

A CRITICAL COMMENTARY

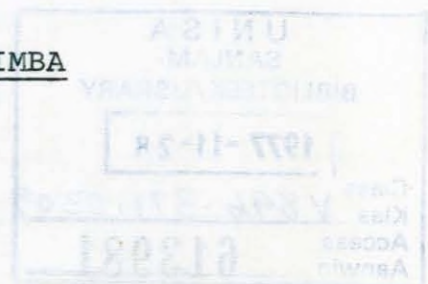
ON THE

FAILURE OF SOME XHOSA NOVELISTS

TO PORTRAY REAL - LIFE HEROES AND SITUATIONS

by

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Submitted to satisfy the requirements for the degree of
Honours B.A. in the Department of Bantu Languages at the
University of South Africa.

Date handed in: 29th January, 1973.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The nature of the problem

0.1 The novel has been given many definitions by various writers. But Lever's definition seems very apt, 'A novel is the form of written prose narrative of considerable length involving the reader in an imagined real world which is new because it has been created by the author' (Lever, 1961, p.16). Earlier, Tappan had pointed out the essential qualities of a novel when he said, 'The novel must have a plot, it must have prominent and secondary characters, and, just as in a play, these characters must act naturally and must change as they are acted upon by incidents or by other characters,' (Tappan, 1964, p.190).

0.2 It is these characters that we are mostly concerned with in our Xhosa novels. Are they acting naturally; are they true to life; are they representative of prominent characters in our society? These are some of the problems that we want to unravel. Lever points out the essential qualities that should be reflected in a novel when he says, 'The relation of the imagined to the actual is a major psychological, philosophical and practical problem. One aspect of the relationship is the relationship of the imagined characters to the actual people the author knew. A second aspect is the relation of these imagined characters to us as actual people. A third aspect is the relation between the people we imagine and the actual people we are in contact with. We are constantly striving to reconcile our images of people with people themselves. The novel is significant because it is concerned with one of the most significant problems we face everyday' (Lever, 1961, p.22).

2. AN ANALYSIS OF SOME NOVELS

1. In this analysis, the early novels have been ignored as they are pioneering attempts of courageous writers at expressing their

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thoughts and experiences in written form. Professor Louw and Mr. Qangule have drawn up a thematic classification of Xhosa novels in their UNISA notes for Course II Xhosa students. We shall use some of this classification in our analysis.

1.1 Most novels in Xhosa have the type of theme in which the hero moves from the country into town. In town he mixes with bad company and becomes one of the worst elements of urban society. The end of the hero is either that he dies as he lived in town, or he goes back to the country and practices his urban tricks on the unsuspecting country folk before he meets his untimely end or repents. In this category of novels we have UMNTU AKANAMBULELO by B.M. Bomela. Bomela's hero, Thobelakhe, is a country man who goes to Cape Town for the first time imbued with the desire of uplifting his home. Before long, he becomes one of four gangsters. Throughout the book, the hero is most disappointing. When framed by his room mate, Thabo, he is sent to goal and on his return he does not break away from his friends as one would expect. Instead he goes along with them and participates in their burglaries. He meets his end in the country after stabbing his uncle in his attempt to sell his inheritance.

1.2 In UMZALI WOLAHLEKO by G. Sinxo, the writer shows us what over-indulgence can do to one's children. There is contrast here, in that Nojaji, the stepmother, spoils her own children whilst she ill-treats her stepchild, Ndimeni. Ndopho the hero, is so spoilt that when he grows up and has to stand on his own, he becomes a failure. He goes to town and the evils of urban life overwhelm him and he dies blaming his mother for failing to discipline him at the right time. On the other hand, Ndimeni, who grew up the hard way, becomes a success in life. The moral seems to be, what one teaches a child during his formative years, he will not deviate from, or what one sows, one shall reap.

1.3 Tamsanqa in INZALA KAMLUNGISI writes on the theme of the prodigal son. The hero is Sindile whose character is spoilt because of his association with bad company. Through parental indulgence his early pranks go unpunished and he grows up an impossible child. The result is that his waywardness results in the death of his mother and the ill-treatment of his younger brother at the hands of a cruel stepmother. He ends up afflicted by his conscience.

1.4 There is a close similarity between the two novels. Both have wayward heroes as a result of indulgent parents. The step-children in both become prosperous men. The novels are highly moralistic and deal at length with urban evils. The writers, being victims of their times, their picture of urban life is that of loose morals and depraved characters which can be overcome only by those armed with a strict Christian upbringing. They are of the 'reward of sin is death' type of novels.

1.5 IKAMAVA LETHU by D.Z. Dyafta, has the same Jim to Jo'burg type of theme. Zukile the hero, is the only educated person in his family. He becomes a teacher and marries a lady teacher. For the love of a widow, he forsakes all and goes to town. Though an educated person, he cannot withstand urban temptations and soon finds himself acting as a front for a shebeen queen. It is only after he has been crippled that he decides to go home. Meanwhile, his wife has become a well-to-do person after a lot of hardship. She welcomes her husband as the father and head of the family.

1.6 The novel is most unreal in its chief characters. Though written in good Xhosa, we find it hard to believe that Zukile would behave as he did. His wife is also made an exceptional woman who could surmount the difficulties of a 'living widow' and become so prosperous. This is especially so when we consider the setting

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of the novel. The community is supposed to be backward and conservative. Consequently it is unlikely that Xhosa women would have been so liberated at that time.

1.7 This kind of novel fails to depict real-life heroes probably because the writer is either influenced by didacticism and missionary flavour, or is an unconscious tool of his period. It is important to note that the Xhosa, in common with other ethnic groups in Southern Africa, are at a crucial stage of their development. From an agrarian economy, they are painfully moving to an industrial one. Unconsciously therefore, Xhosa writing may be reflecting this metamorphosis. As will be explained later, there are real-life heroes who have moved from the country and became a success in urban areas.

(ii) Novels: Mainly dealing with rural life under the impact of Western life

2.1 Here we have novels whose theme deals with the quest for education and how the hero finally succeeds after many pitfalls. He then either becomes a teacher or a nurse and is presented as a beacon of light in his or her community. Themes of this type are found in novels like: UKUFIKA KUKAMADODANA by S. Dazana. The hero, Madodana, is from a heathen family. When he passes Standard Six, he has to struggle to go to Secondary School because his father does not realise the value of education. Before he can pass Junior Certificate, his father dies and he is forced to go to Johannesburg. There he experiences the ups and downs of urban life. He takes private lessons and on passing goes to Lovedale for his professional course. Ultimately, he goes out to teach and becomes a success and civilizing influence in his community.

2.2 In KUFUNDWA NGAMAVA, Dana's hero is a school principal,

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by the name of Sinxotwe, who becomes the victim of a conspiracy of women keen to have one of their sons, Zweni, as a teacher in his place. After false accusations, Sinxotwe is dismissed and ends up in Cape Town. This gives him an opportunity of broadening his education because he takes private studies and passes his matriculation. He also learns tailoring and becomes a teacher at Langa High School. The dying of Madlamini, one of the conspirators, vindicates Sinxotwe and the local people decide to invite him back. Sinxotwe returns and through his sojourning to Cape Town, brings progress to Sulenkama.

2.3 Mda's UNOMNYAMEZELI clearly shows the impact of Western civilisation in its setting. The heroine, Nomnyamezeli, is first encountered as a school going child. She finishes her education and becomes a lady teacher. Like all teachers she experiences the problems of the teaching fraternity. She marries another teacher, by the name of Themba. Themba ill-treats her and finally deserts her for another woman. As her name implies, she endures it all and looks after Themba's children and aged parents. After an accident, Themba returns to Nomnyamezeli and they live a happy life thereafter. The theme shows how perseverance and faith can achieve desirable results.

- (iii) Novels: Mainly depicting the conflict between old disappearing social values and the accommodation of the strange Western social values.

2.4 In this category, we have themes where the people who cling to their customs are regarded by the young generation as being backward and conservative. Some young people, in their haste to imitate the white people, sometimes look down on anything which is African no matter how valuable and useful it may be.

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2.5 In E. Ndovela's SIKO NDINI, Zwilakhe is portrayed as one who does not believe in Xhosa customs. His lust for money makes him a crook of the first order. When he does get the money, he does not settle down and use it as a starting base, but loses it quickly. This reduces him to dire poverty especially when he goes to town. His children grow up wild because they have not been brought up in the good old traditional way. When Nondyebo, his daughter gets married, she quarrels with her parents-in-law because of her upbringing. On the other hand, we have the model son of Mzonzima. He has been brought up to respect the customs of his tribe. When his father dies and appears in dreams to him with instructions of what must be done, he carries them out. Zwilakhe is saved from utter destruction by being convinced by Jongi of the importance of a custom. He immediately performs the necessary custom and soon becomes well again.

2.6 The emphasis here is on the importance of the custom and what havoc its neglect can wreak. This is, of course, coupled with parental discipline. The importance of the ancestors and dream visitations are emphasized. The plot is not very clear and lacks coherence with no satisfactory climax.

2.7 ABANTWANA BETHU by M. Ngani, again shows the clash of the traditionalists with modern youth. Here, the plot involves the old tradition of marrying young people without their consent. The hero is Themba, a young prince who is highly educated. He is required to marry a semi-educated Thembu princess, Ntombebhongo. Without his knowledge, negotiations are conducted, lobola paid and a wedding date set. When he returns from his studies, his father and the tribal councillors break the news to him. He is faced with the dilemma of carrying out the wishes of his parents and marry the princess or follow the dictates of his heart and marry the woman he loves, Nomhle. In desperation, he asks for time to consider. He

decides/.....

decides to marry for love and tells his parents that he does not intend marrying the princess and that he is already married to Nomhle. The result is a court case where the princess's father sues for crimen injuria. Meanwhile, the princess has secretly written to Themba and asked him to educate her and she is sent to a boarding school. The book ends with goodwill on both sides.

2.8 The author distinguishes between custom, which may never be flaunted, and tradition, which may. He shows the importance of custom and the impotence of tradition when overtaken by time. Unlike Ndovela above, Ngani portrays the youth showing the way in a gentle manner to their elders. As the title suggests, the educated youth, who are broadminded therefore, are expected to lead the way into the unplotted future of culture contact.

2.9 Although the novel is generally good, we find that the hero is too good to be true. We meet him when he has already passed his B.A. at Fort Hare and is busy with his attorney's admission as well as his LL.B. An only child of a wealthy ambitious petty chief, whose subjects respect him more than the paramount chief, it is strange to find him unspoilt. His home being near Fort Hare, where he did most of his studies, it is surprising that he has not been spoilt by the many presents that should have been given to him by his father's subjects. In real life, we know that most of our chiefs could not be educated simply because their fathers' subjects spoilt them in this manner. The young prince, usually visualizes himself as an important person while still young and expects preferential treatment by virtue of his royal position. Our plea therefore, is for characters that can be related to real life people as much as possible.

2.10 BHOTA NONCEBA by B.B. Mafuya, is a good example of what may be termed 'bad literature'. The book is virtually full of 'Bhota Nonceba' in an apparent attempt at sticking to the title. The heroine, Nonceba is so naive as to disgust the reader. Both the situation and the chief character are far removed from real life. Nonceba is a docile second eldest daughter of a rural minister. She is dominated by her eldest sister, Funeka, who is pampered by their mother. The father is presented as the puppet of the home and incapable of managing a family. Nonceba is more like a servant than a daughter in her home. When Lindile, the second prominent character appears on the scene, she prefers Nonceba to the beautiful Funeka. Nonceba does not behave as we would expect her to do. She goes to Cape Town as a servant to a low class Coloured family in spite of the fact that she is a matriculant. Lindile, again and again comes to her rescue but she acts so dumb and seems so unsuited to the polished Lindile that she can only be comparable to Bernard Shaw's Eliza Doolittle in PYGMALION. She finally ends up by marrying Lindile and becomes a help to her family which had spurned her throughout for no apparent reason.

2.11 These novels are representative of the types of Xhosa novels that exist and are the outcome of the lack of imagination in constructing new plots. The readers of Xhosa novels may be discouraged by the fact that most of these novels have more or less the same themes. A reader may read the first few chapters and know more or less how the novel will end. If they are not depicting that the rewards of sin is death, they then depict the evils of town life and the virtues of rural life as evidenced by the innocent rural hero who is engulfed by urban evils.

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2.12 This type of writing has also discouraged the publishers from publishing Xhosa novels because of their fear that Xhosa novels, if published, will not be read except in schools. This may lead to the rejection of good novels which the publishers themselves may consider worth publishing. In turn, authors find themselves compelled to write on plots that will suit their readership and market. Since there is little interest in novel reading by the general public, authors also seem to contribute to this lack of interest by their lack of diversification in their plots. If they could persist in writing for the general public not only for the schools, it is possible that public interest would be roused, publishers interested and Xhosa literature expanded.

(iv) Novels, representative of good novel writing in Xhosa.

3.1 Apart from Novels which fall under historical novels, we have some good Xhosa novels. HAYI LO MLOMO by G.J. Mdledle, shows what good and bad can result from our mouths. The plot opens with a young wife quarrelling with her husband. Her jealousy causes many bad things to come out of her mouth. The result is that her husband, Zizwe, rushes out and after nearly drowning himself, wanders off from home. Because of her mouth, the wife also runs away to East London and works as a domestic. One day she eavesdrops on her friends discussing her and this makes her realise the dangers of the mouth and she returns home. Meanwhile, her husband has landed a job at Qumra as a clerk. This position requires a married man and he decides to return home and fetch his wife. At home, his mother has been subjected to the agonies of the mouth because of her children's disappearance. Through talking, the two estranged young people find themselves again. The novel ends by philosophising on the virtues and vices of the mouth.

3.2 Jongilanga's UKUQHAWUKA KWEMBELEKO is another good Xhosa novel. Zoleka the heroine, is deprived of the opportunity of getting a good education because of her father's love for lobola. She is forced to marry someone she does not even know. Zoleka's hatred for her 'husband' is such that she kills him with an axe. She is sent to a reformatory and on her return continues her love affair with her lover Zet. But, because of his flirtation, he ends up by dying too. Zoleka decides to commit suicide and drown herself in the sea. The novel resolves itself into catastrophes and again shows what tragedies can follow the outdated tradition of arranged marriages.

3.3 Mzamane's IZINTO ZODIDI is a social novel of the highest order. The chief character is Deyi who works in Johannesburg. His wife, Makhwetshube is so lonely that she decides to join her husband. She finds him a gangster, and an attempt on his life makes them decide to return home. Their son, Manzodidi becomes an eminent scientist at Toronto University where he makes an important scientific discovery. Another secondary character is Mamzotho who is intelligent and progressive. As a result, she is sent as a delegate to the United States by a women's organization.

3.4 Mzamane's novel is full of humour, intelligent discourse and some fine poetry. It distinguishes itself from many other novels by its severe lack of didacticism.

3.5 Setidisho's INDUKU AYINAMZI, depicts the tragedy that follows when the mother of the home passes away leaving small children behind. The chief character is the family head, Mpayipheli, who, on the death of his first wife takes a second one. Through her influence, he ill-treats and hates his children of the first wife. The situation portrayed here

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is real to life. As the title suggests, the excessive use of the rod never results in a happy contented home.

2. A COMPARATIVE SURVEY OF HEROES IN THE HISTORICAL

NOVELS

4.1 There are not many historical novels in Xhosa, but those available are quite good. ITYALA LAMAWELE by S.K. Mqhayi is one of these. It is as illuminating today as when it was first published. Mqhayi has opened to us the culture, the customs and the workings of a Xhosa court. Through it, future generations will be able to know where the Great Place of the Xhosa was and compare how justice was carried out then and the changes that have occurred since.

4.2 J.J. Jolobe's ELUNDINI LOTHUKELA deals with the chieftainship of the Hlubi before the scattering of the tribes by Tshaka. The novel provides interesting reading and reveals how succession to Hlubi chieftainship did not always mean that the first-born of a chief would automatically become a chief.

4.3 INGQUMBO YEMINYANA by A.C. Jordan, gives us an insight into the history of the chieftainship of the Pondomise, their resistance to change and how they value traditional worship and customs. Though dealing with the Pondomise, it could equally become applicable to any tribe in Xhosaland. Jordan seems to open a small window for us to have glimpses of the history and culture of the Pondomise through the conflict of personalities in the plot.

4.4 More recently, we have UKUBA NDANDAZILE by K. Tamsanqa. The novel deals with the chieftainship of the Xhosa as well as many aspects of the history of the Xhosa. The theme is mainly concerned with the old Xhosa custom of 'isithembu' (polygamy)

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and shows the dilemma of old traditions when confronted with modern changes. Like the INGQUMBO YEMINYANYA, there is a conflict between the traditionalists and the Christianized people.

4.5 The hero in ITYALA LAMAWELE is Wele, who plunges the Xhosa court into such confusion that it is decided to seek the advice of Khulile - an old man and custodian of custom and tradition. Chief Hintsa, the royal poet and Babini are other good secondary characters in the plot. Wele claims to be the heir to his late father's estate and quotes instances which prove his contention. His twin brother also contends that he is the heir and the whole dispute is taken to court. When the verdict is given, Wele returns home satisfied that he is not in fact the heir, but his brother Babini. When the time comes for their family to be cleansed as a result of the death of their father, word is sent to Wele from the Great Place. Wele tells the messengers that the message should have been sent to Babini as the head of the family. This results in the calling of another tribal meeting to resolve the case of the twins once and for all. There, Wele explains that he never claimed to be the heir but merely wanted his wayward twin brother to be put on the right track and fulfill his role of head of the family.

4.6 The hero here differs from the hero of INGQUMBO YEMINYANYA. In the latter novel, the hero is chief Zwelinzima, a Westernized man who lacks the psychology and philosophy necessary for leading conservative tribesmen to the new ways which he knows are good for them. He flouted customs and traditions without realising their significance to his subjects. Though popular with his subjects, the choice of a Fingo woman for a wife and her seemingly bad behaviour through her contempt of avoidance practices, fans the fires which lead to the

splitting/.....

splitting of the tribe and catastrophe. Zwelinzima's failure to detect his uncle's treachery is characteristic of human weakness. Another important character is Ngxabane who is the custodian of custom, a historian and a prophet. He survives up to the end of the novel as the unifying factor on which reliance is placed for normalizing the situation. When Nobantu, the queen kills the totem of the Pondomise, she opens up a bloodbath which results in her death, her husband, child and prominent members of the tribe.

4.7 The novel is so well balanced and so real in its characterization and situations that it has become the 'bible' of both old and young among the Xhosa. Later writers have found themselves unconsciously resorting to Jordan's style, or quoting him to emphasize certain points in their writings.

4.8 When we compare it with ITYALA LAMAWELE, we find that they differ on the question of custom and tradition. While the flouting of these results in catastrophe in Jordan's novel, in Mqhayi's, their preservation and engendering results in the prevention of catastrophe.

4.9 In ELUNDINI LOTHUKELA, the hero Ntsele, is not even the son of the main royal wives. The old chief is a man who wants a successor who will respect the customs and traditions of the Hlubi. His dilemma is that there are three claimants to the throne and he must choose the most suitable. His witchdoctor, Dlikiza helps him with his famous words:

'Baba, mntwan'enkosi, asazi lutho thina, kodwa
amanyange wona kambe athi indoda yingonyama,
ibhubesi mhlekazi. Sisiseko eso. Kodwa nalo
ibhubesi lifa liqwengwa limahlanza ngenxa
yokuqwenga. Amanyange abuye athi indoda yingcongolo
phezu/.....

phezu koThukela, mhlekazi. Ithambile kodwa yinkosi
kuba yoyisa imisinga nezikhukula zoThukela, mhlekazi.'
(Jolobe, no date, p. 6).

(Father, child of the chief, we know nothing but
the ancestors say man is a lion, a lion Sir. That is
the foundation. But even the lion dies being torn,
full of wounds because of tearing. The ancestors again
say a man is a reed on the Tugela, Sir. It is pliable
but is a chief because it can withstand the waves and
storms of the Tugela Sir.)

The chief decides that his successor must be brave as a lion but
humble and strong as a river reed. To find him from the three
princes, he decides on a test for them which involves their
carrying a clay pot full of water to his hut every evening for
a certain period of time. The young princes regard this as
women's work and below them and they therefore, ignore the
command. Ntsele, one of the insignificant princes who has no
claim on the throne, undertakes this task. He becomes the
laughing stock of the other youths, but does not mind as long
as he carries out the commands of his elders. The old chief
then realises that he has found the person suitable for
ruling the tribe. Every evening, when he brings the water, he
tells him the history of the tribe and their customs. At the
same time he makes a headring that will fit only Ntsele's head.
When the day of appointing arrives, the old chief tells the
tribe that the ancestors have decreed that the one on whom the
headring fits will be the next chief. Only Ntsele is fitted by
the headring.

4.10 The hero here differs from the one in INGQUMBO YEMINYANYA
because, as in ITYALA LAMAWELE, he is appointed on one of the
old traditions of Hlubi. He is presented as a non-claimant to

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the throne, but as the only one suitable through bravery, obedience and wisdom. Secondary characters also play their parts well and the minor plots in the novel provide the necessary background to the main plot.

4.11 In UKUBA NDANDAZILE, the hero Lindikhaya is again a chief. Like the hero of INGQUMBO YEMINYANYA, he is a Christian who is intent on civilizing his people. His people, like the Pondomise, are at the cross roads of two cultures. There are the Christians and the die-hard conservative traditionalists. Though his wife is of royal blood, she cannot have children and the conservatives want their chief to get a second wife who will have children so that the royal line should continue. The chief has declared that he is not prepared to have a second wife despite the constant advice that this is an old Xhosa custom and that as the head and descent of one of the most important royal houses, he cannot break the established custom of polygamy. In support of this contention, one of the prominent characters in the plot, Xabiso says,

'Mna ukungazali kwenkosi le andikothuki, kuhla into endandiyilindele kakade okanye ndandilindele nayiphi na into enokuhla kuba lingalahlwa isiko iminyanya iyaqumba; ingaqumba ke iminyanya akudli ngakulungelelana phakathi kwekhaya, iba zizivondoviya. Ngalinye, ingqumbo yeminyanya ilandelwa ngamashwa namashwangusha.' (Tamsanqa, 1967, p.69)

(As for me, I am not surprised by the chief not getting an offspring, what is happening is something that I had expected and I had expected anything to happen because once the custom is ignored the ancestors become angry; once the ancestors become angry there is no peace in the home, there is confusion. In one word, the wrath

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of the ancestors is followed by misfortune upon misfortune).

4.12 Lindikhaya tries to show his people why he cannot take a second wife, and to appease them, he procrastinates. Unfortunately he meets a beautiful lady teacher, Nomazizi, who is a Fingo. Her beauty makes him forget all his Christian principles. He now sees things in a different light and decides to take a second wife. On hearing this, the queen asks for permission to go home until after the wedding. With mixed feelings, Lindikhaya agrees. The Fingo beauty agrees to marry the chief without ascertaining as to whether he has a wife or not. On the wedding day, the queen arrives in church whilst everybody is waiting to witness the union of Lindikhaya and Nomazizi. She correctly points out that Lindikhaya is her husband. This revelation leads to catastrophe and the end of the attempted union.

4.13 The novel is very similar to INGQUMBO YEMINYANYA. The hero in both is an educated progressive man. They are both chiefs faced with the unenviable task of leading a conservative people to a Western way of life. They find themselves beset with marriage problems. Whilst Zwelinzima angers his subjects by marrying a commoner, Lindikhaya is married to a Thembu princess and angers his subjects by refusing to take a second wife. When Zwelinzima bows to the wishes of his subjects to take a second wife, tragedy ensues. Likewise, when Lindikhaya wants to take a commoner as his second wife, tragedy follows. Both have chosen their first wives, instead of the tribe choosing for them, which is something contrary to custom.

4.14 From the above similarities, it is hard not to believe

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that the second novel is not based on the first one, with a different setting. But be that as it may, both are quite good with intelligent characterization and situations.

4.15 These novels seem to flow from the early attempts of the first Xhosa writers who were anxious to preserve the Xhosa heritage. We refer to men like Tiyo Soga who wrote a book on the customs and traditions of the Xhosa. Though classified under anthropology, it is an invaluable book on the Xhosa heritage. The anthology, ZEMK'IINKOMO MAGWALANDINI by W. Rubusana, is a call to Xhosa writers to preserve and cherish their heritage. It has some important historical extracts like a list of the Ngqika chiefs, the death of Sigcau Rili, some Hlubi chiefs, as well as some poetry, proverbial and idiomatic expressions and African lore. Another anthology is IMIBENGO by W.G. Bennie, which has also historical extracts besides the other themes which try to cater for all types of readers.

4.16 In these historical novels, we find that, by the very nature of their themes, they are incapable of boring the reader, because they are not strictly history books but novels which depict historical characters and situations. They are educative without pedantry nor do they exhort or preach.

4. DESCRIPTIONS OF REVERED PERSONS AND SITUATIONS OF IMPORTANCE

5.1 The Xhosa, like other nations, have their heroes both contemporary and old. There are also events and occasions that merit the attention of writers. What Lever said is true, namely, 'A third aspect is the relation between the people we imagine and the actual people we are in contact with.' (vide 0.2, p.1). We have many prominent people in

different/.....

different spheres of life on whom some novelists could base their imagined characters.

5.2 On page 4, under 1.7, we stated that there are real-life heroes who have moved from the country and became a success in urban areas. This is invariably true if we take cognizance of the fact that for a long time, the Africans in the urban areas had very poor educational facilities. Apart from this, there was no incentive on their part to encourage their children to attend school beyond Standard Six. The few that did, found that they had to send their children out to boarding schools in rural areas. The first schools of higher learning were built in the country and it is the country Africans who took advantage of this. It is not surprising therefore, that educated Africans were virtually people from the rural areas. Some of these people, for some reason or other, made their way into urban areas. Because of their education, their social status became higher than that of the ordinary urban African. They had better job opportunities and some soon became leaders of their people in the towns. For instance, the late I.D. Mkize, grew up at UMZIMKHULU in the Transkei. An educated man, he came to Cape Town as a principal of Langa Secondary School. Through his efforts, the school grew up and soon became a High School. He was never for one moment ostracised because of his country background, but was respected instead. Mr. V.C. Qunta, who was the founder of the same school, comes from Peddie, but because of his educational status he was able to improve the lot of the Cape Town Africans by first founding a school and later becoming its principal and chief. The late Dr. Xuma, was born at Engcobo, studied in

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America and after marrying a negro woman came back and settled in Johannesburg. He became the focal point not only of the Xhosas there, but of all the Africans on the Rand and beyond. The fact that he came from the country was never a handicap against him.

5.3 These are but a few examples of a universal occurrence in all urban centres of the Republic. People like these are regarded as leaders in their communities in the townships, because of the many services they instituted, encouraged and sometimes controlled.

5.4 It would seem therefore, that even our novel writers only write about one stream of African society, the stream that is made up of uneducated starry-eyed ignoramuses who cannot discriminate bad from good. This may partly be explained by the fact that, for a long time, the novelists themselves were country people whose experience of urban life was limited to occasional short visits into towns or cities, stories of the Chicago type of characters prevalent in the townships and fear of urban life in general. These experiences they portrayed in their novels. But this is partially negated by the fact that, even the late novelists (some of whom have lived in urban areas) have not departed from this general trend of presenting the one bad side of urban life. Probably also they are influenced by the writings of their country predecessors. Our problem then is why the other stream of African society, which is more important, is being ignored.

5.5 Besides these ignored heroes, we have many other heroes in different spheres of life. In the religious sphere, for instance, we have firstly the early pioneers. These people

accepted an alien form of worship from a people they did not know. They were able to resist the temptation of falling back on the accepted form of life of their ancestors in which they themselves were brought up. In this regard, we are thinking of the Tyhume converts, in particular. We may mention the Sogas one of whom was even trusting enough to go overseas, Rev. E. Makhiwane, Dr. W. Rubusana and Rev. Mzimba, among others. Apart from biographies about them, no novel has been written based on any of these people.

5.6 More recently, with the spread of Christianity, we have had prominent Africans distinguishing themselves in the various denominations. In the Methodist Church, for instance, we have the late Rev. Seth Mokitimi, who was the first African to be the President of the Methodist Church. Though Sotho speaking, he has devoted most of his life among the Xhosa as a House Master and Governor in the missionary schools under the Methodist wing. Currently, we have Rev. Mvusi as the second African to be President of the same church. In the Church of the Province, the Xhosa have also come to occupy distinguished positions hitherto occupied by Whites. Here, we think for instance of Bishop Sobukwe who is the first Xhosa priest to be so elevated.

5.7 Apart from these, we have the Independent Churches which are mostly African controlled. Though many of these are of the spiritually oriented type and run mostly by semi-literate leaders, there are those that have had an impact on Xhosa beliefs from providing some useful social services. Among these, we may mention the church of the

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late Rev. Mzimba which broke away from the Presbyterian Church of Scotland; that founded by the late Rev. Limba with headquarters in Port Elizabeth. It is important to note that this break-away movement has not been confined to the Xhosa only, but is prevalent throughout Southern Africa.

5.8 In the educational field, there are many prominent people upon whom novels could be based. Their contribution in education is well-known. When Nurse Makhiwane qualified as a nurse at Victoria Hospital, she made history among the Xhosa, indeed, among the Africans of Southern Africa, including the then African Federation. Professor D.D.T. Jabavu was again the first African to become professor in South Africa. Professor Z.K. Mathews was the first African to obtain a degree at Fort Hare and lecture there as well.

5.9 Besides these firsts, we have many educationists past and present who have made their mark in our Xhosa community. Among these we may mention the late Professor A.C. Jordan, Mr. B.B. Mdledle. Among the living we have men like Mr. C. Ndamse, Mr. P.M. Ntloko, Mr. R. Cingo, to mention only a few.

5.10 In politics, we have people like the late W. Rubusana, Chief Kaiser Matanzima, Chief Justice Mabandla, Sister Dora Nginza and Mr. K. Guzana, opposition leader in the Transkei government.

5.11 In the social sphere, we have a few distinguished characters. In particular, we think of women who have done a lot in the Xhosa social life. The late wife of Dr. Xuma was the founder of the Women's Self-help Association, a movement that had a great following among the African women.

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5.12 With regard to situations on which novels could be set, we find there is a considerable amount of unexplored ground. There are old events which can only be kept alive if incorporated in novels. For instance, few among the Xhosa know the background to the Cattle Killing episode involving Nongqawuse. The death of chief Hintsa and the hard times the Xhosa had afterwards under his son Chief Sarili, including the superstitious beliefs surrounding his burial place.

5.13 Magic, witchcraft and the persistent belief in diviners up to the present, is an unexplored sphere. Especially is the widespread superstition found in urban areas involving both the poor and the well-to-do Africans a big problem of research! The inter-relationship between dreams, the ancestors, spiritualism, divining and the significance of water. As yet there is no novel which has been satisfactorily written so as to throw light on the above phenomena.

5.14 In South Africa, the early sixties saw the rapid development of the different ethnic groups. This has opened up vast opportunities and situations for novel writing, indeed, for all forms of African literature, including playwriting. We may mention the Radio Bantu services and the resultant interest in the news programs, plays presented in the various languages, and other items all of which are broadcast from the local F.M. station (e.g. Kingwilliamstown (Xhosa), Pietersburg (Venda, Shangaan, Pedi), Bloemfontein (South Sotho) etc.) It may be relevant to mention here that this interest in Radio Bantu regional services has resulted in a vast purchase of F.M. radios by Africans.

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The novel and entirely new experience of Africans in owning land in the Bantustans, for instance, the exodus of traders from the urban areas to the Bantustans, could all be used in novel writing as depicting the insecurity of the African in urban areas and the promise of security in the homelands.

5. CONCLUSION AND FORECAST FOR THE FUTURE

6.1 We have thus seen what problems contribute towards the dearth of novel writing in Xhosa literature. However, we hasten to point out that these are not the only factors that are responsible for the apparent lethargy in Xhosa novel reading. But, it is good for our writers to know what is essential to the Xhosa reader and what can excite his imagination. As pointed out the material for writing is there and it only needs the exercise of the imagination to blend it into a whole to suit different situations.

6.2 Many people interested in the development of Xhosa literature, have been puzzled by the poor quality of Xhosa novels and often wondered as to this lack of literary creativeness on the part of the Xhosa. It will be appreciated if we realise that the Xhosa, like other ethnic groups in South Africa, are basically divided into urban and rural Xhosa. As we know that education and novel writing started in the country, the rural people have been handicapped by the fact that there has been no interest from the beginning to make them read Xhosa literature of whatever nature. Add to this the non-existence of libraries where books on any subject could be obtained, let alone books in and on the vernacular. The missionary schools themselves had poor libraries which, any way, were open to students only. In spite of the many primary schools that existed in the country,

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not one had a library and it is unthinkable therefore that there could be public libraries. Even as we write, there are very few public libraries in the country and also very few primary schools that can boast of any.

6.3 In the urban areas, it is only recently that public libraries have been built in the African townships. It is, however, encouraging to see young and old people streaming to these libraries and to witness their interest in the latest published Xhosa novels, (as the writer has had the opportunity to observe for himself). This interest can, of course, be ascribed to the intense interest that has been shown by urban adults in undertaking private studies by attending continuation classes.

6.4 The Bantustan policy has resulted, inter alia, in a constant culture contact between urban and rural Africans. Many cultural groups, entertaining troupes and politicians move between the homelands and the cities. Radio Bantu is also contributing to this culture contact by its reviewing of newly written books, acting plays, and announcing the names of those who have passed away, besides the many other varied services it offers. In this way the distance between country and town is shortened considerably. All these factors may help to stimulate interest in Xhosa culture and most of all, in Xhosa literary development and expansion. In other words, we wish to emphasize that so many factors in the present evolution of the Xhosa can easily contribute to their literary interest.

6. 5 There are steps which can be taken to accelerate the development of Xhosa literature. One of these has already been embarked/.....

embarked upon in the Transkei, where they have set up writers' clubs or pen-clubs. Writers and potential writers can then contribute articles and manuscripts on any literary matter and these are then edited and published. ISIVIVANE in the Transkei is one of these and is doing a very good job. Also, funds could be established to finance writers so that their material could be easily published. In this way writers may find themselves free from the anxiety of finding their manuscripts never seeing the light of day as well as finding themselves compelled to write only for the schools but not for the public.

6.6 In this way, we hope that the standard of writing will improve through direct experience. But, most important of all, we hope that this diversification of the possibilities for authors will remove the rather vague suspicion that many would-be writers appear to entertain that some members of the Language Committees give preference to their own or their acquaintances' books for prescription as school books regardless of their quality and literary merit. This has resulted in the public questioning the yardstick by which the Language Committees determine what constitutes a good novel or short story or anthology of poems.

6.7 With many avenues being opened up, we hope that our cultural heritage will be preserved and blended with the new cultures that we daily come into contact with.

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