

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SOME ASPECTS
OF SIYONGWANA'S: " UBULUMKO BEZINJA "**

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BY

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Honours degree with the Department of African Languages
faculty of Humanities UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE

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DATE SUBMITTED: FEBRUARY 1999

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to give thanks to the following:

- Prof C.R. Botha, My supervisor, for his continued support and guidance throughout this study.
- the staff of the Fort Hare African Languages department for enlightening me on some aspects concerning my study.
- the Fort Hare main library staff, especially the Howard Pim section, for organising reading material for me.
- the staff of the National Heritage And Cultural Studies for allowing me to access their library in search of some sources for my study.
- my family for their overwhelming support.
- my friends who, during this study, supported me financially, morally, or otherwise.
- the spirits of my parents, Norton and Nosingile, which I believe have been safeguarding me throughout my life especially in my education.
- special thanks to Danny Massey for editing and giving fruitful suggestions on my study.
- and my grandmother, Nowinithi, for being such a responsible person in my life.
- above all, I thank the Lord for making everything possible.



CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the contents of this study. The reader will be introduced to the study with specific reference to aspects such as the aim of the study, the method of research, the significance of the study and the scope of the study. The contents of the various chapters will also be briefly described in this particular discussion. This chapter will therefore serve as an orientation and introduction of the reader to the study.

1.2 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to make a critical analysis of the text, **Ubulumko Bezinja** [Wisdom of the dogs] (Oxford;1962). Some aspects of the novel will be dealt with in greater detail than others, and thus the reader will be provided with some more understanding of these particular aspects. Some outstanding features in **Ubulumko Bezinja** will also be considered and that will provide the reader with more information about the novel. The influence of the particular aspect in the unity of the novel and the properties that contributed to the success of this novel will be illustrated. This study will help to provide the reader with better understanding of the text of the Xhosa novel at large, as well as of the cultural and political history of South Africa. In other words, this study is aimed at acquainting the reader with some information about the social relevance of the novel and of the Xhosa novel at large.

1.3 METHOD OF RESEARCH

Different sources of information have been utilised for the analysis of the novel. Thorough reading of the text has been made. Some sources of literary criticism, especially those dealing with the aspects concerned, have also been studied. A background study of African literature, with reference to its origin and its unique features, has been made. The relationship between modern Xhosa literature and its predecessor, i.e. African traditional literature, has been studied quite well. The research that has already been conducted on the Xhosa novel, and this novel in particular, has received high consideration. The study of the background of the author in the form of biographical texts as well as audio material of a biographic nature has been conducted.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Siyongwana's **Ubulumko Bezinja** (1962) has more than three decades of existence. A number of scholars have studied and criticised the novel, as will be illustrated in chapter three, four and five of this study. This particular study considers some specific aspects in the novel. Some scholars have already thrown light on some of these aspects, but this study aims at providing some more detail. Most scholars who have studied this novel have considered the political perspective of the novel. This study will elaborate on the already existing information and bring light to some contents which have not yet received thorough study. The study of this novel and of Xhosa literature at large will hopefully serve as a guideline to present day scholars.

1.5 SCOPE OF STUDY

The study will concentrate on the basic elements of the novel: setting, characterisation and theme. These elements will be

dealt with on the basis of separate chapters, which are as follows:

Chapter two of this study deals with the theoretical framework of the study. The reader will be introduced to the novel, i.e. its definition, its value as well as the main contents. A brief history of the Xhosa novel will also be provided. The background of the author and a brief introduction to the contents of the text will be dealt with in this chapter.

Chapter three of this study deals specifically with the setting of **Ubulumko Bezinja**. A theoretical framework of setting will be the first to be provided in this chapter. The factors that make up the setting of this novel will receive greater consideration.

Chapter four will deal specifically with the characters in a novel. A theoretical discussion of characterisation will be presented. Characters who play leading roles in the novel will receive particular consideration. The general credibility of characters in the novel will also be illustrated.

Chapter five deals specifically with the theme of the novel. The nature of the theme and its social relevance will be evaluated. Special attention will be paid to the political relevance of the theme.

Chapter six provides the general conclusion of the study. The final evaluation of the major findings of the study will be revealed in this chapter. In each of the chapters the literary and the symbolic meaning of the actions depicted in the novel will be considered.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORY

2.1 THEORY OF THE NOVEL

2.1.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to equip the reader with the necessary information before discussing the text in detail. The information includes theory of the novel and background of both the Xhosa novel as well as that of the author. A brief introduction to the contents of the novel will also be made. The novel theory will be the first to be considered in the discussion that follows.

2.1.2 THE NOVEL: A DEFINITION

Attempts to define a novel have been made by various scholars and most of them came up with different definitions. However, in those definitions there is a commonality about the fact that a novel is a "prose narrative". The field of prose narrative is quite broad and we have to come up with a more precise meaning of the term "novel". In our definition, we will show how the novel differs from other prose genres (i.e. novellete, short stories and essays) which are quite related to the novel. In most cases, length has been used to distinguish a novel from other literary genres. One example is Mtumane (1995:8) who, in terms of length, draws the line of distinction as follows:

**" The novel usually is the longest...
and the short story is the shortest.**

The above statement is not adequate to define a novel as one might ask how long is the longest and how short is the shortest. This might also be confusing as one might think that length is the fundamental property of a novel. Having considered some properties of the novel, Mtumane (1995:7)

comes up with a more precise definition:

**" The novel is a fictitious form of
written prose narrative of considerable
length with characters, actions, events
and settings representative of real life."**

This definition is clearer, but some scholars do identify the length although it is not a common law to do so. Burges (1967:15), among other scholars, defines a novel as:

**"...any imaginative prose composition long
enough to be stitched rather than to be
stapled (a book and not a pamphlet)."**

In this definition Burges does not specify the number of the composition to be stapled and that is probably because it always depends as to how much one could staple. This assumes some problems when considering the novel on the perspective of length. Hawthorn (1985:6) adopts the Oxford English dictionary definition of a novel which is similar to that of Mtumane:

**"...a fictitious prose narrative or
tale of considerable length in which
characters and actions representative
of real life of past or present time are
portrayed in a plot of more or less
complexity."**

This definition tries to accommodate certain aspects that are the constellations of the novel. The constant mentioning of length does not imply that it is the fundamental property of a novel, but is meant to differentiate it from other genres. It

should be kept in mind, however, that length is not the only feature to distinguish a novel from other literary genres. Hawthorn argues that one should not unnecessarily prolong his or her story in order to call it a novel.

Hawthorn (1985:6) states some features that a novel should possess and so further argues about its length that:

"...we feel unhappy about granting the term novel to a tale of some forty or fifty pages...we feel that a novel should involve some investigation..."

The definitions given above show the basic properties of a novel. The point that is mostly emphasised is that not any piece of creative writing should be called a novel. Certain features that include, among others, length, should be considered in order to classify a text as a novel.

2.1.3 THE PURPOSE OR VALUE OF THE NOVEL

When one starts writing a novel or any kind of story, he or she always has a reason or aim of doing so. With regard to novels, the writer might have an experience that he or she wants to share through his writing. The message delivered and how it is delivered is what is valued most by the reader. The purpose of the writer is depicted through the actions that take place in the story. In order to make this possible, the writer has to attach an element of realism to his or her story so that the readers can recognise the story as representing their lives. It is from how its actions and events are depicted that the novel achieves its purpose. If the novel has the characters, actions, and a setting that is representative of real life, that means the reader can share his or her beliefs with the writer. Allot (1959:30) supports this idea and argues that:

" The purpose of the novelist...is to help

the reader to understand life."

In order to understand the purpose of the novel, it is important to consider certain properties that make up a good novel. A novel has to be representative of real life and share the experiences and beliefs that are familiar to the reader. In this regard Allot (1959:13) argues that:

" As a novel is analogous to the real world, it should possess the element of realism or probability, as the world is real..."

Furthermore, it is important for the reader to benefit from the novel. Among others, the most valuable factor that a novel should possess is to help the reader apply or use the understanding that they got from the novel in real life. Pleasure and entertainment are some other factors that a novel is valued for. In some cases, these factors are considered as the primary factors of the novel. The novel gets its recognition when the reader enjoys what he or she is reading.

It could be argued that the main purpose of a novel is to present us with experiences and help us understand life and primarily provides pleasure and entertainment. The educative element in a novel is quite fundamental as it normally convey the message of the writer. The latter two (i.e. pleasure and entertainment) are also important as they give an aesthetic quality to a text.

2.1.4 THE MAIN ELEMENTS OF A NOVEL

All the elements in a novel are equally important. In order to identify the main elements, one has to look for those elements that make it impossible for a text to be recognised as a novel when they are left out. In this discussion we will identify at least four elements that are quite crucial in a novel: **theme,**

character, setting and plot.

Theme in most instances is recognised as the most important element in a novel. This perception develops because theme is the main idea that the writer intends to share with the reader. All other aspects in a novel contribute to the development of the theme. However, there are some other important elements without which the theme will be impossible to depict.

Characters in a novel have the responsibility of carrying the actions. The actions carried by the characters have to be believable. In other words, they have to be the actions that are taking place in our real world. If the characters are human, they have to be as we are human. Particular attention could be paid to certain characters by giving them special abilities that make them special in order to achieve the writer's aim. This view is further emphasised by Brooks and Warren (1959:169) when they argue that:

" ...some characters are obviously more special than others, and require much fuller descriptive characterisation."

It is through what the character does that we know who the character is. The surroundings in which the characters are interacting with one another are also important. Setting is the environment in which the story is set. The actions, events and incidents take place in a particular setting. The environment has to be arranged to suit the actions that take place so as to accommodate the beliefs of the reader. For instance, it is not strange for an African reader to find the notions of ancestral beliefs in African novels, as they are peculiar to their beliefs. The setting, therefore, has to be created to suit the situation of the people written for.

Plot in a novel is generally known as the sequence of events. Events in a novel have to assume a logical sequence. The purpose of the plot is to link each detail to the next so as to give

better understanding of the events taking place in the novel. There are some other elements in the novel that are equally important, but for the purposes of this specific study will not receive further attention here.

2.2 BRIEF REVIEW OF THE XHOSA NOVEL

2.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Through the influence of the missionaries, Xhosa has been fortunate to be the first written African language. It was in the beginning of the twentieth century that Xhosa literature got its start. This study will focus on the birth and development of the Xhosa novel, beginning from 1909 up to the eighties. Special attention will be paid to the lives of the most prosperous writers of this period.

2.2.2 RISE AND DEVELOPMENT OF XHOSA NOVELS

Henry Msila Ndawo should be considered as the founder of the Xhosa novel for his novel **Uhambo luka Gqobhoka** (Lovedale;1909). Ndawo was a teacher and belonged to the Hlubi tribe (Gerard;1981:63). Another prosperous writer from this tribe is S.E.K. Mqhayi, who was also a teacher. Mqhayi's **Ityala Lamawele** (Lovedale;1914), is his first novel and **U-Don Jadu** (1929) is the second one. Writers such as Mqhayi seemed to open opportunities for other African writers in South Africa. One of those writers is Guybon B. Sinxo, who was born on 8 October 1902, at Fort Beaufort. Sinxo's first novel, **U-Nomsa**, was printed at Lovedale in 1922. His wife who was Mqhayi's daughter died in 1929. He dedicated to her the novel, **Umfundisi wase Mthuwasi** (Lovedale;1927). In 1933 Sinxo wrote his third novel, **Umzali Wolahleko** (1933), which was printed at Lovedale. He died on the 14th of June in 1962 (Gerard;1981:69).

Another writer of this generation was James J.R. Jolobe, who was born at Indwe in 1902. Jolobe wrote the novels **Elundini Lothukela** and **Uzagula** (1923). More Xhosa writers like A.C. Jordan, who

wrote the novel, **Ingqumbo Yeminyanya** (Lovedale;1940), emerged as the middle of the century approached. It was during this time that Siyongwana's novel **Ubulumko Bezinja** (Oxford;1962) was first published. This publication will receive more attention in the chapters that follow. The Xhosa novel seemed to be developing as the century progressed. Some prosperous writers of the modern generation, such as P.T. Mtuze, are still producing Xhosa novels. Mtuze's novels include **Umsinga** (1979) and **UDingezweni** (1983). Since the beginning of the century, there has been rapid growth of literature writing in South Africa. The Xhosa novel in particular developed quite strongly and successfully during this period. This is probably because of the common experiences that the authors shared during this period, specifically with regards to the political situation in South Africa.

2.3 THE BACKGROUND OF THE AUTHOR

2.3.1 INTRODUCCION

This section is going to present the biographical background of the author. The information to be presented has been collected, mainly, from Kanjana's Master of Arts Dissertation (UFH;1996) and a biographical audio tape which is available at the National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre. The personal background of the author will be presented separately from his social and literary contribution.

2.3.1 PERSONAL BACKGROUND

Rustum Siyongwana is the son of Mr T. Siyongwana and Mvulazana Tsedi. He was born on 10 May 1928, at Ngqamakhwe. He went for primary education at Esihlabeni primary school in Ngqamakhwe. After primary education, he went to study at Nomaheya Missionary School where he completed standard six in 1944. He went to Emgwali where he completed the Junior certificate in 1946. He proceeded to do the senior certificate in the same place, but due

to certain circumstances (probably the political situation), he had to break without having completed his studies. He then went to work in East London and then moved to Cape Town. In Cape Town he worked for the Methodist Publishing Company. After working in Cape Town he went to Johannesburg where he started writing **Ubulumko Bezinja**.*

2.3.2 SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT AND LITERARY CONTRIBUTION

Siyongwana developed a love for reading when he was still a young boy. This love of literature intensified during his days working for the publishing company in Cape Town. In Cape Town, Siyongwana was involved in a number of social structures. He joined the ANC Youth League in 1949 and was also a member of the Resident's association in kwa-Langa. He was not just a member of these structures, but was also actively involved in some actions that were meant to oppose the government of the time. Kanjana (1996) informs that:

" ...as a youth he was frequently detained
for challenging the government policies"

Ubulumko Bezinja (1962) is the first book ever to be published by the author, but is not the first book that he wrote. His first book was turned down by publishing companies because of its overt political content. This is probably the reason why he had to resort to conveying political messages in a more symbolic way. Some critics argue that in this novel, Siyongwana is trying to imitate George Orwell's **Animal Farm** (1951). Siyongwana stated that he only read the text in 1982 after so many people have been telling him about the relatedness of his novel to **Animal Farm**. He also informed that the idea of writing about the dogs came after he read a book by A. Romany entitled **A. Romany and Raq**. In this book, A. Romany tells a story about himself and his dog. Siyongwana was also affected by Dr Sheperd's comment in his book

CHAPTER THREE: SETTING

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will deal specifically with the setting created in **Ubulumko Bezinja** (1962). Some factors that influence or work towards the setting and the significance of this setting will be considered. Not only will the geographical setting be considered, but the social and historical factors will also be considered as they play an important role in this novel.

The concept of setting may seem to be a simple one, but in fact it is rather complicated. The concept will therefore have to be defined and a discussion will follow as to how to recognise and evaluate the setting in a novel. The significance of the general setting of **Ubulumko bezinja** will also be dealt with in greater detail. As stated above, it is important to understand what setting generally is before considering it in a literary context. This discussion will firstly deal with the theoretical part of setting before going into greater detail of the setting of **Ubulumko Bezinja**.

3.1.1 DEFINING SETTING

Setting is generally known as the manner in which something is set or arranged. With regard to literature, setting has a deeper meaning. Setting in a literary text has a great significance, therefore a writer chooses a particular kind of setting for a specific purpose. In this regard, Brooks and Warren (1959: 647) argue that:

"...the writer selects only what is significant for the final purpose of the story, so he must select the significant items in presenting his settings."

The purpose of this discussion so far was to illustrate how setting functions in a novel. In order to identify setting, it is important to consider various aspects and the way that they influence the manner in which the story has been arranged. In the discussion that follows, the setting of **Ubulumko Bezinja** will be critically analysed in greater detail.

3.2 DIFFERENT SETTINGS FOUND IN "UBULUMKO BEZINJA"

3.2.1 GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

Ubulumko Bezinja is set in the rural areas. The village called Ntakana is the place where most incidents take place in the novel. This village is typical of African traditional society and the way of life lived by the inhabitants corresponds with the setting of the novel. There is also mention of places such as Njica village as well as the local forests and bushes. The narrator addresses the setting in the early developments of the novel as follows:

**"UKholisile lo ke wayakhe kwilizwe elihle
kakhulu elinamahlathi kwanamathafa" (p.1)**

**Kholisile had built in a wonderful place
with forests and bushes.**

In traditional Xhosa society a man is the head of the household. The head of the household has got to possess some property and animals such as cattle, sheep and obviously dogs to safeguard the property. In this novel, the author has depicted Kholisile as a man who meets all these requirements. The dogs, who play the leading role in this novel, belong to Kholisile and there is also mention of the kraal where the other animals are kept. We also find out that Kholisile owned some sheep:

" Ngantsasa ithile kwasa kukho igusha

kaKholisile kude kufuphi nomzi wakhe." (p.37)

**One morning there was one of Kholisile's sheep
(which was dead) not too far from his house.**

In traditional Xhosa society, people did not go to work on a daily basis in order to get paid so that they can buy themselves some food. People lived on the breeding of animals and from ploughing and planting crops in the fields. In this novel, the author has successfully presented these aspects of traditional society by making mention of farm animals such as cattle and sheep and also of the ploughing of the fields. The narrator comments on the change of seasons and argues that:

**" Abantu baya kulima emasimini kwakuna
iimvula zehlobo." (p.36)**

**People went to plough in the fields when the
rains of summer began to fall.**

The cultivated fields are normally situated in a specific place away from the houses, preferably near rivers. The animals such as cattle and sheep were kept in their own place, in man's territory, and that is the kraal. The kraals also serve, as the meeting place for men of the villages during social gatherings. Siyongwana throws light on this aspect of society by presenting a traditional ceremony held at Njica village. In this instance, the author gives the following picture of a Xhosa traditional ceremony:

**"Zafika amadoda ethe qwelele ayame ngentla
ebuhlanti ukususela esangweni." (p.62)**

**When they arrived men were sitting round the
kraal starting from the entrance.**

3.2.2 SOCIAL SETTING

Social factors play a very important role in the setting of this novel. The traditional life of Africans, particularly the Xhosa, is not just reflected in the physical make up of the setting of this novel, but also in the social perspective. The social classification and character interrelationship in this novel strongly reflects the one that is known in real life. The importance of the geographical setting of this novel has already been illustrated. It is important to note that the geographical setting on its own would not have created a good setting for the novel without the artistic formulation of social setting. In other words, there is strong correlation between these two aspects. Put together, they contribute towards the achievement of an excellent setting of this novel. It is important therefore to consider the different aspects that contribute towards the social make-up of this novel. The author presents the Ntakana village as the place where most actions and events take place in the novel. Social classifications in this village can be clearly noticed in the early development of the novel. As one reads the novel, it can be noticed that this classification ranges from men to women, boys to girls, and then animals, of which it is the dogs that are most disadvantaged. In other words, in the social classification of Ntakana, men occupy the upper position and at the bottom of this hierarchy are the dogs. In this discussion, particular attention will be paid to the status of the dogs in the society, as they are the main movers in the novel. With regard to the status of the dogs in this novel, Kanjana (1996:34) argues that:

" Dogs in this (kholisile's) family occupy the most inferior position of all animals. They are used as watchdogs at night and are as such exposed to most dangers without any security."

yakho eyamakhwenkwe." (p.42)

The man cut the meat into pieces. He divided into two, there was one for men and the other for boys.

It should be noticed that there is no mention of the dog's share even though they are present in the ceremony. Ironically, in job distribution they are constantly mentioned as the helpers of the people. This view is also acknowledged by Tawuse when he argues that:

Thina sibekwe nje ukuba siwagcine
angonakali. Inqina laloo nto nangoku
silaliswa phandle, baze abantu babese-
zindlwini.

We are just here to look after their
households. To prove that even now we
are left outside and they are in the
houses.

It should be noted that the dogs are left outside in order to ensure the safety of humans as well as their property (which includes the domestic animals). This implies that dogs do a crucial job in the households and thus are exposed to most dangers. In spite of all that, dogs still occupy the most inferior position and yet have to respect every human being. This kind of living seemed to have its roots in the minds of some dogs such as Sibi who thought that there was no way that the dogs could be compared with the people. She argues that:

" Yonke into engumntu yinkosi yenja." (p.15)
Every human being is a dog's master.

Sibi had this belief because the humans had imposed their rule on her and she never thought of complaining or challenging humans in any way. To her, humans are invincible and they always say or do the right thing. It has been confirmed above that the setting of this novel is a true reflection of Xhosa traditional society. Siyonwana stated that some foreign critics argue that African writers are concentrating on writing about people who come from the rural live unhappily in the urban areas. His aim in this novel, therefore, was to write about people who are coming from nowhere else but are in their cultural environment. That is the reason why this novel is set in a traditional society.* The roles played by the respective characters also reflect the traditional life of Africans. The author often introduces people representing different groups according to age, gender and social status. In traditional Xhosa society, all these aspects are important as they determine the recognition and status of the individual. Among the human characters, the first person that is introduced to the reader is Kholisile who is the head of the household. This is no surprise as, according to Xhosa culture, a man is the head of the household and everything has to start with him. To give a brief description of Kholisile as a typical head of the household in a traditional society, the author comments that:

**" Ukholisile wayenayo yonke into abanayo
umninimzi." (p.2)**

**Kholisile had everything that the head of
a household is supposed to have.**

The author assumes that the reader has a clear understanding of Xhosa culture. Therefore he does not bother giving all the details. The reader is expected to understand that in a traditional society, for a man to get recognition, he has to have a family, possess property which includes breeding some animals such as sheep and cattle, and obviously dogs to ensure security

of the property. However, as the story develops, the author illustrates some of these aspects and the reader realises that Kholisile meets all of these requirements. It is a common unwritten law in almost all African societies that a man whose life is a failure should be deprived some rights. Chinua Achebe (1958:15) exemplifies this view with the case of the Igbo nation of Nigeria. Here we find a son, Okonkwo, who hated his father because his life was a failure:

**And so Okonkwo was ruled by one passion-
to hate everything that his father Unoka
had loved.**

In **Ubulumko Bezinja**, we find a similar case exemplified by Kholisile. He is a highly recognised man in his society and has too much confidence in himself. As a result of his confidence, Kholisile never wanted to listen to anyone and that actually creates problems in the society. This kind of behaviour can be noticed in the way that he responds to Jongani who is trying to convince him about the way he is dealing with the dogs. In response to that, Kholisile argues that:

**" Zenza into entsha, ke, ndiyekeni nam
ndizininike isohlwayo esitsha.**

**" They are doing a new thing, let me give
them a new punishment.**

Other situations have also been presented whereby men of the *information gathered from a biographical audio tape interview of the author. society had to work as a group. One of those situations is when they had to fight against the dogs who were actually ruining their property. In this particular case, all men of the society (including Jongani) went to confront the dogs. Siyongwana informs the reader that

" Enyukile amadoda, achola amatye azigibisela.
(p.135)

The men went on, they picked up some stones
and threw them at the dogs.

The situation created by the author here is typical of the one known in real life. Men (contrary to women) do not have much responsibility in the household. As the heads, men give orders in the households and are always there to protect the whole society against any harm. Siyongwana presents a number of cases where Kholisile gives orders in his household and the person whom he gives the orders to always obeys. This can be noticed when he asks his daughter to bring him food for the dogs. The narrator exclaims that:

" Ubize intombi yakhe yasabela ikwenye indlu.
'Khawukhe intwana yomqa phaya ndiphe ezi zinja"
(p.21)

He called his daughter who responded from the
other house (in the compound). Bring me some
porridge so that I can give it to the dogs.

This particular case also illustrates the responsibility of girls within the household. In Xhosa traditional society, girls are responsible for light jobs like cooking for the family. The girl's responsibility in a traditional society can generally be considered as the preparation for womanhood. Married women have more responsibilities to take care of. This includes preparing for traditional ceremonies and other social gatherings. In the traditional ceremony held at Njica for instance, the author informs the reader of some of these responsibilities:

" Ziyile kwicala ababekulo abafazi.
Babesayiyizela kanye kukho nabazamisayo...
Abafazi bema ngenyawo bambi bathabatha
abantwana babo..." (p.67)

They (the dogs) went to the direction of
women. The women were still chanting and others
still stirring the meat. They stood up on
their feet, some took their children.

The above passage presents child bearing and preparation of food in traditional ceremonies as some of the major tasks of women in a traditional society. These tasks are carried out specifically by women. As in the case of men, boys do not have many responsibilities within the household. It has been mentioned in the above discussion that there is a relation between dogs and the boys. In this novel, the author has presented Bonani as the character representing the role of boys in a traditional society. In the early part of the novel, a group of boys is found collecting dogs for hunting. The narrator informs us that:

" Amakhwenkwe elali akhwaze izinja zakwa-
makwawo ngoku kusathethwa ngoTawuse." (p.2)

The boys of the village called the dogs
from their homes while Tawuse (and other
dogs) were still talking.

Both men and boys go for hunting, but the difference can be recognised in their objectives. Men actually go for bigger animals such as bush buck and springbok whereas the boys look for smaller animals such as rabbits and birds. However, this does not mean that the boys would not chase the bigger animals when they happen to meet them. Siyongwana also presents a case where

black people (see chapter five) in South Africa. This shows that Siyongwana is part of the formerly oppressed community and thus personally experienced the effects of apartheid employed by the government of that time. The personal background of the author also reflects that he has been personally involved in the liberation struggle. It becomes vital therefore, to consider the social significance of the setting of this novel. The political situation of the time of the first publication of this novel, serves as the guideline towards discovering the significance of this setting. Kanjana (1996) in her foreword also highlights this view and also tells that during the time of first publication of this book there was "...suppression of Communism Act of 1950 which was designed to deny the right to free association and expression among the non-whites". Since people were denied the right to express their disapproval of government rules, there had to be other means of voicing out people's grief. One of the possible ways is to present the situation in a way that would prevent the reader (especially foreign readers) from easily recognising the message being conveyed. This might be the reason why Siyongwana chose to turn everything to the world of the folktale. A folktale is generally a story handed down by tradition and some impossible actions are expected to happen. With regard to the narrative **Ubulumko Bezinja**, Kanjana (1996) argues that:

" He opens with the conventional pattern for an "intsomi", 'Kwathi ke kaloku ngantsomi', which immediately transfers the reader's mind from the world of realities and sets it in the folktale world."

The presentation of this novel in the form of a folktale is a possible reason of how Siyongwana survived prosecution and censorship. The government officials charged with politicising publication of novels. They may have turned a blind eye to this

one because of its format. When considering the general setting of this novel, it can be noticed that there is no mention of different races but instead some different species. This might basically be one of the reasons why the publishing companies never hesitated to get it published. It literally mentions nothing directly about racial discrimination. It has been argued above that the social setting of this novel reflects that of the African traditional culture. It is important to consider the whole situation and relate some situations to the political situation in this country before liberation. In other words, we have to provide life to this novel and not consider it as a folktale that presents impossible situations only. This novel is set in Ntakana village and this kind of setting can also be related to our real world. Considering the background of the author, it can be argued that Ntakana represents South Africa on a broader basis. The basic relation between Ntakana and South Africa (during apartheid regime) is the fact that in both places there are some social differences and classifications. It becomes important therefore to relate the situations with one

another wherever possible. The social classification and the interrelationship of the characters who are the inhabitants of Ntakana is not very distinct from that of South Africa prior to independence. The author introduces Kholisile who is the head of the house and whose words seem to be the strongest. This character is depicted as someone who owns property and thus is in control of a number of things. His word is final and all other characters in this household have to obey him. The first sentence of the novel reveals the power of this character as the narrator informs us that:

"...umfo othile ekwakusithiwa nguKholisile wafuyainja..." (p.1)

A certain man called Kholisile kept a dog.

The fact that this character owns another being suggests that he has certain powers over that being. The author has skilfully arranged the novel in a way that will reflect different aspects of society. Each character in this novel represents a particular group of persons. When relating this novel to the South African situation during apartheid rule, Kholisile (and other humans) can be regarded as representing the ruling class, who were the white people. The dogs, on the other hand, can be regarded as the formerly oppressed races, specifically the blacks (see chapter five). The geographical situation of this novel can also be related to the political situation in this country. For instance, there is mention of the forest where the animals (such as baboons) lived and where the dogs reside during the struggle. The forest, in this case, can be considered as representing the African countries where the South African citizens fled to (see chapter five). Some South African citizens did not leave the country merely because they were in search of better lives, but mainly because those were just some possible forms of fighting the enemy. In most cases, the exile life was no better than the

**" Although characters might be non-human,
they still represent/symbolise typical
human beings..."**

Mtumane (1995:50) further entertains the idea that it is not just the physical make up of characters that is important when he argues that:

**" It is the action, words, and
personalities of the characters which
readers are mostly interested in."**

As the factors mentioned by Mtumane in this extract influence each characters' life, it is important therefore to consider these factors directly. The credibility of a character is dependent on the social factors, actions and a variety of factors that surrounds him in a novel. The writer therefore employs certain technique to present his or her characters. Some of the methods that writers often employ to present their characters will be dealt with in the discussion that follows.

4.3 METHODS OF CHARACTERISATION

The way a character is presented in a novel varies in accordance with the requirements and nature of that particular novel. Each writer has a certain objective or reason for employing one method and leaving the other in each and every case. The writer can employ different methods to present the same or different characters in a single novel. It should be kept in mind that the duty of the writer is to present the story and it is for the reader to choose either to despise or support certain characters in a novel. The presentation of character in fiction is a highly sensitive matter. There are a number of factors that the writer needs to consider when

choosing the method of characterisation. There are two major forms of presenting characters in a novel. First, we have the expository method, which is sometimes also referred to as the descriptive. Secondly, we have the objective method, which is preferably referred to as dramatisation. The discussion that follows will pay particular attention to these methods as they are applied in a novel.

4.3.1 EXPOSITORY (DESCRIPTIVE) METHOD

The word "expository" originally comes from the verb "expose" which means that the character is depicted explicitly through certain techniques employed by the writer. The method is often applied in narrative literature where the narrator directly describes certain features of the characters.

In the case of narrative literature, the author or narrator can describe the physical and mental features of the characters. In other words the narrator can tell, for instance, that a certain character is short or tall and that he is very intelligent. However, this does not imply that it is only the physical and psychological features that the narrator should describe and that he has to be that specific all the times. There are some other direct methods that a writer can employ to describe his characters. There are some additional features which are applied specifically in African literature and which are important and only recognised (basically) by Africans. These literary features might seem to be of no importance to an "outsider," but are quite valuable to Africans as they are peculiar to their philosophy and culture. Mtumane (1995:17) argues that:

" African novels, therefore, written in Africa and by Africans, may represent the culture, beliefs, philosophy of life and experiences of Africans."

It is important therefore, when considering any literary text, to consider the cultural background of the writer. In most cases the cultural background of the author is revealed in the story, especially through his characters.

4.3.2 OBJECTIVE (DRAMATIC) METHOD

In this method of characterisation, the writer does not describe the characters directly, but rather gives them an opportunity to reveal themselves. In other words, the author does not tell us what personalities his characters are, but instead "shows" the characters to the reader and it is up to the reader to evaluate and perceive the personalities of the characters. This method is sometimes referred to as the indirect method as the writer does not actually describe the characters directly. Brooks and Warren (1959:683) say about this method:

"...fictional method is said to be dramatic when the author gives a purely objective rendering of his material, without indulging either in editorial comment and generalization of his own or in the analysis of the feelings and thoughts of his characters."

There are a variety of options for a writer to reveal his characters indirectly in order to portray their personality. Certain factors such as thoughts, action and naming can be employed by the writer to reveal his characters. Mtumane (1995:75) further argues that about the objective method:

"...the objective method of characterisation involves the presentation of speech, action and thoughts characters in a dramatic manner."

This method of character portrayal requires the reader to investigate on his own what kind of characters are found in that particular novel. Characters, on the other hand, reveal themselves through what they do, what they think and what they say. In the discussion that follows we will consider dialogue, action, thoughts and naming as the aspects of the dramatic method of character portrayal. These aspects of indirect character portrayal will be considered under separate headings.

4.3.2.1 DIALOGUE

A dialogue is generally known as the conversation between two or more persons. In literature dialogue is meant to serve certain purposes such as the dramatisation of the story. The way characters speak usually reveals the kind of character that one is. Brooks and Warren (1959:170) argue that:

" One of the important modes of character revelation is of course the way in which characters talk."

It is through what the character says and the manner in which the message is delivered that we can recognise the personality and the role played by the character in a novel. This is actually applicable even in real life. This view is also acknowledged by Brooks and Warren (1959:170-171):

" The artist in order to be convincing, must have his characters speak "in character", and his normal way of presenting the unusual character is to give us flavour of his peculiar dialect and idiom."

It is through the dialogue of the characters that the reader simply knows the feelings and attitudes of characters. This method of character portrayal helps to shorten the story and make things easier for the reader to understand. The reader does not spend much time wondering what kind of character that one is, instead, he can just discover from what the character says.

4.3.2.2 ACTIONS

The action of a character in a novel reveals the personal conduct of that character. It is through the action of the character that we know that the character is an antagonist or a protagonist. For these reasons, action becomes one of the main features of the objective method of character portrayal. When a character carries a certain act, the reader often encourages or regrets those acts together with that character. Action forms part of the factors that lead the reader into despising one character and supporting the other. Mtumane (1995:84) acknowledges this view:

" During the course of the story, the action of the characters may be presented to the reader. From these actions the reader may infer the nature of the characters."

The action of characters has to be real so that the reader can associate himself with the characters in the story. In other words, the action carried by the characters has to be believable. The change of personalities and ideas is found in real life and therefore the characters have to change under certain circumstances. The action of characters helps to rouse the interest of the reader. Mtumane (1995:87) supports this view:

"From what characters do, their interest

and personality may be inferred."

The writer's responsibility therefore is to give or present the personality of his characters convincingly through their actions. As we have mentioned earlier in this discussion, characters in the novel have to resemble "us". This suggests that even the way the fictional characters think, needs to be considered. The discussion that follows will pay particular attention to "thought" as one other important element of objective method of character portrayal.

4.3.2.3 THOUGHT

In fiction the narrator or writer is capable of knowing what a character thinks or feels even if that particular character does take not take practical action to reveal his thoughts. In this method of character portrayal, the narrator can even comment on what a character thinks or feels, and in that way reveals the personality of that character. In other cases, the character may reveal himself by voicing out what he (the character) is thinking inwardly. Such cases are often found when the character is really depressed or is engaged in some deep thoughts. This suggests that there are some inward thoughts. The inward thoughts are sometimes referred to as the interior thoughts. With regard to interior thoughts, Mtumane (1995:95) argues that:

" In this sense the thoughts are presented as they are in the minds of characters. They are not described by the narrator but are shown directly to the reader."

Interior thoughts can only be recognised in fiction, as it is not possible to describe one's internal thoughts in reality. External thoughts on the other hand, are voiced out by the character concerned. This is also found in reality and it often happens unconsciously. Such cases are quite common when one is being

haunted by a certain act or is distressed. The interior and exterior thoughts therefore are meant to reveal a character's personality in the novel. This is regarded as the more effective technique for the depiction of character that any writer may have at his disposal. In the section above we mentioned two major methods which are normally used or employed by writers to present their characters. However, this does not imply that it is only the objective and the expository methods of character portrayal that can be employed. There can also be other methods which are more closely related to the particular culture and nationality of the author. In the case of African novels, naming is one significant method that needs to be considered. The importance of naming and its significance in the African context will be highlighted in the discussion that follows.

4.3.2.4 NAMING

The giving of names is an important and very significant act in African societies. African writers often name their characters with the intention of revealing certain aspects of their personalities. It is important, therefore, that when we are dealing with African literature we also pay attention to the significance of the names given to characters. Mtumane (1995:17) acknowledges this view and argues that:

" African novels...may represent the culture, beliefs, philosophy of life and experiences of Africans."

In African context almost all names have meanings. The meanings might be based on the wishes of parents about the child, or the gratitude of the parents to the creator. The child might also be named in relation to the historical event that marked his birth. The naming factor is also applicable even when it comes to giving names to animals. Africans name their animals according to their physical appearance and their (people's) wishes. Names like Bhaku

for instance, refers to the physical appearance of a dog. Names that reflect the wishes of the people are often found in dogs, for example Gcinumzi (watch-dog), Gilindoda (hit a man), etc. African writers therefore, apply these features in their naming of characters. This idea is also supported by Mtumane (1995:56) who argues that:

**" Most novelists name their characters
according to what is expected of them
in the narrative."**

When dealing with the African novel therefore, it is important to consider the names of characters and their significance in the story.

4.4 CHARACTER PORTRAYAL IN "UBULUMKO BEZINJA"

4.4.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding discussion was based on giving a clear understanding of the role of character in a novel. In other words, it gave a theoretical outline of the role of character in the novel. In this discussion, particular attention will be given to the depiction of character in **Ubulumko Bezinja**. In dealing with character in this novel, certain factors that are relevant to the formulation of characters will be considered. As this novel has animal characters which act as leading characters and a few human beings, this discussion is going to pay particular attention to these character types and the way that they are depicted. The human characters who play leading roles in the novel will receive particular attention separately from the non-human (dogs) characters. The discussion that follows pays particular attention to the depiction of human characters.

4.4.2 HUMAN CHARACTERS

4.4.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Although the main characters are dogs, there are some human characters who also play the leading role in this novel. The human characters found in this novel can basically be classified into two general categories, viz. flat and round. In the discussion below, the depiction of these two types in the text will be analysed more closely.

4.4.2.2 FLAT CHARACTERS

This discussion pays particular attention to the characters that are portrayed as being one sided. In other words, who characters do not change their personalities throughout the novel. In the novel, Kholisile and Jongani are typical examples of this category of character. Although they are on opposite dimensions in terms of conduct, they have one thing in common- they remain one sided and they do not change (in terms of personal conduct) throughout the story. In the paragraph below each of these two character's role will be dealt with separately from the other.

4.4.2.2.1 KHOLISILE

Through the depiction of this character, Siyongwana has been very successful in formulating a strong opposition to the chief characters of the dogs. In other words, Kholisile can be referred to as the antagonist. From the very beginning of the novel, we see Kholisile as a very authoritative and cruel man who despises the dogs and always enforces his interests. The author makes the reader expect this kind of behaviour as his name suggests someone who is very confident of what he is doing. The word "kholisile" is derived from the verb "-kholisa" which is a Xhosa word meaning to satisfy. In terms of that name, Kholisile does things that only satisfies himself, regardless of somebody else's opinion or needs. Kholisile's personality is reflected in his very first appearance in the novel:

" Yintoni izinja endlwini?" (p.18)

What do the dogs want in the house?

Kholisile's approach here is not a friendly one and the author might have done this to inform us of the feud that is going to exist between the dogs and Kholisile. Strong hatred exists in Kholisile's heart and the growing hostility between him and the dogs is symbolised by fire when the dogs visit him to express their disgust:

**Zifike kuloo ndlu yayihleli kuyo ibase
umlilo, yothile." (p.18)**

**When they got into the house, he was
sitting by the fire.**

Africans usually recognise fire as a symbol of danger and in this case it signifies the danger faced by the dogs in dealing with Kholisile. It might also be the danger that he is going to put himself and other people in later in the novel. As stated before, Kholisile is portrayed as a very stubborn man, especially with dealings that have to do with the dogs. He never makes any effort to create good relations with the dogs and all he wants to do is to punish them:

**" Uthabathe uswazi waqala wabetha uTawuse
...Uzibethile nezo uKholisile kodwa akazibetha
njengo Tawuse." (p.22-23)**

**He took a whip and started beating Tawuse.
He beat others as well but not as much he
did to Tawuse.**

This shows how cruel this man is as he punishes the dogs without any valid reason. Although his actual opposition are the dogs,

Kholisile's conduct is the same, even when he is dealing with the people. This can be noticed when he scolds his daughter after she had given his own dogs some food:

" Ngubani lo ebethe kuwe yipha izinja ezingafuni kusebenza ukutya?" (p.39)

Who told you to give food to the dogs that do not want to work?

One can also evidence this element in Kholisile's personality as he argues with Jongani:

"...ndiyekeni nam ndizinike isohlwayo esitsha. (p.46)

Leave me also so that I can give them a new punishment.

Kholisile's hatred of the dogs, among other things, is an unnatural one. He even expels the dogs despite the other people's views(p.45). Even though Kholisile is portrayed as being such a cruel man, the dogs proved to him that he is not invincible. They attack him on his attempt to assault Tawuse and other men do not assist him in fighting the dogs(p.67). The fact that other men do not bear a hand in protecting Kholisile shows that his behaviour is just unacceptable even to the human beings.

Kholisile's cruelty and hatred towards the dogs is depicted through the brutal killing of Sibi and Mthendevu who were initially his personal favourites among other dogs. Kholisile mercilessly orders the boys to kill the dogs:

" Zibulaleni. Ukuzigxotha akuyi kunceda nto". (p.133)

**Kill them. Expelling them will
not help anything.**

This incident further illustrates the features that were mentioned earlier about Kholisile's personality- authoritarian and cruel. It is he who wants the dogs to be killed but he does not kill them himself, he orders the boys to carry out the job. To Kholisile killing a dog is not a big deal, and that also proves his cruelty. This view is further evidenced when he suggests to other men that all the dogs found in the community should be killed:

**" Ndiza kuthi kuni kunganjani na xa
sinokubulala zonke izinja
ezisesixekweni." (p.135)**

**I would say to you, what if we kill all
the dogs that are in the city.**

Kholisile is imposing more than suggesting this idea as he goes further to indicate what should be done. This is also in line with his name which implies that he is the man who always does the right thing. In the end the humans have to compromise by negotiating with the dogs, but Kholisile is not pleased despite losing a lot (property and dignity) due to his arrogance. Even other men blame him for their loss of property (p.150). It is only because Kholisile is bound by the majority decision that he cannot oppose the coming of the dogs to live with the humans. In spite of that, deep down in his heart the element of hatred still remains:

**" Wazihlekehlekisa uKholisile akubabona,
ebakhohlisa kuba kwakuzele inqala**

nempindezelo ngaphakathi kuye." (p.156)

Kholisile seemed like laughing although he was deceiving them as his heart was filled with hatred and retaliation.

Even though Kholisile has suffered a lot and realises that his acts are not good at all, he does not change his attitude. He still remains arrogant and never considers reconciling with the dogs. As stated before, through this character Siyongwana has successfully portrayed or formulated a flat character. What is remarkable about this character is the fact that he is an antagonist.

4.4.2.2.2 JONGANI

Although Jongani is a fringe character who seldom appears in the story, the role that he plays is a vital one. In terms of personality, he is the exact opposite of Kholisile. He is a very kind and reasonable man. He actually acts as a mediator between the two conflicting parties (i.e. humans and the dogs). At the beginning of the novel we are only told that Jongani is one of Kholisile's neighbours and that he is the master of a dog named Xhonti. Nothing is heard of him until he interferes when Kholisile takes the decision of expelling Tawuse, Mthendevu and Bhaku from the people's homes. We hear Jongani opposing the idea by arguing that:

" Ubungafanelanga kuzohlwaya na izinja zakho xa zikonileyo? Esi senzo sokugxothwa kwazo ndiyaqala ukusiva oko ndabangumntu." (p.45)
Were not you supposed to punish them when they have done wrong? It is the first time that I hear the act of expelling them since I was born.

In contrast to Kholisile, this character is very flexible. He can consider both sides and can sympathise with the dogs. Jongani is portrayed as the only character capable of standing firm against Kholisile. He does not hesitate to express his disapproval of any act that Kholisile commits:

" Mfondini! Uphikele ukuchukela izinja zingakwenzanga nto," (p.66)

Man! You are after dogs which have not done anything wrong.

This actually leads to a serious argument between the two and ultimately they have to take sides. Jongani voices out in his own words that he is in support of the dogs (p.66). In spite of Jongani's admittance that he is on the side of dogs, the reader will realise that, by following this procedure, he is trying to reconcile the two hostilities. To support the idea that Jongani does not take any sides, he is among the men who go to talk and ultimately fight with the dogs and other animals which support the dogs in the forest. He is also the first victim in that process:

" UJongani wabethwa yimfene entlafunweni wopha." (p.135)

Jongani was hit by a baboon on the lower jaw and bled.

In this case Jongani had no option but to confront the dogs in order to protect his (and other men's) property. The intention was to negotiate with the dogs but suddenly the fight becomes

inevitable. Jongani is a human character therefore whatever happens to humans affects him as well. Jongani's involvement in the two sides can be traced, in the first place, to when he complains about the bad treatment given to the dogs (p.45). Secondly, the very same man is found with the humans when they fight with the dogs in the forest. One might get the impression that Jongani is a round character but that is not the case. He is in-between the two opposing parties but does not join either of them. Instead he is trying to reconcile them. In simple words, he can be referred to as the mediator between the two warring powers. This is evidenced by his own words when he argues that:

**" Kwezam iimbono bendisithi makuyiwe
kuzo kucelwe uxolo...Namanye amadoda
aseza kuvelisa awawo." (p.147)**

**In my own views, I would suggest that
we go to them and apologise. Other men
can also come with their plans.**

The above extract shows that Jongani is determined to reconcile the hostilities. Unlike Kholisile, Jongani suggests something and is prepared to hear other people's opinions. In his speeches, Jongani puts more emphasis in the fact that there has to be peace between the dogs and the humans:

**" Kaloku uxolo olu yiyona nto izijikayo
ingqondo eziqulathe umoya ombi." (p.148)**

**Peace is the main thing that changes the
bad minds.**

Jongani plays a crucial role in reconciling the humans and the dogs. It has been argued in this discussion that Kholisile can

be regarded as an antagonist. Jongani, on the other side, is neutral, but remains flat as he does not possess any other features in the story other than being a moderate and a mediator.

4.4.2.3 ROUND CHARACTERS

4.4.2.3.1 INTRODUCTION

This type of character is simply described as someone whose conduct changes due to certain circumstances that occur during the course of the novel. Mtumane (1995:101) cites Abrahams who, concerning this type of character, argues that:

" This means a character whose conduct is not readily predictable and who changes under changing circumstances."

There are some different circumstances that can affect and influence that character's conduct. The effect of the circumstances could be positive or negative. The character that changes in personality is regarded as a "round character". In **Ubulumko Bezinja** the character who matches this description is "inkosi kaBhaku" (Bhaku's master). The paragraph below is going to consider the role of this character in the novel.

4.4.2.3.2 BHAKU'S MASTER

This is one of the fringe characters in the novel. He is Kholisile's closest neighbour and seems to be the only one who truly understands him. This character's conduct is difficult to predict even by other characters in the novel. This can be noticed from Bhaku's argument that he (Bhaku) should not be included in Kholisile's decision of expelling the dogs (p.46). Ironically, Bhaku's master states that he says what his neighbour is saying, that even Bhaku should leave:

" Nam ndithetha loo nto ithethwa

nguKholisile," (p.46)

I am saying what Kholisile says.

The fact that Bhaku's master cannot repeat or express himself in his own words to expel the dogs simply shows that deep down in his heart he has some other ideas. What he is saying is not his own thought but somebody else's. This can actually be considered as the first change that this character undergoes in his temperament.

The unpredictability of the conduct of this character is further illustrated in the way that he expresses himself. He is found exclaiming about the way that Bekelentloko argues with Kholisile about the laws of the society with regard to hunting. Bhaku's master argues that:

**" Bafondini! ilizwe lonakele, xa inkqubo
yezinto sinokuyaziswa zizinja," (p.51)**

**Gentlemen! The world is a disaster, when
we are taught the course of things by
the dogs.**

This argument has two dimensions. Firstly, it can imply that humans are so stupid that they are outwitted even by the dogs in their knowledge of the societal laws. Secondly, it can express his disapproval of loss of respect in the dogs that they now tell what humans should obey. In order to understand what Bhaku's master actually means, the reader has to consider his general conduct and the situations that influence him at that particular moment. As the story develops, all the dogs are expelled from Ntakana and other villages and those that are found roaming around are killed. As it has been illustrated, Bhaku's master is among the people who expel the dogs in the beginning. It is

surprising, therefore, to hear Sibi telling that:

**" Izolo ndibone iinjana ezimbini kulo
mzi wawukade ungowakulo Bhaku." (p.117)**

**Yesterday I saw two puppies in the house
that used to be Bhaku's home.**

The presence of the dogs in Bhaku's master's house makes the reader wonder whether this character has always been in need of dogs in his house or whether he is no longer angry with them. This character is also one of the victims in the clash between the dogs and humans. The reader might have an impression that after this incident Bhaku's master will not consider reconciliation with the dogs. Ironically, Bhaku's master is not just found supporting the idea (that humans should reconcile with the dogs), he goes further to oppose and blame Kholisile as being responsible for the situation(p.150). The change that Bhaku's master undergoes can also be noticed by the fact that he disregards Kholisile and give much respect to the dogs. This can be noticed in the way that he addresses himself to the dogs:

**" Ningabisakhathazeka, Mthendevu...Asobe
siphinde senze izinto ezingangqinelaniyo
nemiphefumlo yenu." (p.151-152)**

**Please don't worry, Mthendevu. We will never
do things that are against your spirits again.**

This character is portrayed as someone who has oratory skills. This aspect can be witnessed by the way that he tries to convince other men and the way that he speaks to the dogs (p.150). The narrator also presents direct portrayal of this aspect of this character as he informs that:

" Yayingumntu okwaziyo ukuyicoselela into
ide iphumelele ngalendlela ebefuna ngayo." (p.150)

He was the kind of man who will carefully plan
his things and get the results that he desired for.

Although in the beginning the words of this character do not seem to have impact, the change of his conduct later brings the change in the story as a whole. After Bhaku's master is injured in a clash between men and the dogs, his whole personal conduct changes. He, and other men (except Kholisile), begin to think and consider the demands of the dogs. Bhaku's master even went further to convince Kholisile to change his mind (p.147). In the end this character is in support of the idea that humans should stay peacefully with the dogs. Although **Ubulumko Bezinja** is part of fiction, Bhaku's master is the kind of character that is normally referred to as the "living character". He is a true representation of a human being of the real world. Certain factors, such as social factors, affect him the same way that they would be affecting anybody in the real world.

4.5 ANIMAL CHARACTERS

4.5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section, the role of the second type of character found in this novel, viz. the animal character, will be analysed. Our investigation has shown that the main movers in this novel are animals (particularly dogs) which have been attributed with human qualities. Symbolism of the animals depicted in this novel will receive particular consideration. The discussion that follows is going to illustrate the significance of animal symbolism in African literature.

4.5.2 ANIMAL SYMBOLS

Symbols are generally known as objects that represent others as means of conveying certain messages. Okpewho (1992:101) defines a symbol as:

**" ...a concrete or familiar object
that is an abstract idea or less familiar
object or event."**

According to the African point of view, animals, with regard to their colour, nature and many other qualities, may have important symbolic meaning. In our discussion of theme (see chapter five) we will illustrate how **Ubulumko Bezinja** reflects the influence of traditional literature. One of the fundamental features of traditional literature is that the depiction of characters is more important than the nature of characters. In other words, as African literature was originally told in oral form, the immediacy of the composition does not require full development of character. These are the possible reasons why the author chose animals, particularly dogs, to depict the actions in his novel. In this discussion we will have to find out if the author is successful in conveying the main message of the novel through certain symbols. In order to discover the degree and kind of symbolism involved in this novel, certain factors such as colour and naming, will be considered in the portrayal of the characters. In addition to the qualities that have already been considered in the case of human characters, the colours of the respective animals will also be considered. Just like the human characters, the animal characters will be considered separately from one another, owing to practical reasons. Only those who play a leading role will be considered. The discussion below will pay particular attention to the animal characters and what they symbolise in this novel.

4.5.3 TAWUSE AND MTHENDEVU

Tawuse and Mthendevu should be regarded as the main characters

in the novel. The story begins with their birth and goes on by revolving around their lives. They are involved in almost each and every incident taking place in the novel. Other characters keep talking about them even when they are not present in the scene. According to the norms of Xhosa society, the word "tawuse" has a significant meaning. It is a name given to a curious individual (especially a child), hence the saying, " Yithi tu Tawuse..." (Shut up Tawuse). People normally employ that saying when a curious child keeps on intervening when older people are speaking. Siyongwana is quite conscious of the significance of this name and thus he portrays Tawuse as a very curious character. This curiosity in Tawuse is acknowledged by other characters:

**" Wena uqavile, futhi uyakwazi ukucikoza."
(p.42)**

You are curious and eloquent in speech.

Tawuse's curiosity makes him conscious of the ill-treatment received by the dogs under the hand of man. Tawuse's curiosity helps to open the minds of the other dogs concerning the lifestyle that they are living under the hand of man. In other words, Tawuse brings light to the community of dogs. The light that Tawuse is bringing is symbolised by his physical appearance. In the beginning of the story, just after the birth of the puppies, the narrator describes Tawuse as follows:

**"...yaza emhlophe yabizwa ngokuba ngu-
Tawuse." (p.1)**

**...and the white one was then called
Tawuse.**

According to the norms of African culture, the white colour may symbolise hope, purity, brightness or light in the community (Kriel;1984:178). In this case, the light is Tawuse's awareness of oppression of the dogs by humans. Through Tawuse's light, the other dogs see light and they start revolting against human rule. The white colour might also symbolise the hope for a brighter future for the dogs in this novel. In his struggle Tawuse is not alone, Mthendevu is always on his side to support him. Kanjana (1996:36), informs that:

" Both puppies show a strong critical attitude towards the treatment received by the dogs under the hand of man."

From the early development of the novel, Tawuse seemed to be a courageous and enthusiastic puppy. This can be witnessed in his efforts to try and live under water:

" Zihle zaphuma ezimbini kwasala u-Tawuse yedwa ezamazama. Naye wancama." (p.28)

The other two came out and Tawuse remained struggling alone. He also gave up.

Although Tawuse and Mthendevu are both involved in the struggle, their personalities are completely different. While Tawuse is so bold to confront and express his ideas to the humans and other characters in the novel, Mthendevu excels in reasoning. Tawuse is the initiator of many actions in the novel and Mthendevu, on the other hand, comes up with the actions to be taken:

" Masiye kuyithabatha," wazincekelela uTawuse. ...Zibuzene ngecebo ezinokuthi zivele ngalo ebafazini. UMthendevu wathi, " Kufuneka siye

phaya ngasezimbizeni, size sithi sakufika kusuke
izinga ezimbini zibambane zibengathi ziyalwa." (p67)

" Let's go and snatch them," Tawuse insisted...The
dogs asked about the plan to approach the women.
Mthendevu said, " We must go near the pots, and
when we are there two dogs should pretend as if
they are fighting.

In this particular case, Tawuse has an idea that they should
snatch the pots (full of meat), but does not provide the plans
to carry out the plot. Mthendevu then comes up with a strategy.
The role of these two characters is to open the minds of the dogs
and fight against oppression and discrimination against dogs by
humans. The white colour of Tawuse mainly symbolises the light
that he brings to other characters in the novel. His role in the
novel is in accordance with this aspect of African thought.
Tawuse seems to be the first one to be aware of the elements of
oppression that are laid upon them by humans:

" Nala magama ooBambisela zizinto nje
zokuba befuna ukuba sibambe amasela," (p.17)

Even the names of Bambisela (" the one who
catches the thief") are just their tricks aimed
encouraging us to catch the thieves.

From the beginning of their struggle, Tawuse takes the initiative
and Mthendevu is always on his side. This can be evidenced by
their first attempt to express their disapproval of their
conditions of living to the humans. Tawuse wanted to confront the
girl, but Mthendevu advises that they just go to their master
(p.18). In good times and bad times Tawuse always takes
initiative. He is the first victim among the dogs of Ntakana to

be assaulted by humans (p.63). He is also the first one to grab the pot at Njica:

" UTawuse ube yeyokuqala ukubamba imbiza kwezo zazinyulwe." (p.67)

Tawuse became the first one to grab the pot among those who were elected.

He also demonstrates his bravery when he eats in the same bowl with some men while other dogs are loath to do so:

" UTawuse wasuka waya emadodeni, wathabatha inyama watya." (p.43)

Tawuse went to the men's bowl, and took some meat to eat.

The reader might have an impression that Tawuse is the natural born leader, and therefore he should be the leader of the dogs. Although Tawuse possesses so much courage and boldness, he has some major weaknesses which are: lack of integrity and tolerance. This aspect of his behaviour is depicted when he fails to tolerate starving with other dogs in the forest. Tawuse goes back to the people's homes to get himself some food (p.124). Mthendevu on the other hand, does not take initiative as much as Tawuse does. However, he is engaged in the struggle throughout the novel. Mthendevu excels more in the fundamental leadership skills, i.e. integrity and reasoning. Mthendevu has a good skill of convincing other characters and is dedicated to the struggle (p.113). Unlike Tawuse, Mthendevu suffers whatever pain is suffered by his comrades. Mthendevu's good leadership skills are acknowledged even by other characters. The narrator informs that:

" NoBhaku wayekholwa ukuba kubekwe yena
(Umthendevu)..." (p.139)

Even Bhaku preferred Mthendevu for the post.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Mthendevu becomes the official leader of the dogs. It is at this point that some weaknesses in Tawuse's character are revealed. The selection of Mthendevu to be the leader upsets Tawuse as he seems to be longing for the post. The narrator informs that:

" UTawuse wabonakala engatyhilekanga ebusweni,
ekucace into yokuba wayeyifuna lendawo
yokukhokela." (p.142)

**Tawuse's face reflected dissatisfaction, it
was quite clear that he longed for the
position of being the leader.**

Tawuse tried to get support from other dogs by asking them individually if they were pleased with Mthendevu being their leader (p.145). Tawuse's efforts are a failure and ultimately Mthendevu remains the leader of the dogs until the return back to the people's homes. Through these characters, Siyongwana illustrates various types of leaders in the struggle. From this discussion, it can be argued that people have different objectives to be engaged in the struggle. There are some who fight merely to free the nation. On the other hand, there are those who are engaged in the struggle only to get to higher positions and enrich themselves at the expense of the masses. The latter group is often aimed at enriching themselves at the expense of other people's efforts. An Example of this would be some government officials who forget about the people who put them in the high positions that they are occupying and only think of themselves. Siyongwana is quite conscious of the fact that

there are those who might be good in leading the struggle but fail to lead a freed nation after the struggle. This aspect is depicted through the role played by Tawuse in the novel. Through Mthendevu, the author illustrates the requirements of good leadership. The role played by Tawuse and Mthendevu is crucial for the unity of the novel and has some significance to the lives that we are living.

4.5.4 SIBI AND BAMBISELA

These characters are mother (Sibi) and son (Bambisela) which suggests some commonality between them. The names of these characters are not relevant to their physical appearance as described in the novel. However, after reading the novel one can notice that there is relatedness of the names of these dogs and their respective roles in the novel. The term "sibi" might have been derived from the Xhosa noun meaning bad. The significance of this name, in this respect, is reflected by some incidents that affect this character in the novel. The meaning of Bambisela's name is simply "the one who catches the thief". The significance of this name is acknowledged by other characters such as Tawuse (p.17). Through the portrayal of the characters, the author informs the reader about the role that is going to be played by that particular character in the novel. An example of that can be found where the narrator describes Bambisela as:

" Ebomvu kwathiwa nguBambisela." (p.1)

The red one was named Bambisela.

The philosophy of African people indicates that the red colour is associated with danger (Kriel and Abrahams;1984:190). Through Bambisela's colour, the author confirms the danger that surrounds this character's life. The portrayal of both Sibi and Bambisela connects them with danger. The purpose of the author might be to

confirm the tragic end faced by these characters. The name Bambisela is a compound personal noun derived from the Xhosa nouns, "ukubamba" and "isela" , respectively. The former means to catch and the latter means a thief. It is, therefore, no doubt that by attaching this name to this character, the author's aim was to inform the reader of the closeness of this character to its master. A dog catches the thieves for its master as he (the master) is the one who owned some property of which the dog is part of. Bambisela's role in the novel correlates with the name that he is given. He is determined to work for his master in a sense that he would rather sacrifice his own happiness in order to impress his master. He is even willing to sell out his brothers:

**" Hayi mna ndize kukuchazela ngento ebithethwa
ngoo Tawuse." (p.20)**

**No, I have just come to tell you about what
Tawuse (and other dogs) were saying.**

Bambisela is conscious of the fact that what he is doing is neither good for him or for his brothers. To him, what matters most is that he has formed good relations with his master. A similar character is found in Ngugi's **A Grain of Wheat** (1967:36) where it is argued that about Karanja:

**"...Karanja would rather endure the humiliation
rather than to lose the good name he had built
for himself among the white people."**

The above argument about Karanja also applies to Bambisela as his role in the novel is typical to that of Karanja. Bambisela is the only dog in Sibi's generation that is left to work for the humans even though other dogs (except Sibi) leave to work for their own

survival. Sibi, on the other hand, is portrayed as an old female dog that never thought of opposing anything imposed on her by the humans. To her, it is natural that humans should be above the dogs. She is conscious of the oppression but she lives with a perception that the dogs cannot do anything without humans. She expresses this view in her own words as she says:

" Xa izinja zingaphulaphuli into ethethwa ngabantu azinakuphila." (p.15)

When the dogs do not listen to what humans are saying, they will not survive.

This statement shows that humans have imposed their ideas upon Sibi and now she lives with an inferiority complex centered around the idea that dogs should work for humans.

Although Sibi cares much about satisfying the needs of the humans, she still possesses the feelings of motherhood. This is depicted in her longing to meet her children even though they dissented her by going to live in the forest in spite of her disapproval. The narrator presents her feelings when she is visited by Mthendevu and Bhaku from the forest:

"...ngangendlela awayevuya ngayo wayethetha yonke into." (p.116)

She was so glad in a sense that she said everything.

Bambisela later seem to share similar ideas as his brothers. When Mthendevu and Bhaku go to the people's homes to look for Tawuse who is missing, Bambisela argues that:

" Kanti ndiyafuna ukuza kuni." (p.131)

Actually, I want to come to you.

Even though these dogs have some differences, they could not avoid the bond of kinship. There is something that associates them with each other and therefore they have to share similar opinions in some situations. Sibi and Bambisela miss their only chance to go and join other dogs in the forest and the result of that is to meet their death. They cannot deny to their master that they have been talking to the dogs from the forest and for that reason the master decides to kill them (p.133). The dogs can see that their master has no mercy with them and eventually they curse him and express their disgust:

" Kodwa niyakuhamba nzima nokuba sesingekho thina." (p.133)

But you'll have some difficulties even if we are not here.

The entire life of Sibi and Bambisela is almost the same. It is generally a common thing that in a family there should be one child that is too close to one part of the parents. Bambisela is very close to his mother so much so that almost no incident affects one and leave the other between them. However, because they differ in gender and age, there are some differences in behaviour. In some situations Sibi behaves like a mother and Bambisela like a child. The tragic ending of these two also symbolises the strong relationship that existed between the two. Just before they had to be found talking to the "dogs from the forest", Bambisela had taken the decision of joining other dogs in the forest. As an elder, Sibi does not want things to happen that fast and asks Bambisela to stay with her for a while. They are found by Kholisile who then orders the boys to kill them (Sibi and Bambisela). The life of these characters is not separated from one another throughout the novel- they are always

found together and they also die in the same way at the same time.

4.6 CREDIBILITY OF ACTIONS DEPICTED

This novel is narrated in the form of a folktale and that permits the author to present the kind of characters that are not found in real life. However, most of the actions carried out by the characters in this novel are logical and believable. Even though the main movers in the novel are animals, particularly dogs, they move and act like human beings. The purpose of this discussion is therefore to evaluate the logistics of events and actions depicted in the novel. The credibility of characters depends on the actions that they carry out in the novel. Reference needs to be made to the background of the author and the historical background of South Africa and the political situation during the late fifties and early sixties which is the time that this novel was written. Although published in 1962, **Ubulumko Bezinja** was first written in 1958 and this is the period when the oppressed races in South Africa were beginning to challenge the government laws*. It was also during this era that blacks resorted to armed struggle (see chapter five). It is more likely that the author preferred a fictional rather than a documentary genre as means of avoiding censorship and prosecution. During this era, one could not directly oppose the government as many political activists and their parties were banned. Kanjana (1996:12) argues that:

" Siyongwana prefers this literary genre because he wants to obscure a delicate issue by employing a premise where everything is allowed to belong to a world of unrealities."

The animal characters found in this novel are not complete animals, as in some respects they are more human than animals. They are only animals in the physical sense of the world. Apart

from this, they act and think like humans and they can communicate with all other species found in the novel. Reference can be made to the situation where Tawuse argues with his master (p.19) and when the dogs are engaged in a conversation with the baboons (p.113). It is important therefore, to pay attention to the actions carried out by characters and the way the characters are portrayed rather than the nature of the characters. In other words, the animal characters should be judged like humans and their differences in nature should be equivalent to differences among races. Most of the characters found in this novel represent a particular type of people that were involved in the liberation struggle in this country (see chapter five). The fact that it is actually the youth who come up with the idea of protesting against the humans, does not mean that old people did not think or involve themselves in the struggle. Siyongwana presents characters such as Xhonti, who despite his old age, is determined to challenge the humans and fight for the rights of the dogs. It is clear that the idea of revolting against the human rule has long record of existence in Xhonti's mind as he willingly joins

*information gathered from a biographical audio tape interview of the author

other dogs in the struggle (p.83). In one occasion, Xhonti argues that:

**" Akukho nto phofu nokuba sesiza kufa
thina. Sesivuyiswa nje kukuba izinja
ziyibonile indlela." (p.100)**

**It does not matter even if we are about
to die. We are just glad that the dogs
have seen the way.**

Similar cases have been experienced in the history of the liberation struggle in South Africa. Some activists fought for the benefit of their people and some of them did not benefit from

the consequences of their struggle. The young activists, as represented by the likes of Tawuse and Mthendevu, were inspired by the support of elders, such as Xhonti in the novel. Sibi, on the other end, represents those adults who never wanted to engage themselves in anything that is against the government (see 4.4.4). However, Sibi has been acquainted with human emotions. Sibi could not resist the feelings of being the mother and that is why she bites Kholisile who was trying to assault Tawuse (p.66). Sibi bites her master merely because she has been angered by the assault on her son and, therefore, as a parent she is protecting her son. Even though Sibi has opposite opinions from her children (except Bambisela), she is always sympathetic with them (as argued in 4.4.4 above).

In the novel, the idea of revolution comes with the young dogs, however it is not a conventional feeling. There are some individuals who do not engage themselves in the struggle. This group is represented by Bambisela who only decides to join others at a very late stage (p.131). Bambisela changes his mind just before he meets his death. In contrast to this, there are those who involve themselves in the struggle only to give up on the brink of success. In the novel that group is represented by Tawuse who enlightened other dogs and initiated the action in the liberation struggle and only gave up at the latest stages of the struggle (see 4.4.3). The humans also represent a particular class of society (see chapter five). With regard to the attitude towards the dogs, there are some human characters who are at opposite angles. This can be noticed when comparing the role played by Kholisile and that played by Jongani in the novel (see 4.3.2.2.1 and 4.3.2.2.2 above). These are human characters with absolutely different views in terms of dealing with the dogs. Characters found in this novel are a true representation of the people in real life. Although some are animals, their conduct and the role that they play in the novel is a true representation of the people who formed part of South African society during the

apartheid era. Almost each and every character in the novel, represents a particular group of people in the South African community during the apartheid era.

CHAPTER FIVE: THEME

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals specifically with the theme presented in **Ubulumko Bezinja**. While dealing with the theme of this novel, reference will be made to other texts which share similar themes or which have some relevance to the theme of this novel. The significance of the theme of this novel will also be identified and discussed in greater detail.

It is quite important to refer to the background of the author as well as the political history of South Africa, especially during the era when this novel was first published. The intention of making reference to the background of the author as well as the political situation of the time of the publication of this novel is to identify the forces or circumstances that propelled the author to write a novel of this kind. In our discussion of theme, various matters illustrated by this novel will also be identified. Having considered various implications of the theme, a final evaluation of the theme will be the last to follow. Before discussing the theme of this novel in greater detail, it is important to have proper understanding of what theme actually is. The discussion that follows will attempt to present a theoretical framework of theme that is quite crucial when dealing with the theme of a specific novel.

5.2 THEORETICAL DISCUSSION OF THEME

5.2.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter two of this study the main elements of the novel were identified. Theme forms a part of those elements. This discussion will focus on discussing theme in greater detail. However, the role of the remaining elements, namely setting, plot and characterisation will not be totally overlooked. All these elements form part of the structure of the novel and are thus mutually interrelated. For that reason, it is quite difficult to

extract a single element (e.g. theme) and deal with it without also touching on the other elements. While this study deals specifically with the theme separately from other elements, the mutual relationship between the elements will be acknowledged as strictly as possible. The discussion that follows will focus on defining the concept "theme" and thus identifying its difference from other closely related elements in the novel.

5.2.2 WHAT IS THEME?

The question about the nature of theme poses some contradictory arguments. The cause of such controversies is the diversity of ways in which the concept can be interpreted. However, even though the concept has been coined to different meanings, there is a basic commonality in those meanings. For instance, the relationship between theme and topic is acknowledged and in most cases these two elements are confused with one another. With regard to this view, Brooks and Warren (1959:272) argue that:

" The theme is what is made of the topic."

The above argument implies that there is a relationship between theme and topic. The relatedness of these two aspects is, in most cases, confusing, as some writers prefer to present the theme of a text through the topic. In such cases, the topic becomes the theme of the novel. Thus far the difference between the theme and the topic has been illustrated, but as of yet we have not stated what theme actually is. The conventional understanding of theme in literature is that it is the main idea or message that the writer intends to deliver through his text. To support this view, Mtumane (1995:141) argues that theme is:

"...the main idea of the story, or what the author wishes to cultivate in the minds of his readers."

The above statement acknowledges that theme is the main idea of the story. However, the question still rises about the way this idea is portrayed and the role that it plays for the successful realisation of the novel. The discussion that follows will attempt to answer these questions.

5.2.3 THE ROLE OF THEME IN THE NOVEL

The role of theme is determined by the way that the theme is depicted in that particular novel. There is a variety of ways in which a writer can present the theme. Mtumane (1995:142) identifies four ways in which theme can be portrayed: general statement, general atmosphere of the narrative, the title, and allegory, symbolism or a parable. These methods will not receive any further discussion in this particular study. However, in our discussion of the theme of this novel, the specific method used by the author in this novel will be further analysed. The view that theme is the main idea of the novel suggests that all other elements contribute towards the building up of the theme. In this way theme remains the nucleus of the novel. This view is further entertained by Mtumane (1995:139):

**"...all other elements contribute towards
the development of the theme."**

As all other elements contribute towards its development, the theme in turn plays a very important role in the unity of the novel. The pivotal role played by the theme in a novel is influenced by the effective presentation of other elements, particularly the plot. In other words, there has to be coherence in the actions that work towards revealing the theme in the novel. It is only through its relationship with other elements that the theme assumes its true fulfilment in a novel. The discussion thus far has presented a theoretical framework of theme. The discussion that follows is going to deal specifically the theme of **Ubulumko Bezinja**.

5.3 THE THEME OF "UBULUMKO BEZINJA"

5.3.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter two of this study we presented a brief introduction to the contents of the novel. This particular discussion is going to focus on identifying and analysing the main message of the author in this novel.

In our discussion of setting (i.e. chapter three), we maintained that there might be some hidden objectives for the author to present the novel in this particular form. The author has used symbolism as a particular method to portray the theme of this novel. In this method, theme is not presented directly; instead certain symbolic actions or objects are used to present it indirectly. It is quite important therefore to make reference to the personal background of the author and the political situation in the country at about the time of the first publication of this novel (i.e. 1962). Particular attention will be paid to this aspect in 5.3.2.2 of this discussion. Some critics maintain that in this novel Siyongwana is trying to imitate George Orwell's **Animal Farm** (1951). One of those critics is Gerard (1971:98) who maintains that:

'Ubulumko Bezinja'... is a rather poor imitation of George Orwell's 'Animal Farm'. The chief characters are three dogs who overthrow their master in the name of democratic equality, but they soon reveal themselves as just four legged power seekers."

Siyongwana opposes critics such as Gerard and justifies his position. To counter such critics, Siyongwana argues that:

" ...one writes about the things that he knows and that are happening in his society.

It cannot be easy for one to write about something that he does not know."*

Siyongwana's argument is based on the fact that George Orwell is a European and he wrote about communism in the Soviet Union, which is peculiar to his own society. The themes that Siyongwana wrote about are known to South Africans, particularly to amaXhosa. The novel reflects the influence of traditional literature. Animal characters are widely used in African traditional literature and it is not surprising to find a writer like Siyongwana demonstrating this aspect of African culture. The author also asserted that the idea of writing about dogs came after he read Romany's **A.Romany and Raq**. However, this does not mean that he tried to imitate this text. Reference can be made to various factors as to why Siyongwana chose to write a novel of this nature. The author's background is the possible factor that had much influence in the setting of this novel. The author was born in a traditional society of Ngqamakhwe, in the old Transkei region, and that might have contributed in his understanding of traditional culture. Transkei was then a homeland for amaXhosa and thus the source of Xhosa culture and traditions. The whole political situation during the fifties could have also influenced the author in this novel: the imposition of the Pass Laws in 1953 and the formation of "Umkhonto Wesizwe" in 1961 might have had an influence in the writing of this novel. Siyongwana's personal involvement in the struggle for liberation should also be acknowledged.

It is quite clear that the theme of this novel has some relevance to the political situation of South Africa. The discussion that follows is going to analyse the theme of this novel as a symbolic representation of the South African liberation struggle. Some

*information gathered from a biographical audio tape interview of the author.

events in the text are going to be linked systematically with those that took place in the struggle.

5.3.2 THE STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION

5.3.2.1 INTRODUCTION

The struggle for liberation in South Africa began as early as during the nineteenth century. The formation of the South African Native Congress (SANCO) in 1912 assumed the beginning of black protest politics in South Africa (Odendaal;1984:40). For the purpose of this particular discussion, we are going to concentrate on the events that actually surrounded the author's life up to the time when the blacks finally got liberated. The concept "blacks" will be constantly mentioned in this discussion and it is quite important to understand what we mean by blacks. For the purposes of this discussion, we will adopt the Black Consciousness (Biko;1978:62) definition of blacks as:

"...those who are by law or tradition politically, economically, and socially discriminated against as a group in the South African society and identifying themselves as a unit in the struggle towards the realisation of their aspirations."

In this novel, we have the dogs, who represent the black people and the humans, who are a symbolic representation of the whites who were the oppressors (see 5.3.2.2). This discussion is going to be based on these notions. The liberation struggle in South Africa assumed various forms. These forms determined the stages and the development of the revolutionary struggle in this country. The discussion that follows is going to pay attention to some actions in the novel and relate them to some events that took place in the South African liberation struggle.

5.3.2.2 THE NON-VIOLENT STRUGGLE

This section is going to pay particular attention to the non-violent forms of struggle as depicted in the text. This form has been portrayed as the initial form of the struggle, which corresponds to the history of South Africa. It should be noted that in most cases the reaction of the opposing parties has been violent. That does not mean that the actual form of struggle was violent. The first protest that we hear about in the novel is actually a question directed to Sibi by Tawuse who asks about the dogs' share of meat. Sibi seems to be obliged into accepting whatever is imposed on her by the humans (see chapter four). She tells them (the puppies) that they are supposed to get nothing except the bones. The young dogs, feeling that their mother's response is not satisfactory, decide to approach their master about the matter. Tawuse addresses their concern in this way:

**"Sifuna ukukhe sazi ukuba kutheni
singenasabelo sisiso nje apha ekhaya." (p.18)**

**We just want to know why is it that we
do not have a fair share at home.**

It should be noted that the dogs do not demand anything that will put them above humans. They just want a fair share. This particular demand is actually related to some of the clauses in the Freedom Charter, which was unanimously adopted at a congress of the people held in Kliptown, near Johannesburg on 25 and 26 June 1955. A specific clause of the charter that could be related to the above demand of the dogs would be the one which states, "The people shall share in the country's wealth". It should be noted that in the text it is the young dogs that first express their disgust directly against the humans. This has been the case even with the liberation struggle of South Africa. The people who first took more practical measures to oppose the government's oppression were the youth. The demands of the dogs are basically

equality before the eyes of the law. This idea is highlighted as Kholisile asks the dogs that:

" O! Nifuna ukutya nokulala nabantu
ezindlwini?"
" Ewe nje!" (p.19)

Oh! You want to eat and sleep together
with the people in the houses?
Exactly.

The dogs are not demanding control over the humans. This is actually what the black people in South Africa were demanding. Mdaka (1994:140-141) argues that Africans in their struggle:

"...do not demand, or agitate for, the
extinction or domination of whites by
blacks. They merely clamour for equality
before the law, abolition of discrimination
and fair treatment."

Humans in the novel, as represented by Kholisile, do not seem to be prepared to listen or act positively on the demands of the dogs. All Kholisile does is to chase the dogs away. There are similar events that took place in the struggle during the time that this novel was being written. In an ANC document (1982:100), such events are illustrated with the killing of people as a reaction to their demands:

" On March 1960, a peaceful demonstration
against the Pass Laws was fired on by the
police, leaving 69 dead and 178 wounded.

In this novel Siyongwana presents similar cases where

peaceful demonstrators are being killed. One of those incidents is when a puppy is being killed by the human beings:

**" Eyayisemva ayibetha yasadalala, yafela
apho phambi kwezindlu." (p.78)**

**The one that was behind was beaten, and died
in front of the houses.**

In this particular case the puppy symbolises the innocence of those who died in the struggle. In this case the puppy does not know what is happening- it's just going with other dogs. This case corresponds with the case that has been illustrated above where the peaceful demonstrators were killed by government forces. It should be noted that in the South African struggle for liberation it is the youth that actually took practical measures to confront the government. In this novel the youth are represented by the young dogs such as Tawuse and Mthendevu who recruit other dogs such as Bhaku. The three dogs remain the leaders of the struggle and they are the first to be expelled from the man's property (p.45) as they seem to be having some opposing ideas. This is actually what happened in this country as well. Political parties such as the ANC and PAC seemed to be giving the government some problems and ultimately they were banned. It was actually in this period that the citizens of this country began to stream out from their country. In the cover page of his book, **The Children of the Diaspora** (1996), Mzamane writes:

**" As the sixties began, intense political
struggles caused South Africans to stream
from their country- most without passports,
money, or education."**

It should be noted that in the South African struggle for

liberation it is the youth who actually took practical measures to confront the government. In this novel Tawuse, Mthendevu and Bhaku represent the youth. In spite of many hardships, the dogs lived successfully in the forest. They had to learn to live on their own in the new environment. This actually brought new experiences to them and one of those experiences is that they learnt to share. This aspect is symbolised by the act of sharing a dead bird which they picked up from the ground:

**" Zithe xa zisiya kujikela kwelinye icala
zihamba zihlola indawo le zabhaqa uBhobhoyi
ofileyo. Zabelana ngaye zimtya neentsiba
zakhe." (p.47)**

**When they turned to the other side inspecting
the place, they found a dead hoep-hoo. They ate
it together with its feathers.**

In the above example Siyongwana symbolically demonstrates one of the major needs of the people which is the sharing of the country's wealth. The hoep-hoo is yellowish in colour and most political parties that are involved in the struggle (e.g.ANC) adopt the colour to represent or symbolise the minerals or wealth of the country. The narrator declares that the hoep-hoo is picked up from the ground, which also emphasises the idea that it symbolises the country's mineral wealth. In the case of the dogs we do not hear of any controversies or dissatisfactions concerning the sharing of the hoep-hoo. The dogs share it amongst themselves equally. This is actually one of the demands found in the freedom charter where it is stated that "The people shall share in the country's wealth" (ANC;1982:154). The sharing of the hoep-hoe also demonstrates the good relations that developed among the people as they fought against apartheid in this country. They united and lived like brothers and were willing to share whatever piece of food they had. This is also demonstrated

by Ngugi (1967) when a character by the name of Warui tells about the people's struggle in Kenya:

" Others did not bring food. We shared whatever piece of food we had." (p.13)

A practical example of this aspect in the South African liberation struggle has been illustrated by Thami Mali (1993:47) where it is told that:

" They were hungry and tired, and morale was low. On the nineteenth day Chris (Hani) shot a dove. He boiled it in a water bottle, and then cut it into twenty-eight equal pieces so that all of them could eat. It was their first food in eight days."

The basic point that is being emphasised in the above extracts is that the people should share. It also illustrates that the struggle of the people has not been an easy one. These are also the circumstances that drove formerly peaceful demonstrators to resort to violence. The hardships experienced by the dogs in their struggle are also an inspiration to the people of South Africa. Mdaka (1994:151) supports this view as he argues that:

" The implication is that life in exile is as difficult as trying to live underwater when you are made to live on land."

The writer's purpose of presenting these situations is nothing more than encouraging the people to fight for their rights and to teach the new generation about the past. The history of the South African struggle has been misrepresented by some outsiders

and thus giving the people of this country some misleading ideas. In the foreword of the ANC document (1982) O.R. Tambo acknowledges this idea and argues that:

" Correcting the historical record is part of the liberation process of the oppressed and nowhere more so than in South Africa."

Through this novel, Siyongwana attempts to present a true reflection of the liberation struggle in a symbolic way. In the text the dogs give absolute effort to talk to the humans but the latter would not listen. It is after several efforts that the dogs resort to other means of confronting the humans. This has been the case even in the liberation struggle in South Africa as it is confirmed in the ANC document (1982:108) that:

" The government closed all channels of protest. On 12 December 1961 leaders of the underground ANC and SACP launched "Umkhonto Wesizwe" (Spear of the Nation)."

What is illustrated in the above extracts is that the peoples' struggle was meant to be a peaceful one. It can be argued therefore that the dogs in this novel, just like the blacks in South Africa, did not just turn to armed struggle. As the government never listened to their demands and kept suppressing their rights, the people in turn had no option but to resort to military confrontation. In the discussion that follows we are going to focus on the actions employed by the dogs to confront the human beings. These are merely the violent actions, as the government, represented by the humans, never reacted positively to the non-violent ones. The actions of the dogs as depicted in the text will be related to those which took place in the history of the South African liberation struggle.

5.3.2.3 THE VIOLENT STRUGGLE

In the preceding section we have illustrated some instances where the dogs were engaged in peaceful demonstrations protesting against the humans. These actions have been systematically related to the history of the liberation struggle in this country. These instances provide the reader with the historical background and the circumstances that drove the blacks (as represented by the dogs) to taking arms. To argue in support of the violent struggle, Mdaka (1994:152) cites Ngugi who argues that:

**" Violence in order to change an intolerable,
unjust social order is not savagery: it purifies
man."**

Blacks who engaged themselves in the struggle were often given negative labels by the government. These labels caused some differences among the black people themselves as some considered their brothers as enemies. Some had to sell out their brothers in order to get benefits (such as food and money) from the government. Siyongwana exemplifies this aspect with the case of Sibi's sons where Bambisela developed negative attitude towards his brothers who engaged themselves in the struggle against the humans (see 4.5.4). In spite of the lack of support from some of their "comrades" the dogs continued their struggle. The first incident of physical confrontation by the dogs is when they attack Kholisile who was trying to assault Tawuse:

**" Wathi xa aqalayo ukuphakamisa ingalo
ejonge ukubetha kuTawuse owayengaphambili
kuzo zonke izinja, suke uMthendevu wamluma
...zibuye zonke izinja zakuva ingxolo.
Zamtya selele phantsi."**

**When he lifted his arm intending to beat
Tawuse who was in front of all other dogs,
Mthendevu bit him. All the other dogs came
and bit him even though he was lying down.**

It should be noted that the dogs attacked Kholisile after he tried to assault Tawuse. This is quite different from the case of humans when they attacked dogs that did not fight at all but protested verbally. For the first time in the novel we see the dogs (both from Ntakana and Njica) uniting and fighting against the humans. This act is a source of inspiration to the dogs and they go further to employ other strategies to fight the enemy. They snatch the meat and ultimately all of them are expelled from the people's homes. In this case the dogs suffer the same pain which is actually the aim of the dogs that initially went to live in the forest. The narrator informs that:

**" Into awayeyifuna ngamandla uTawuse
yayikukufumana izinja eziza kuhlala nabo
endle." (p.88)**

**What Tawuse basically wanted was to get many
dogs to stay with them in the forest.**

This is typical of what was happening in the South African liberation struggle. Blacks had to get as much support as possible in order to fight the enemy. This is also confirmed by Thami Mali (1993:58) when she tells that:

**" New recruits had to be won and a military
network established and expanded to receive
and support trained combatants."**

The recruitment of some other dogs has been presented in the

**in practical ways. They gave the exiles food
and shelter...The people of Lesotho proved to
be good neighbours indeed."**

In the text, the baboons and other animals do not just help the dogs in allowing them to stay in the forest, they also take part in assisting them to fight against the humans. In a physical clash between the dogs and humans, the baboons assist the dogs:

**" UJongani wabethwa yimfene entlafunweni
wopha." (p. 135)**

Jongani was hit by a baboon on the jaw and bled.

A number of similar clashes are demonstrated in the text and in most cases dogs are being killed. It should be noted that in the text there is no mention of any human being killed by the dogs. Perhaps the author's aim is to show that the dogs actually fought for their rights and not the lives of the humans, which is similar to the blacks, who merely fought for freedom. Siyongwana also demonstrates the brutality of the humans with the death of Sibi and Bambisela (p.133). After the killing of these dogs, the humans kill every dog that they come across in the community. These incidents can be traced back to the life of the author. Certain incidents that correspond to these examples took place in this country while the author was still in the process of writing this novel. One of those incidents is the Sharpville massacre, which took place on 21 March 1960. Holland (1989,1990:116) writes about this massacre:

**" Sixty one bodies lay dead on the ground
outside the police station, 178 more were
wounded. Over half the victims had been hit
in the back while running away."**

Siyongwana must have, in a way, been influenced by this particular massacre as it occurred just about the time of the writing of this novel. Some incidents in the text can be related to this massacre. Kholisile states:

**"...kunganjani na xa sinokubulala zonke
izinga ezikhoyo esixekweni." (p.135)**

**What if we kill all the dogs that are in
the community.**

Kholisile's word in this respect is unanimously adopted by the men and the killing of dogs follows, with Tawuse escaping. The dogs are angered by the killing. Tawuse maintains that:

**" Abantu baza kulihlawula igazi lezinga
abaliphalazileyo."**

**People are going to pay for the blood that
has been shed by the dogs.**

The feeling that Tawuse has here can be related to the feeling that the people had after their compatriots were killed in some incidents such as the Sharpsville massacre. They had to fight the enemy in whatever way possible. In the novel dogs start stealing some sheep that belonged to the humans. They do this for survival but at the same time it is a strategy of fighting the enemy. Similar acts have taken place in the struggle as Mali (1993:48) illustrates:

**" They had also captured some food supplies,
which was a great morale booster. Chris shared
the food out and they ate."**

In this particular case, the notion of "survival of the fittest" is illustrated. In **Ubulumko Bezinja** the dogs go beyond that, they no longer just steal the property nor conquer the enemy, instead they start seizing herds of sheep:

**" Izinja zaya kuzifunela iigusha emadlelweni.
Zabuya nemihlambi mhla zaqala ukuphuma." (p.146)**

**The dogs went to find themselves some sheep
in the feeding camps. They came back with
many herds on their first day.**

In the South African liberation struggle, blacks were forced to commit similar acts of sabotage. Among many acts of that nature can be made mention of the well known Sasolberg incident (ANC;1982:14):

**" In June 1980 Umkhonto guerilla units
struck a powerful blow at the regime's
economy when they sabotaged the Sasolberg
oil refinery causing millions of pounds
worth of damage."**

The government, as symbolised by the humans in the novel, had to feel the effect of such big blows before listening to the demands of the black people. The black people have been engaged in a variety of actions to fight the government and eventually the government had to face compromise. The major steps of compromise taken by the government include the unbanning of the political parties. Denilson (1990:13) argues that:

**" The momentous decision to unban the ANC
and other bodies have opened the way for
government representatives to start dealing**

opening formula for folktales but does not end the narration in the same way. The sequence of events depicted in the novel are more relevant to the course of the South African liberation struggle. The beginning, the ups and downs and the consequences of the struggle have been systematically presented. The author uses a skill of relating one event to the next and still links the novel to practical situations of the South African liberation struggle.

The text, **Ubulumko Bezinja**, is thus a good example of traditional Literature, as well as being a symbolic reflection of the South African liberation struggle. Writers such as Siyongwana have played a very important role in encouraging the black people to fight for their rights. Although it could be criticised by some "outsiders", in the African perspective and to the people who suffered the pressures of apartheid in this country, the theme of this novel quite meaningful.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to sum up and present the final evaluation of the preceding chapters. The major findings of the study will also be highlighted in this chapter. In other words, the aim of the chapter is to highlight some important points discovered in this study. The discussion that follows will therefore throw light on those aspects.

6.2 CONCLUSION AND FINAL EVALUATION

The first chapter in this study introduced us to the contents of the study. Specific aspects to be considered in the discussion have also been illustrated. The main purpose of the study would be to give a critical analysis of setting, characterisation and theme in Siyongwana's: **Ubulumko Bezinja**. These aspects have been thoroughly examined in chapter three, four and five respectively. A theoretical framework of the aspect concerned has been given in each chapter before discussing the particular aspect in detail from the text. However, some other aspects of the novel which are mutually related to the aspects concerned, have also been considered.

The text, **Ubulumko Bezinja** reflects the influence of traditional African oral literature as well as political situation of South Africa. The presentation of the novel in the form of a folktale illustrates the influence of African traditional literature. Folktale is part of African oral literature and therefore reflects the influence of traditional literature. The author's knowledge of traditional culture can be traced back to his personal background. In chapter two, we stated that Siyongwana was born in Ngqamakhwe which is located in the old Transkei region. The Transkei was a homeland for the amaXhosa and so the region was a rich source of Xhosa culture. **Ubulumko Bezinja** is set in a traditional village where there are no different races

and that emphasises the relation between the novel itself and the background of the author.

The novel is symbolically related to the political situation of this South Africa. In our discussion of theme, we asserted humans as representing the whites and the dogs representing the blacks. We further declared that the author's aim of employing this technique was to avoid prosecution and censorship as the government laws of the time did not allow the blacks to express their disapproval of the government practices. It should be kept in mind that several times charges were pressed against Siyongwana for opposing the government acts and laws, and that his first attempt of creative writing was turned down*. It is for these reasons that the author resorted into conveying his message in a symbolic form and in this instance his aim has been successful. It can be argued therefore that, through this novel the author has made contribution in the South African liberation struggle as the novel gives courage and sense of optimism to the freedom fighters. This suggests that the liberation struggle in this country did not assume one form, but a variety of efforts were made to fight against the government malpractices. As the theme of the novel is conveyed in a symbolic form, to discover it one has to be engaged in thorough investigation. Information about the background of the Xhosa novel, the personal background of the author, and the political history of South Africa are quite essential in the analysis of **Ubulumko Bezinja**. These are the factors that played a crucial role in this study.



*Information gathered from a biographical audio tape interview of the author.

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