mention the sun in the above passage it is common knowledge that days are counted in terms of the sun that rises in the morning and sets in the evening. When this similar sequence occurs for seven consecutive days that forms a week. When such similar natural phenomena occur for four consecutive weeks that forms a month and twelve months form a year. These months are divided into four seasons i.e. spring, summer, autumn and winter which are mainly determined by the different prevailing weather conditions. This time factor is determined or controlled by the sun and without it we would not have these different times, nor know our ages, nor be able to estimate the time span taken by certain incidents or during which they occurred. This passage gives us time leeway to permit the growth of our characters in terms of years.

The last chapter in this novel, chapter twenty seven, (27) starts by using the image of the thunderstorm. Shabangu(1966:151) starts by saying:

*Lase lidume ledlula lashiya kukhalwa;  
izihluthulelo zase zivaliwe phaqa ukhiye  
wokuvula walahlelwa ebumnyameni lapho  
ungasenakutholwa khona sekugcwaliseke  
ngokusobala ukuthi umvuzo wesono ukufa.*

Thunderstorm had thundered and gone leaving behind people crying; locks were completely locked and key to open thrown into darkness where it could no longer be found, clearly fulfilling that the outcome of evil is death.

(**Imvu Yolahleko**, 1966:151).

The idiom used by Shabangu here suggests that the tempest had spent itself. It is common that after a heavy storm there is damage and when it is over you can hear rumbling sounds at a distance and see evidence of destruction. Tholie's deeds are likened to damage caused by the storm for what had happened to his life occurred quickly like a thunderstorm which does not take long. There is a short time of turmoil then it subsides. In this case Tholie's life changed in a mere wink of time then he found himself locked behind bars. The key to freedom was thrown into darkness where it could not be found. The darkness in which he floundered was death, biblically the outcome of evil. In his cell there was no life for darkness is dull and lifeless which is why it is associated with death.

True enough, the thunderstorm destroys. In most cases people sustain damage in its wake. Shabangu uses the thunderstorm to depict the ups and downs that took place in Tholie's life. The gloom and doom he was now suffering stemmed from the evil he perpetrated and his plight was now like the weeping and wailing after a tempest. He was now faced with the consequences as explained by using the image of the storm.

In Ntuli's novel entitled: "Ngiyoze Ngimthole" he introduces his chapter 6 by saying:

*Ifu elimnyama lisalokhu lithe ngci phezu  
kwelaseNguga. Namanje ilanga lisacashile,  
linamahloni okuvela lilunguze le ndawo*

*eshunqa igazi. Amafu asemnyama bhuge manje. Isicongo sentaba iNguga sesicashe enkungwini.*

The dark cloud is still completely covering Nguga area. The sun is still in hiding, it is shy to appear and look at this area which smokes blood. Clouds are dark now. The peak of Nguga mountain is hiding in a mist.

(**Ngiyoze Ngimthole**, 1983:40).

A dark cloud makes the sky to be overcast thereby covering the sun. The place where there is no sun is characterised by cold and darkness, without heat and light. The dark cloud predicts that there is imminent rain or storm which could cause havoc. The sun is shy of showing up in this place because of tension. The situation is tense because these accumulating clouds suggest danger. The fact that the peak of the mountain is also invisible indicates that there is still no sign of the sun that may save or redeem the situation.

Literally a dark cloud predicts that it might rain but in this introduction the dark cloud symbolically stands for death. Among the Zulus, people who are mourning are said to be under the dark cloud (*basefwini elimnyama*). The people of Nguga were mourning Dube's death. This dark cloud and mist may also stand for the confusion that was in the minds of the people of Nguga who did not know exactly who killed Dube. Ntuli uses weather conditions with the understanding of how the Zulus relate sky phenomena with their earthly life. The sun that is missed by people of Nguga is life and meaning normal life. Bad weather predicts that things are



ominous. The weather condition suggests that Bhakubha is angry and he will cause danger at anytime. He is like a cloudy sky that threatens an imminent storm.

Contrary to what is found in chapter 6, chapter 8 (Ntuli 1983:53) is introduced by saying:

*Laze lalihle izulu namhlanje. Akukho nelilodwa ifu emoyeni. Umoya uthule kamnandi. Nampaya abantu besabalala ngemizilazila bebheke emasontweni.*

The weather is nice today. There is no single cloud in the sky. The wind is quiet. People are taking different directions going to churches.  
(**Ngiyoze Ngimthole**, 1983:53).

The clear nice weather used by Ntuli here suggests that things are normal. The weather indicates that the place is full of life, represented by a clear, cloudless sky. There are no clouds foretelling trouble. The quiet wind also reveals that the scene is quiet in this place. The images used by the author here portray a picture of the Nguga area in the mind of the reader. He only used the sky phenomena to explain the situation at Nguga after some troubles and difficulties. This is further confirmed by what is found in the same chapter where it says:

*Le nkungu ekade ithe khuhle phezu komuzi kungathi isiqala ukuthi nwi kancane. Leli fu ebelithe ngci; selithanda ukuphakama. Imisebe yelanga isimfifamfifafa phakathi kwegqikolo*

*lamafu: umuntu usebona nezinyo lapha ekhaya.*

The mist that has been covering the home is clearing up now. The cloud that has been covering is clearing up. The sunrays are penetrating through a thick cloud: One can notice a smile now in the family.

(**Ngoye Ngimthole**, 1983:55).

The mist and the dark cloud stand for the bereavement that has engulfed the Dube family, indeed not them alone but the whole area of Nguga. Many people are puzzled and do not know exactly who killed Dube and why. The sunrays that are penetrating through the cloud might be a symbol of the breakthrough that will lead to the arrest of the culprit. They are shedding light on what has been clouding local minds. Those very sunrays also predict precious normal life that is going to start afresh in Dube's home for that is what the sun stands for.

Ntuli prominently uses varying weather conditions as a parable of his characters and their area. When Bhakubha's circumstances change from good and normal to bad and abnormal, Ntuli(1983:56) says:

*Leli fu ebekungathi liyasuka, le nkungu  
obekungathi iyancunzeka, yini kubuye  
kwehle futhi kufiphaze ilanga  
ebeselithanda ukulunguza lize nentokozo  
lapha ekhaya? Sekubuye kwakhona  
ukuguqubala okunye emqondweni  
kaBhakubha.*

This cloud that tended to be moving away, this mist that tended to be clearing up slowly, are they not coming back to cover the sun that was approaching bringing happiness in this home? There is now an overcast situation in the mind of Bhakubha.

(**Ngoyoze Ngimthole**, 1983:56).

Clouds can blot out the sky and when it is overcast one cannot see the sun. On a misty day the sun is also invisible. When the clouds and the mist clear from the sky, the sun becomes visible again. Hence, in this story the obscurity that was clearing up was the dark cloud of death. The mist that is slowly lifting is the confusion in Nguga about the death of Bhakubha's father. It is universal, not only the Zulu cultural belief, that inclement weather such as an overcast or cloudy day stands for bereavement. A bereaved family is said to be in the dark or black cloud. The author in this story opted for this familiar image of the state of the weather but used it in a metaphorical way. Knowledge of Zulu culture is indispensable to know that this image stands for bewilderment and, may be, death.

Besides confusion and death, mist and darkness can also be associated with evil spirits like ghosts and apparitions (*imingcwi*). *Imingcwi* are believed to operate on days of low visibility while ghosts are believed to practise at night and this is supported by Mbatha and Zulu(1994:50) who say:

*Kodwa kungaba yisipoki kanjani ngoba alikashoni ngisho nelanga. Kuthiwa izipoki zihamba ebusuku. Ngiyakweshwama lokhu ukuthi kungabakhona isipoki emini uma kunenkungu.*

How could this be a ghost because the sun has not yet set. It is said ghosts travel at night. It is new that there could be a ghost during the day when it is misty.

(**Bathini Osizwile**, 1994:50).

During daytime when the sun is still shining there are certain things that cannot be seen such as animals which avail themselves of the day to sleep and venture out during the night only. This has divided animals into nocturnals and daytime ones. Ghosts are a phenomena said to be confined to darkness of the night and it would be unusual to see them during the day. If that does occur Zulus associate it with witchcraft.

What is said by Mbatha and Zulu confirms the belief regarding mist, darkness and the ghosts. In the introduction of this story these authors make mention of the weather forecast in preparation of what will be happening in the story. The introduction is as follows:

*Akuyona inkungu lena isimanga. Uma uthule ulalele, uzwa sengathi kukhona abantu abakhulumayo. Akubona abantu iyona inkungu uqobo. Ikhasa phansi.*

This is another mist. When you are quiet and listening, it sounds as if some

people are talking. It is not people it is mist. It covers the whole area.  
(**Bathini Osizwile**, 1994:48).

There are so many stories that are associated with misty weather and the night. It is said some people are taken away by evil spirits and later found deep in forests or in graveyards. Such tales which deal with people misled by evil spirits during the night are very common amongst the Zulus. They believe that these evil spirits are agents of witchcraft. Khumalo(1998:50) in his essay entitled: "Izilingo Ebusuku" says:

*Okubi yizilingo zemimoya emibi. Hhayike, kunzima kakhulu uma nizohlaselwa ngotokoloshe nemikhovu. Kukhale izingane, zikhomba ezikubonayo kube yinqaba. Nani nina enibadala nizwe ukuthi kukhona okukhona, kodwa eningekuchaze ngoba anikuboni... Amandiki, amandawu, izipoki nemingcwi zilingo nje ezitheleka ngozwaca qede kusangane abantu. Ezinye ziyakhwibizeka, ezinye zigweve nje.*

What is bad are the temptations of evil spirits. It is quite difficult if you are going to be attacked by tokoloshes and imikhovu. Children will cry pointing at things they see. Even you old people you will feel that there is something which you cannot explain because you do not see it... amandiki, amandawu, ghosts and apparitions are the temptations that come during the night and confuse people. Some can be chased away, others are stubborn.

(**Isibabule**, 1998:50).

Zulus believe in the existence of a witch-connected creature called a *tokoloshe* and there is another one called *umkhovu* or a zombi. This is a person who died as a result of being "thwebulaed". The belief here is that this person is changed through *muthi* into a zombi. This is only superstition because you do not see these creatures. They only tell you that *imikhovu* are seen by young children and *muthi* trained men only who have used certain potions to catch zombis and *tokoloshes*.

The presence of these evil spirits is said to be signalled by the shrinking of the hair and the heat that is felt in the house. Most authors claim these evil spirits are pro-active during the night and on misty, unclear days. Donda(1997:84) in his essay entitled: "Ukuthula", says:

*Uthanda kanjani uhlangane nomungcwi uma  
 uhabulile kumbe uphethe incosa  
 kwesikabhadakazi? Utshwala bumane  
 buphele nya, uyibone kahle inkinga  
 okuyo. Kungaba khona kanjani ukuthula  
 ubukwa ngamehlo anomlilo, uphefumulelwa  
 ngamakhala ankewuka umlilo? Kuba mandla  
 kakhulu uma izulu liphendule.*

How would you like it to meet an apparition when you are drunk or when carrying meat at night? Drunkenness simply disappears, you then realise the problem you are facing. How can you have peace when you are looked at by eyes blazing fire, breathed at by nostrils

blazing fire? This is more powerful during bad weather.  
(Izidlodlo, 1997:84).

There are certain beliefs associated with the evil spirits like the apparitions. They are said to like attacking people who are drunk and those who are carrying raw meat. They are so frightening that even if you are drunk you become sober. They are said to be blazing fire from their eyes and nostrils. One can associate this fire with that in the Bible, hellfire.

#### 4.3 CONCLUSION

Older people have been observant and alert about responses and reactions of what they perceived in their surroundings. They could see that the three tiers of creation is interrelated and interdependent. Looking at the sky made them to relate it to something more concrete on earth. To this Nyembezi (1990:43) is of the opinion that in proverbs, we not only have the wisdom of the Zulu people, their observations and their reflections, but we also have the very juice of the language itself. This is also the case with riddles for without them, the language would be but a skeleton without flesh, a body without soul. One cannot think of good Zulu, without its proverbs; and so long as the Zulu language lives, so long must its proverbs survive, with all their wealth of experience, their depth of thought and their beauty of expression.

These expressions are not only commended for being didactic but also for the rich symbolic language they transmit to our future generations. This then puts forward the Zulus' perception of the celestial bodies and natural phenomena as they are metaphorically used in their literature.

This chapter also touches on the sun, moon, weather conditions and natural phenomena in this category of prose. The sun has been reflected as standing for different situations. The rising sun may stand for the beginning of life while the setting one may depict the end of it. The setting sun may also symbolise death in certain instances. It may also mark the beginning of the nighttime and its troubles like sickness and fear. There isn't much that is said about the moon except that Zulus could use it to determine rain and drought

Regarding weather conditions and other natural phenomena, they appear to play a major role in defining different situations in a Zulu social setting. One of these could be used to define the behaviour as well as the character of the people as a response to certain circumstances that they come across in life as depicted in a novel, or short story or an essay. A cloudy stormy weather may stand for confusion, uncertainty, anger, etc. These sky bodies and natural phenomena are therefore used as symbols in this genre of literature. In most cases in each and



every instance where they are used they stand for something.

**CHAPTER 5**  
**CONCLUSION**

This chapter will summarise the study, its analysis, interpretation of findings as well as recommendations thereof. These are findings of the whole study which show exactly how a literary artist views the celestial bodies and natural phenomena from a Zulu perspective. It may be a contribution to help anybody who has not been taking cognisance of the usage of the celestial bodies and natural phenomena fully in isiZulu. This includes almost all genres of literature that are involved.

The major highlight of this study is that Zulus are not mere stargazers. They assign different meanings, philosophies and beliefs to heavenly bodies. These conclusions emanate from the metaphorical transference of meaning that is mostly used. The fact that when they look at the sun they associate it with power, life, health, godliness, disaster, happiness, success etc shows that to them one object can depict different situations. The symbolical meaning depends solely on the context in which that particular object is used at that point and time.

It is not surprising to note that Zulus share similar sentiments with other African people regarding these celestial bodies. They all assign elements of godliness to the sun in that it can bring life as well as death. To all of them the sun is the most important of all other celestial bodies. All natural phenomena

like human beings, animals, vegetation, moon and weather rely on the sun. On this Ridpath (1987:31-32) points out that all living things need the sun in order to live. Plants need sunlight to grow. Animals feed on the plants. The plant eating animals, are eaten by others. People eat plants and animals. The sun also warms the land, sea and air thereby causing wonderful weather so people can go and bask on beaches. It also causes storms, winds, clouds and rain.

In summer, days are long and warm whereas in winter they are short and cold. The two main dilemmas that are caused by the presence as well as the absence of the sun are darkness and light. The meaning assigned by the Zulus to darkness and light concurs with everybody's view. This belief is influenced by both Christian and traditional religions. According to Christianity, darkness is associated with Satan and sin whereas in the traditional setting it is associated with witchcraft and death. In both religions light is associated with goodness and life.

Unlike other nations of the world like Greeks, Egyptians and Asyrians who literally worship the sun, Zulus believe that it plays a major role in life as a whole but do not come out clearly to actually worship the sun. They do however look at it as having some godly powers. From certain Zulu poems the sun has been seen as representing God or being God himself. The behaviour of the sun is very mysterious to the Zulus because when they think deeply about it they fail to explain what it is, its nature and its behaviour. Most

Zulus do not use the scientific approach in defining and looking at the sun. They simply view it in relation to its behaviour, influence on the earth, human beings, animals, vegetation and other phenomena like the weather and life as a whole.

The fact that language not only represents the object of the word but also the intentions of the speaker, calls for consideration of the speaker's culture. One should consider one's beliefs regarding the whole universe. In the case of the Zulus the idea of the three-tier creation influences their culture a great deal. When they look at the sky and its components, they look at it in relation to the earth and the underworld. The thinking, belief, philosophy and behaviour of the Zulus regarding the celestial bodies and associated natural phenomena has been looked at in *izibongo*, modern poetry, traditional literature as well as modern literature. In all these genres of literature these celestial bodies (especially the sun) are not seen in the literal sense but have a figurative meaning.

This has been achieved by using the Russian formalist theory especially the defamiliarization and Jakobson's theory of metaphor and metonymy. In *izibongo* the sun is associated symbolically with kings. Due to its dominance over nature, it is associated with royalty who dominate their subordinates. Others assign godliness to it because God is the source of life. This matches the conception held by other African people like the Luyia of Kenya, Yoruba of Nigeria,

Kikuyu of Kenya, Ganda, Bacwa and Sonjo who regard God as reigning in heaven through nature. Africans believe that God dwells in all aspects of nature that he created.

In modern poetry God is seen as revealing himself through his creation and most poets look at the sun as the source of life and goodness. They look at it as though it is associated with God Himself and even refer to it as God's eye. When they consider the sun it encourages them to think deeply about the mystery of God. If they are uncertain about God they cast around for such an idea. Through the sun they try to have a guess about him and his relation to nature as a whole.

Traditional literature and later genres also assign supreme importance to the sun and moon. The sun dominates during the day and the moon during the night. But both are given human attributes of kingship. The fact that both these objects bring light confirms them as carriers of life to living creatures. However, supreme power means they bring life as well as death. Zulu people, however, look at it from the positive side, that of life rather than death.

In most cases sunlight stands for healing power and in some of our stories this stands for goodness. When this light is overshadowed, it is either by death or evil that is represented by darkness. In most cases the sun and its light are believed to be having certain powers or are a symbol of life.

The belief that the Zulus have of the relationship between God and celestial bodies is seen in Revelations chapter 12:1 which says:

A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head.

This mention of the sun, moon and stars in relation to heaven shows that these are somehow related to God or he reveals himself through them. The fact that the Zulus are a nation whose life centres around kingship and chiefdom means they associate these celestial bodies with kingship and/or chiefdom. On the other hand, the mysterious nature and behaviour of these bodies influence the Zulus to associate them with God or godliness whose nature and behaviour are also mysterious. One can then conclude that when the Zulus look at the sun and the celestial bodies they do assign them certain elements of godliness. They also think deeply about God and his revelation to his creation.

To a Zulu literary artist the sun and light carry universal symbols, those of godliness, life, healing, goodness and happiness, while darkness stands for death, sin, evil, confusion and witchcraft. According to the Zulus God is known as *uNkosiyaphezulu* who dwells in heaven, and this helps us in imagining this God. Having exhausted all power of imagination the only thing that we remain with is the sun and other

celestial bodies. This has been supported by poets who say explicitly that when they look at the sun they look at God Himself. Others say the sun is God's eye. Since God is invisible they believe that the sun is the visible reflection of this mysterious God. They all award to the sun the power to rule over nature like God over his subjects and creation.

There is a channel of communication between the Zulus and their God. They are aware that if they have misdeameanoured he punishes them through the scorching sun or the thunderstorm and lightning. The Zulus also believe that God communicates with them using thunderstorms. Cemane and Nkabinde (1975:2) say:

*Angithi nje uma liduma izulu kwakuye  
kuthiwe uMvelingqangi uyakhuluma*

When it thunders people say God is speaking.

In times of drought they appeal to God for rain by mere going to the mountain to plead for rain in a customary way. This customary way of going to the mountain to plead for rain has been adopted by Christians. They all believe that God in heaven is capable of bringing rain. This belief is reflected in Ntuli's essay (1994:150) where he says:

*Kusho ukuthi ukhona umuntu ngaleya  
ongabonakali. Uyakwazi ukubona uhlamvu  
uma selufakwe phansi ukuthi kumele  
alumilise, nemvula ayinise ukuze zidle  
utshani nezinkomo. Unamehlo abukhali.*

It means that there is an invisible person up yonder. He is able to see to it that a planted seed germinates, rainfall comes so that cattle could have grass to eat. His eyes are sharp.  
(**Isibhakabhaka**, 1994:150).

Positive response is received in most cases. It is also interesting to know that the moon itself, clouds and rainbow are the determinants that predict the forthcoming weather. Without any scientific knowledge of astronomy the Zulus could and can still easily interpret the different states of these natural phenomena.

This study then proves that the Zulus rely a lot on nature and more specifically celestial bodies in their daily lives. These bodies are seen as representing God who is the creator of everything. To appreciate this view it has been necessary to get a Zulu literary artist's conception of the firmament and celestial bodies. This is important because people's beliefs, philosophy, history, culture and life as a whole is clearly reflected in their literature. Literature is taken as a storeroom of history, religion, and language of the people. It is a mirror through which anybody can learn more about a particular people.

The author hopes that this study shows that the Zulus observed the world around them and reflected upon it. They looked at the heavenly bodies above them like the sun, moon and the stars. On earth they could see



animals, insects and plants. Although their knowledge and power had understandable limitations it was through their five major senses that they use to open gates through which all kinds of experiences flowed upon them. These experiences stimulated them to reflect upon their life and the universe in which they lived. The result thereof was a gradual building up of what one can term the Zulus' views or ideas about the world and the universe at large which are reflected in their literature. They are trying to establish or tackle the relationship between the sky above and the earth below it. There can be no end to the development of people's views about the universe.

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