

**IMAGES OF AFRICA: A SELECTIVE COMPARISON AND
CONTRAST OF THEMES AND PREOCCUPATIONS BETWEEN
XHOSA AND OTHER AFRICAN WRITERS**

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Sibizwa Solomzi Mdaka do hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is entirely my own work with the exception of such quotations or references which have been attributed to their authors or sources.



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Dated at Fort Hare this 30th day of March 1992

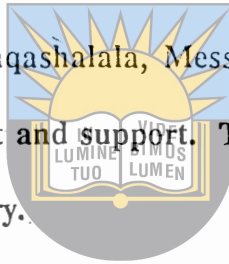
S S MDAKA.

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My wife Nomafa for her unstinted moral support.

Finally Menzi, the Almighty God who inspired me throughout this research project.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to:

My parents "RTS" and "E"

My wife, "VN"

My children, "OoMduduma".



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ABSTRACT

To date, very little scholarly effort has been made to integrate the study of African literature in European languages with that of literature in African languages. In the light of growing recognition of the decolonizing imperative (in which Ngugi's articulation of the political importance of writing in indigenous African languages has perhaps been most influential), this is a lacuna which urgently needs to be addressed. This study aims to make a small contribution in this direction by analysing parallel themes and preoccupations in selected representative literary texts in English and in Xhosa.

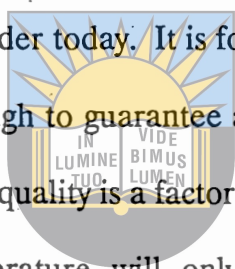


The approach adopted in this study requires an emphasis on content, but since form and content are ultimately inseparable, attention is also given where appropriate to the way in which the formal strategies adopted by an author help to shape the thematic burden of his work. Again, where appropriate, biographical and other background information is invoked in order to establish more fully the historical and ideological context of a text.

The study concentrates on novels of resistance against colonialism because the major themes and preoccupations shared by European and African-language literature can all be seen to stem from the fact of colonialism and the resultant ideology and politics of resistance. Several strong parallels are described, while in the concluding chapter certain important differences are noted and some attempt is made to account for these. At the end of the discussion of each parallel theme identified, some assessment is made of the relative effectiveness of each author's attempt to deal creatively with the consequences

of colonialism.

Making "effectiveness" rather than the standard Western notion of artistic merit the criterion of evaluation does not involve throwing out all aesthetic considerations: rather, in much the way that critics like Njabulo Ndebele have argued, it entails placing the act of artistic judgement in the context of a specific political responsibility and commitment. Evaluative considerations therefore include the ideological standpoint from which an author writes, the historical context in which he writes, and the significance of his message and achievement for the reader today. It is found that neither political content nor pure aesthetic excellence is enough to guarantee a novel's effectiveness: rather, as Mao noticed many years ago, artistic quality is a factor which empowers both author and reader politically. A work of literature will only have a lasting impact on the consciousness of the reader if it is expressed in sufficiently memorable language, and if it is sufficiently complex and truthful to measure up to his own experience of actuality.



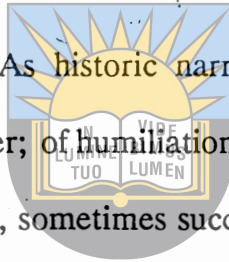
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CHAPTER 1



INTRODUCTION: COLONIZATION AND AFRICAN WRITING

From our present point of vantage, the central event of modern African history has been the colonization of the continent by European powers. Whatever regional variations there have been in the nature and intensity of the trauma suffered by indigenous Africans, the discourse of Africans on colonialism and its effects has been remarkably homogeneous, even monolithic. As historic narrative, this discourse is a story of conquest, dispossession and plunder; of humiliation and dehumanization; of resistance, revolt and triumphant repossession, sometimes succeeded by disillusion.



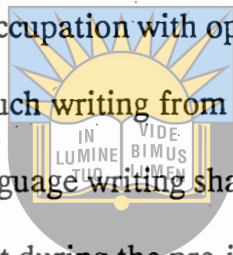
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The modern or written literature of Africa constitutes one of the most powerful composite authorities for this narrative. With very few exceptions, its point of departure is the fact of colonization and disastrous impact of that historical event on the society, culture and psyche of Africans. Again with few exceptions, its destination is decolonization, the liberation of Africans from the foreign yoke and its legacy of political tyranny, economic exploitation and cultural impoverishment.

In this study, selected works of Xhosa literature are compared with novels in English from other parts of Africa. This choice of material is prompted by a number of factors. In the first instance, it is motivated by the proposition that the experience of black South Africans over the past three centuries has been in essence no different from the

experience of Africans in other regions with no large European settler populations. Secondly, it provides a way of assessing the achievement of Xhosa literature within the context of modern African literature as a whole, and of thus measuring the extent to which it is capable of assimilation into the mainstream of modern African writing, or the extent to which it is atypical or eccentric. The very concept of an "African literature" is therefore implicitly at issue. Thirdly, while writing in English by Africans from South Africa has received considerable critical attention, writing in the so-called vernacular languages has been largely neglected. Black South African English writing - with its urban settings and concerns, its preoccupation with opposition to apartheid - is generally speaking, palpably different from much writing from the rest of Africa. It is one of the findings of this thesis that Xhosa language writing shares far more common ground with modern African writing written or set during the pre-independence period than its South African English counterpart. Finally, exploration of this common ground sheds useful light on the whole question of the "African experience" and the "African personality", so central to the (Pan-) Africanist discourse.



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This thesis has two basic trajectories: the first is an exercise in comparison, in which prominent themes in the literature under review are explored in a fairly open-ended way. The second is aimed at elaborating an appropriate critical method for evaluating the achievement of individual literary works. Here cognisance is taken of the social "conscientizing" purpose of the writing, and a compromise is struck between the ostensibly disinterested aesthetics of Western tradition and the propagandistic imperative of African liberation politics.

The remainder of this introductory chapter is given over to discussion of a few exemplary texts which dramatize in unusually forthright ways salient aspects of the colonial situation.

Colonialism and Christianity

Colonization was accompanied by bitter wars. It is paradoxical that missionaries, who have been acclaimed as benefactors to Africans, played a significant role in these wars. They actually paved the way for the conquest of Africans. Their Christian religion created dissension and disunity amongst blacks, and its "soeten praatjies" - the values of obedience, humility, meekness - lowered the level of resistance among them (Mnguni 1952, 69).



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The role played by missionaries in conquest made it very difficult for Africans to make a distinction between Christianity and subjugation; a mission and a fort; a priest and a soldier; the cross and the gun. The imagination of African writers was shaken by the hypocrisy of the missionaries, and their revulsion at it is attested by the recurrence of this theme of hypocrisy in their writings. J.J.R. Jolobe in a poem entitled "Ingqawule" explores this theme. He writes:

zeza kwesokunene zifumbeth' ithamsanqa
Umqulu waseNyango, amathende obomi
Ichibi lokuhlanjwa kwentliziyo yoluNtu
umchithi wamathunzi okungazi kwintlalo
Kwinzungu yomphefumlo nakwinkungu yengqiqo
Ukanti ngesekhohlo zazibame ikrele.

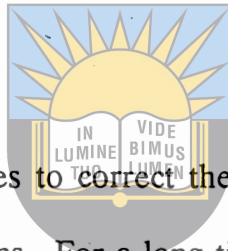
Lilubengu lokufa, zibele umbane.
Isihlabanisela sibhubhisa, ngomlilo
Ududum'okwezulu ulabalab'umfiyo.
Iindwane zabachasi zisikw'okwesikhotha
Sidliwa yisekile yotshabalaliso (Ilitha: 40).

(They came holding blessing in their right hands
The Book of Heaven, the graces of life
The font for washing the human heart
The dispeller of the shadows of ignorance
From the soul's anxiety and foggy understanding
Yet in their left hands they carried a sword
The instrument of death, lightning on their backs
Stabbing weapon of deadly fire.
Thundering like heavens its victims spreadeagled.
Enemy heroes cut down like grass
when the destroying sickle devours.
(translated by Kuse 1977, 287)



The underlined verb "fumbatha" in the first verse means more than simply holding: it implies that the person holding an object is fully or partially covering it, reluctant to part with it. In this context it suggests that the colonizers were not honest in teaching the Bible to Africans. They presented to Africans the 'Christ of the other cheek', inculcating docility, humility and obedience, while carefully omitting or de-emphasizing in their teachings the Christ who is opposed to unjust laws, the Christian notion of the brotherhood and the equality of man before God and the 'Golden Rule' of doing unto others as you would like done unto you. Jolobe enumerates the attributes of the Bible as if to say: It is paradoxical that people holding a source of life should be responsible for such destruction of life, and that people bearing the 'dispeller of the shadows of ignorance' could without any qualms of conscience promulgate a system whose intention was to keep Africans in perpetual ignorance.

This view is further reinforced when Jolobe juxtaposes these attributes of the Bible with those of the sword in the left hands of the colonizers. When we read this poem and other comparable African writings we gain the impression that the Bible was used as a mental opium to lull Africans into a political slumber whilst the colonizers looted the fruit of African labour, stole their land and cattle, deprived them of the right to live as they pleased in the land of their forefathers, and finally stripped them of the dignity that is the birthright of human beings. Through its use Africans were made vulnerable to the white man's invasion, and in this poem their vulnerability is likened to that of grass that is cut down by a sickle.

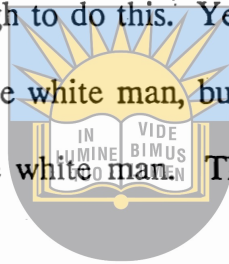


In the rest of the poem Jolobe tries to correct the distortion of the African past by colonial commentators and historians. For a long time, white historians described the Cattle Slaughter of 1856-1857 as a national suicide. Jolobe suggests that it was not national suicide but genocide. (Sirayi has made a brilliant analysis of Jolobe's point of view in his M.A. thesis). Here, it suffices to say that to Jolobe the Cattle Slaughter was a treacherous, well-planned ploy of the white man to establish his hegemony over Africans. This wicked design succeeded where war had failed.

Jolobe not only corrects the misrepresentation of African history but also exposes and condemns the savagery of the white man. In the epilogue the whites who are responsible for the mayhem are seen suffering in hell and Nongqawuse, who has always been portrayed by colonial commentators as the one who caused the holocaust, goes to heaven to enjoy eternal life. I am sure that, had the contents of this poem been recognised by

the publishers, it would not have been published, but Jolobe's use of obscure symbols enabled his work to elude censorship.

Even today the analysis of Jolobe's point of view makes some white scholars very uncomfortable. Sirayi's article "The African Perspective of the 1856-1857 Cattle-Killing Movement", published in the South African Journal of African Languages, for instance, caused commotion in some quarters here in South Africa. There is perhaps a feeling that it opens old wounds and will incite revolution. My opinion is that Jolobe's look at yesterday is not revolutionary enough to do this. Yes, he exposes and condemns what he perceives as the barbarism of the white man, but he also unwittingly confirms the vulnerability of the Africans to the white man. This does not incite revolution but paralyzes political action.



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Furthermore, Jolobe elsewhere perpetuates the myth that things will be made right for Africans in the hereafter. This myth was propounded and promulgated by the white man to lull Africans into political apathy while he looted their land and rights. He also seeks further consolation for his reader by evoking an idyllic pre-colonial African past: however, in Chapter Two I will show that the romantic rehabilitation of the African past and the condemnation of colonization are not in themselves necessarily a spur to political action. The analysis of the image of the African hero in Chapter Three will show that it is when this retrospective glance focuses on the valiant deeds of African heroes that it can revolutionize the responses of African readers.

Colonialism, Dispossession, Land and Labour

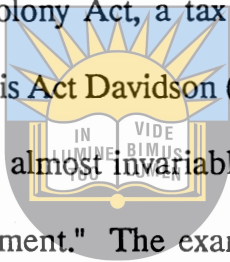
It is arguable that the worst evil brought to Africa by colonization was the capitalist economic system. While its implementation touched ruthlessly every fibre of African life, the dispossession of Africans which it accomplished was felt most keenly in the related areas of land and labour.

The development of the colonial labour system can, generally speaking, be divided into two phases, which were equally exploitative. The first phase was characterized by coercion. When colonial rule was firmly entrenched in the colonies, there arose a need for labour to facilitate administration. Roads, railways, administrative buildings were to be built. Since the Europeans "[would] not do manual labour in a country inhabited by black races" (Davidson 1981, 107), it became imperative for the colonizers to secure African labour. Africans were understandably unwilling to work for the Europeans for various reasons. One reason was that the wounds caused by wars of dispossession and the imposition of colonial rule were still fresh in their minds.

Another reason was that the idea of working for another man was foreign to the traditional African economy, which provided every man with basic human needs like food, shelter, warmth, freedom. Intoxicated by victory and impelled by the need for African labour, the colonizers decided on coercion. Characteristically they then tried to camouflage the atrocities which accompanied this type of recruitment by giving it the name of 'contract labour'. In spite of all their attempts to mask the brutality involved in this type of recruitment, the resultant calamities spoke louder. For instance, among

127 250 'fit adult males' recruited in this way to build the French equatorial stretch of railway known as Congo-Ocean, 10 200 deaths were reported (Davidson 1981, 108).

Nonetheless, with all the evils that this phase of the colonial labour system brought about, it turned out to be just a prelude to a more hypocritical, destructive, unjust and oppressive phase. This is the phase where taxation was used in forcing Africans to work for the Europeans. This strategy of exacting labour was initiated in South Africa, where the demand for African labour grew day by day because of the discovery of minerals. Thus in 1894, through the Cape Colony Act, a tax in cash was imposed on 'fit adult males'. About the implications of this Act Davidson (1981, 110) says: "To pay cash taxes Africans would have to earn cash; almost invariably in that period this meant leaving their villages for European employment." The example set by South Africa was soon followed by other colonies. In Kenya a hut tax and poll tax were imposed for the same purpose.



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This strategy, as intimated above, not only forced Africans to work for wages and contribute to the cost of being governed, but also gave birth to the most detestable system of migrant labour. The permanent absence from their homes of most "fit adult males" had detrimental effects on traditional economy. It meant that the manpower which is the pillar of any economy was absorbed by European mines and farms. The condemnation of this and many other exploitative measures is unequivocal in the literature under review. This system of extracting labour was by no means the only method used in forcing Africans to leave their villages and seek employment in farms and cities. The missionaries, in the words of Dr Phillip, "by creation of artificial wants"

played a part in this. These "artificial wants" made many abandon their villages to go and work in the cities. It was, however, the colonial system of land distribution which dealt the most serious blow to the harmony of village life.

Early land expropriation and subsequent land Acts such as the Land Act of 1913 in South Africa and the notorious Labour Acts of 1919 in Kenya, were designed to reduce the Africans' land units so that as many Africans as possible would be left without means of support and thus form a reservoir of cheap labour. These Acts had a disastrous outcome for Africans, whose political, social, religious and economic livelihood depended on land. Through them the whole traditional order was disorganised.



The expropriation of fertile land from the Africans, achieved by these land Acts, rendered many homeless and landless, reduced them to destitution and forced them to migrate to the cities. Misery was the lot of wives who were left behind in the barren, denuded, congested, overstocked and eroded Native Locations and Reserves. In a woeful poem entitled "Zemka iinkomo" Tshaka portrays this suffering. He writes:

Amahlath' agawulwe amahlath' aphelile,
Zityeshelwe ezimivuz' ephilisayo.
Amadlel' abiyelw' amadlel' avaliwe,
Zemka k' iinkomo magwalandini.

Oonyana bawashiyil' amakhaya ziinzima,
Akulinyw' akuhlakulw' akuphilwa.
Oodade nabo, int' engazang' ibekho,
Zemka k' iinkomo magwalandini.

Iirafu zilindile kumakhaya ngamakhaya,
Kodw' akusekho ms' uqhumayo.
Amakhaya ngamanxuwa, ahlala amabhungane,
Zemka k' iinkomo magwalandini.

Lusizi, ziimbandezelo wanendlala,
Amanzi neenkun' azuzwa ngexabiso.
Bubomi bentlungu, bubomi beenyembezi,
Zemka k' iinkomo magwalandini.

Nab' oom' ootata noodade,
Kule dolophu, kulaa dolophu nakuleya.
Noko k' asikayaz' int' esakuba yiyo,
Zemka k' iinkomo magwalandini.

Imfund' ayizuzwa ngoboya nombona,
Njengamzuzu kookhokho bethu.
Izuzwa ngoku ngamath' entaka.
Zemka k' iinkomo magwalandini.

Ibhongo lesizwe ziintombi zalo,
Kant' ubuhle beentombi lilizwe lazo.
Zoze ziphindwe zifaniswe n' ezi zinto?
Zemka k' iinkomo magwalandini. (Iintsika Zentlambo YeTyhume, 20)

(Forests have been cut down, Forests are destroyed, Fertile and resourceful lands have been alienated. Pastures are fenced and closed. There go your cattle, you cowards.

Sons have left their homes because of poverty, There is no planting, no cultivation and no means of living.
Our sisters likewise have left, something that had never happened.
There go your cattle, you cowards.
Taxes await payment in every home
But there is not even a trace of life there.
Homes are in ruins and deserted.
There go your cattle, you cowards.

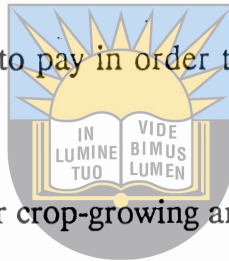
There is sorrow, suffering and poverty,
Water and wood are now paid for.
It is life full of pains, and tears.
There go your cattle, you cowards.

Here are mothers, fathers and their daughters,
In this town, that one and the one yonder.
We do not know yet what our future will be,
There go your cattle, you cowards.

Education can no longer be acquired through wool and maize,
As it used to be in the days of our forefathers.
It can now only be acquired through paying with bird's spittle.
There go your cattle, you cowards.

The pride of a nation is its daughters.
And the beauty of the daughters is their country.
Will these things ever be likened to each other again?
There go your cattle, you cowards).

In the first stanza the poet describes how Europe plundered African resources and cunningly confiscated the lands of Africans. Possessed by the desire to tame Africa, the white man indulged in the reckless and wholesale destruction of forests whose products met numerous household needs in traditional Africa. Some forests were declared government property and Africans who from time immemorial had enjoyed free access to these forests were now expected to pay in order to get wood from them.

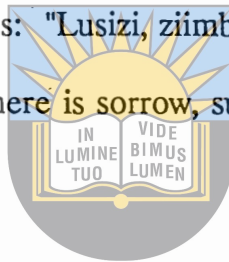


Fertile lands which Africans used for crop-growing are seized by the white intruder, and again he cites as a 'rational justification' for his action the African's supposed inability to govern himself and develop the full potential of the land. Green pastures are fenced, allegedly for the benefit of Africans, who are subsequently debarred from using these as grazing lands for their livestock. Deprived of the free use of forest products, of land for growing crops and of grazing for their livestock, Africans are left with virtually no means of subsistence. The whole traditional economy is thus disorganised. Africans have no option but to leave their villages to go and seek employment on white men's farms and in cities. This is exactly what the white man aimed at.

In the second stanza the poet tells us that this rape of African resources was successful. Hunger, poverty and misery drive black men from their homes to the cities and farms owned by the white men. The third line of this stanza reveals that girls are also forced

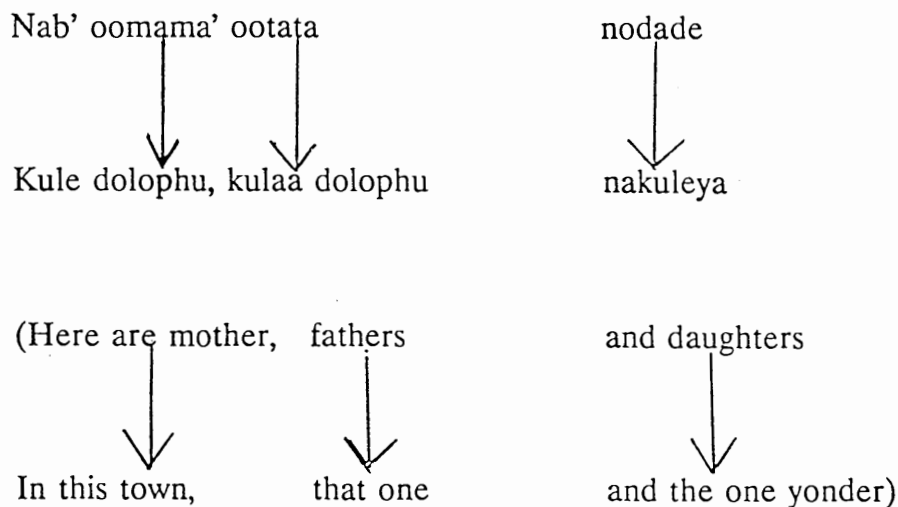
to leave their homes, something that had never happened in the history of the Xhosas.

In the third stanza Tshaka explains that the colonial system of taxation gave impetus to this exodus. He exposes and condemns what he sees as the immorality of colonial government in forcing Africans to pay taxes for homes which are not homes but ruins. The fourth stanza describes the desolation this strangulation of the traditional economy brings to African homes. Many Africans are poverty-stricken, landless, homeless and doomed to destitution. Tshaka paints a graphic picture of their deplorable and miserable situation with the cadences of pathos: "Lusizi, ziimbandezelo, kwanendlala ... Bubomi bentlungu, bubomi benyembezi" (There is sorrow, suffering and poverty ... It is life of pains, it is life of tears).



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The fifth stanza portrays the disrupting effect this has on African families. In the first and second lines of this stanza it is suggested that families are fragmented because mothers, fathers and daughters go to different towns. The fragmentation is mirrored by syntactic parallelism:



As could be expected, this colonial economic onslaught on African families resulted in degrading practices such as homosexuality, prostitution and adultery. Of course, to the white man these do not appear as the inevitable outcome of his economic system but as further evidence of the African's inherent promiscuous sexual passions. Scattering African families in this way achieved two things: it made it possible for them to be over-exploited, in that a married person could be paid the wages of an unmarried man. It also helped to break up the African nation, for a nation is formed by families and, if the families are disrupted, the nation will also fall apart. A disunited nation's future is bleak; hence Tshaka says: "noko k' asikayazi into esakuba yiyo" (We do not know yet what our future will be).



This seizure of the lands has also closed another door to a better future for Africans by making education inaccessible to most of them. In the sixth stanza Tshaka tells us that before the 1913 Land Act, Africans could pay for the education of their children through selling wool and maize. But now that, through this Act and similar regulations, Africans are herded into barren Reserves, it has become extremely difficult for them to pay for the education of their children. The imagery of the bird's spittle is a vivid and ingenious figure used by Tshaka to convey how difficult it is for landless Africans to get the bare essentials such as schooling for their children. This state of affairs is made worse by the fact that, even when they resort to working for the white man, they are paid meagre wages which are not sufficient to pay for their food and clothing, let alone for the education of their children.

In the last stanza Tshaka alludes to the degrading influence that city life has on African girls. Away from the protective and restraining power of their parents they become vulnerable to morally debasing habits. They are no longer the pride of their nation for the nation takes pride not in the physical beauty of its daughters but in their moral beauty.

It is not only the girls who have undergone drastic change but also their country. Before the confiscation of the lands of Africans by the white man, their country was so beautiful that you would hear people saying: "Ilizwe liyintombi" (the land is a virgin), particularly after the first rains in Spring. This means that the land is as beautiful and full of good prospects as a virgin in traditional Xhosa society. But now their fertile lands have been usurped by the white intruder and they have been herded into such barren, eroded, congested Reserves that it would be an insult to girls if it could be said: "Kant' ubuhle beentombi lilizwe lazo" (And the beauty of the daughter is their country). What can now be termed their "country" is so devoid of beauty that the poet doubts if African daughters and their land could ever be compared; as he says: "Zoze ziphindwe zifaniswe n' ezi zinto?" (Will these things ever be likened to each other again?).

The title of this poem "Zemka Iinkomo Magwalandini" (There go your cattle [i.e., rights] you cowards), which also becomes a refrain, is presumably intended to spur its African readers to political action. But the poem itself is more of a lament than a goad. It seems to belong to that category of protest writing which Ndebele has identified as "the literature of the powerless identifying the key factor for their powerlessness. Nothing beyond this can be expected of it" (1986, 150). Ndebele points out that mere description

of the spectacular ugliness of the plight of Africans in South Africa is by no means automatically politically productive, for "knowledge of the existence of oppression does not necessarily enable one to fight it People, without being actually organised, will not necessarily go out to fight for their rights" (1986, 152)

Mphahlele (1972, 17) has also deprecated the sort of protest writing which he characterises as "sheer exhortation, a facile rejection and therefore..... not 'memorable speech'". Tshaka's poem, while admirably clear in its exposition of the African predicament, is not particularly memorable: idiomatic expressions such as "there go your cattle" and "the land is a virgin" have arguably become so commonplace as to have lost the power to stir the reader. Both these critics have pointed, on the other hand, to the possibilities of a literature which goes beyond the simplications of spectacle to what Ndebele terms "the rediscovery of the ordinary", or what Mphahlele calls "a memorable act of language with transcendental possibilities" (1983, 14). These issues will be elaborated in the discussion of the theme of protest in Chapters Two and Three.

Colonial Ideology and African Resistance

The imposition of the colonial economic infrastructure led to the emergence of a colonial ideology whose function was to legitimate the power of the colonizers and make the oppression and exploitation of blacks by whites seem 'natural' (Eagleton 1989, 5). Part of this task was in the capable hands of missionaries. Through religion and education they undermined African culture and made European culture appear most admirable. In the words of Fanon "the christian missionary and his religion functioned as a special

ideological DDT to destroy the 'native parasites'" (Gugelberger 1985, 51). To the missionaries, conversion, education and civilization were synonymous and were to replace traditional values.

The uncompromising and unquestioning enthusiasm encouraged by missionaries in their converts caused bitter conflicts between them and their 'pagan' brothers. The whole process of the debasement of African culture had serious repercussions on African traditional societies and preoccupied the imaginations of African writers. It made them openly challenge the colonial ideology.

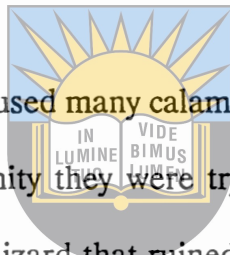


Some writers write with the sole intention of portraying in bold negative terms the image of an African convert, so that his lack of confidence in himself, his hypocrisy, credulity, unbridled and unquestioning enthusiasm, loss of identity and independence, and hatred of his fellowmen, often become objects of severe ridicule and cynical criticism.

In Arrow of God John Goodcountry, a black teacher from Niger Delta, in accordance with the dictum of Christianity, encourages Umuaro converts to desecrate the shrines of the clan, fight the bad customs of the people, and kill the sacred python as a Christian duty. The first person to defy him, strangely enough, is Moses Unachukwu, the first and most famous convert in Umuaro. He bluntly tells him that neither the Bible nor the catechism requires the converts to kill a python. He attacks and ridicules the teacher's narrow-mindedness and unquestioning enthusiasm.

His attack is made more acidulous by the use of Ibo proverb and folktale: "outsiders

who choose to weep louder than the owners of the corpse", "the lizard that ruined his own mother's funeral". The proverb is used to poke fun at African converts who, because they want to prove that they are Christians, become pretentiously zealous in executing what they think are Christian duties, to the extent of going beyond what the very missionaries expect from them. These converts in the words of Ngugi (1982, 10) "hearkened to the voice of the missionary's God, cried Halleluyah and raised their eyes to Heaven. They derided the old gods and they too recoiled with studied (or genuine) horror from the primitive rites of their people".



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The actions of these zealots have caused many calamities in Africa. Their fanatical faith boomeranged on the very Christianity they were trying to propagate, as explained by reference to the folktale about the lizard that ruined its own mother's funeral. Achebe makes a mock of these people by showing that, although "they may cover the ground with words", when the testing time comes their valour melts like ice in a hot pan (Arrow of God, 50). Oduche, eager to gain approval of his teacher John, refutes Moses' argument that the Bible does not require them to kill the python. He sheepishly explains that the Bible does say that man should crush the head of the serpent. Moses contemptuously retorts: "I shall be waiting for the day when you will have courage to kill the python" (50).

It is after this challenge that Oduche takes the decision to kill a python. Six days elapse without Oduche getting a chance to execute his decision, and "during this time his heart lost some of its power". When the favourable moment comes his teacher-acclaimed courage fails him. He merely pushes the snake "down from the wall with his stick but

could not bring himself to smash its head". He finally decides to lock the python in his box hoping that it "would die of lack of air and he would be responsible for its death without being guilty of killing it ..." (50).

Achebe also berates the converts by giving them the names of biblical characters. Oduche is to be called Peter on his baptism as an honour for his bold answer. Exalting himself to the position of Jesus, John proudly says to Oduche: "When the time comes for your baptism you will be called Peter; on this rock I will build my church" (49). The irony in all this is that, although this is meant to be an honour to Oduche, to the readers it brings to mind that Peter of the Bible, like Oduche, boldly proclaimed that he was prepared to die with Jesus but denied him when afforded a chance to stand by his words. John also unknowingly condemns himself and Christianity as a whole when he says: "on this rock I will build my church," which implies that the Christian church is to be built on the desecration of African shrines and the strangulation of her cultures (49). Achebe further ridicules his uncompromising attitude on this by giving him the name of John the Baptist, who was beheaded for his lack of tact in dealing with people.

This same device is used in portraying the character of Moses Unachukwu, who with all his knowledge about the white man's God has not forgotten the myths of Umuaro. This is evidenced by his use of both the Bible and the myths of Umuaro in attacking and exposing John's narrow-mindedness. Achebe draws our attention to the parallelism between Moses Unachukwu and Moses of the Bible. He writes: "He [Unachukwu] saw his sojourn in Anitsha as a parallel to that of Moses of the Old Testament in Egypt" (47). By giving Unachukwu the name Moses, Achebe impresses upon us that, just as Pharaoh's

daughter failed to seduce Moses with power and pomp to forget the religion of his people, so have the Christian teachings of future glory and enjoyment failed to make Unachukwu renounce his traditional beliefs. Through these devices Achebe succeeds in ridiculing the abject mentality of Christian converts and satirizing all the unsuccessful missionary attempts at "dragging and pushing and kicking [Africans] 'up' to the Christian God" (Mphahlele 1974, 26-27).

Yet ridiculing these converts and other docile Africans without providing a way out or an alternative to their way of life is to be "vindictive rather than redemptive" (Qangule 1979, 227). It does not help the readers who suffer from the same complexes but simply makes them feel ashamed. Some African writers, rather than blaming the victims in this way, suggest some ways through which they can be redeemed, as will be seen in Chapter Three under the subsection entitled "The Image of the Docile African". Furthermore these quislings "appear in most of our writings as finished products often without personal history" (Ndebele 1984, 44). Such writings do not transform the reader's consciousness because the image of a docile African is likely to leave an indelible mark on the minds of the readers only when the writer makes them understand something about the psychology of the collaborator. Chapter Five will shed more light on this observation.

European colonizers consolidated their position in African through brute force, treacherous treaties and indirect rule. In due course they introduced discriminatory and oppressive laws in terms of which the value of a human being was measured by the colour of his skin, and these were enforced by the police, military forces and the courts.

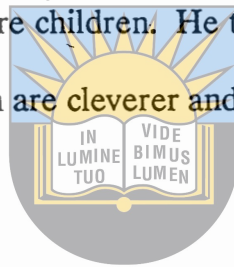
The political dispensation of colonialism soon found its antagonists among African writers, who have responded not only with anger and outrage to its inequities, but also with programmes for resistance and liberation. In Chapter Four I examine a selection of works by writers who portray the political struggle for freedom or Uhuru. Several of these texts explicitly sanction the use of violent action to further the struggle and achieve its ends, and the question of the position of violence in the discourse of decolonization will be addressed.

Mphahlele's short story "The Master of Doornvlei" provides an early example (1946) of writing which champions mental and physical defiance as opposed to the more conciliatory strategies of ameliorist African politics. Although the story merely adumbrates in largely symbolic terms the militant advocacy of violence which became dominant in Africanist discourse a decade later, it reveals in interesting ways how the larger national political struggle can be imaged in the interaction between individuals on a much smaller canvas. In the story, the farm workers' demand for the expulsion of the cruel foreman Mfukeri at Doornvlei, for example, is politics, because it is Mphahlele's argument that non-violent resistance not only fails to bring about the desired political change, but makes the oppressor tighten the chains of oppression rather than loosen them. He also seems implicitly to propose that the restoration of human stature to Africans can be achieved through the use of violence.

In this story we are introduced to a group of labour tenants who are in a prayer session on a rainy day. Whilst they are still in the process of prayer, Mfukeri comes in to fetch a young boy, whom he forces to go and work in the rain. The labourers have from time

to time complained about these disturbances and Sarel Blitz's answer has always been: "I'm just to my labourers. I favour nobody above the rest. Farm work is farm work, I often have to give up my church service myself" (The Unbroken Song, 72).

This means that African labourers on these farms have no day that can be called a day of rest. This "puny wisp of a boy with scraggy legs" who is forced to work in the rain subsequently dies of pneumonia. The labourers run berserk with rage and with one voice demand the expulsion of Mfukeri. This shocks Sarel Blitz out of the racist stupor in which he has thought that Africans are children. He then says to his mother: "Yes Ma, they're fully grown up: some of them are cleverer and wiser than a lot of us whites" (74-75).



One hopes that this realization will bring about a change in Sarel Blitz's heart but it achieves the opposite. Instead of treating them as human beings he vows to crush them: "they are serpent's eggs and I'm going to crush them" (75). Their legitimate demand, through their leader, that justice be done, is met with more determination to "crush them". Possessed by this desire, Sarel Blitz makes their stay on his farm even more unbearable than before. He expels Rathebe, their leader and spokesman, and informs them that Mfukeri, the culprit, "had been warned and would be given another chance; and still he has the audacity to say, "I'm just" (75). Such intimidation and disorganization of the masses through the silencing of their leaders has become a characteristic of the white man's regime in Africa, which the white man hypocritically terms "the maintenance of law and order". In this way Africans are condemned to endless poverty, relentless oppression and merciless exploitation.

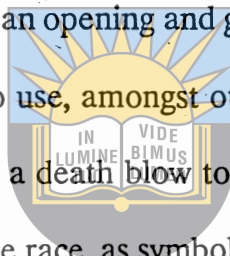
Through this portrayal of Mfukeri, Mphahlele attempts to show how a black man who suffers from the deadly disease of slave mentality may be saved through the use of violence. Mfukeri "had always felt inferior before a white man" (79). Sarel Britz, his master, enjoys ordering him about to assert his authority. One day he orders him to take care that his "scrubby" bull, Donker, does not mix with his cows. Mfukeri is visibly offended by this but agrees to do as the master demands. He hands the bull over to a friend who lives on a farm adjoining Doornvlei.

Two days later Donker returns to Doornvlei and a fight ensues between Mfukeri's bull and Britz's pedigree stallion, Kasper. In the heat of the struggle slime flows freely from Donker's mouth and mixes with the earth. Britz didn't like the slime mixing with the sand: it looked as if Donker were invoking a mystic power in the earth to keep his forehoofs from slipping" (81). When Donker's forehoofs are firmly planted on the ground the bull gores Kasper in the stomach. Seeing that the stallion is dying, Britz shoots it and orders Mfukeri to do the same to his bull, but for the first time in his life Mfukeri refuses to obey his master.

This fight symbolizes a fierce struggle between African humanism and white racism, represented by Donker and Kasper, respectively. Mphahlele maintains that for some time white racism appears to have succeeded in obliterating African humanism in the minds of Africans. However, he shows that even during this time it is not eradicated but relegated to the subconscious mind, as intimated by Mfukeri's handing over of the bull to a friend who lives on a farm adjoining Doornvlei. One day its stubborn head

will again loom menacingly in the conscious mind, as suggested by Donker's return to Doornvlei.

The ancestors play a decisive role in this struggle, as implied by the bull's slime mixing with earth. Africans believe that, since the dead are buried under the ground, the earth is the abode of the ancestors. Thus Britz is correct when he perceives the slime mixing with the earth as an invocation to a mystic power (i.e. the ancestors) in the earth to keep the bull's forehoofs from slipping. Once the forehoofs are planted in the ground (i.e. the abode of the ancestors), the bull finds an opening and gores Kasper in the stomach. This implies that African humanism has to use, amongst other things, African religion as its anchor, in order to be able to deliver a death blow to white racism. The demolition of the myth of the superiority of the white race, as symbolized by Kasper's defeat, will bring about a change to Africans who suffer from slave mentality: "when Mfukeri saw Kasper tottering, and his beloved bull drawing back, an overwhelming feeling of victory shot through every nerve in him" (81). He becomes a changed man who can say "no" to the white man. He is expelled for his audacity but he goes away a better man. It is interesting that, in this story written during the 1940s, the violent conflict is rendered symbolically in the fight between two animals: although Mfukeri's consciousness is altered, it is not he who combats the white master. Later writers as I shall show will come to depict this conflict more directly.



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CHAPTER 2

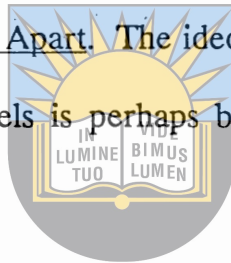
THE REACTION TO CONQUEST

Although African writers have responded to colonization in a variety of different ways, their work evinces a considerable degree of thematic convergence. Three major recurrent thematic foci have therefore been selected for discussion in this chapter: first, that which deals with the disruption of African life caused by advent of the white man; secondly, the theme of reconciliation, in which the writer seeks to negotiate some resolution of the tension between the traditional and the foreign, the ways of the colonizer and colonized; and thirdly, the theme of protest, in which the writer records the affront to the human dignity of the colonized, the protest about the economic exploitation, political oppression and cultural repression he is made to suffer. There is of course considerable overlap among these categories, and they are isolated purely for the convenience of discussion.

Owing to the paucity of appropriate Xhosa prose fictional texts, in order to sustain a reasonable comparative balance I shall have recourse from time to time to representative work in other genres (poetry, drama), as well as to writing in English by black South Africans.

The Advent of the White Man

The articulation of this theme is a reaction to the notion propounded by colonial writers and politicians that Africa prior to the coming of the white man was a land of lawlessness inhabited by barbaric savages in need of civilization. The writers who explore this theme aim at correcting this distortion of the past through the affirmation of African culture and the condemnation of colonization. The novels that are going to be used as examples of fiction where this theme is articulated are Mqhayi's Ityala Lamawele and Achebe's Things Fall Apart. The ideological orientation of both these writers in the writing of these novels is perhaps best described as that of cultural nationalism.

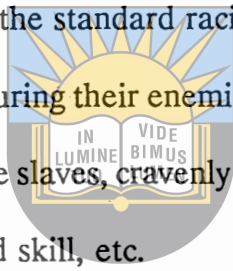


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Mqhayi's novel Ityala Lamawele was first published in 1914, two years after the foundation of the African National Congress, and gives clear expression to the mood of nationalism prevailing at that time. Throughout his life Mqhayi was a champion of African traditions and customs. At one stage he risked expulsion from Lovedale by undergoing circumcision while he was a student there; fortunately, he was pardoned for this 'sin'. He later taught at the same institution but had to give up his teaching career because of disagreement with the missionaries over the teaching of colonial history (UMqhayi waseNtab'ozuko, 74). Mqhayi maintains that his love and immense knowledge of African tradition was generated by his six-year stay at his uncle Nonzanza's court in Centane.

Achebe's Things Fall Apart was first published in 1958, two years before Nigeria

assumed independence, which helps to explain why it is so strongly imbued with the spirit of cultural nationalism. Achebe's self-avowed intentions as a novelist are to "teach [his] readers that their past - with all its imperfections - was not one long night of savagery from which the first European acting on God's behalf delivered them", and to help his society "regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement" (Achebe 1982, 44-45). This mounts to a declaration of ideological war, in which the aim is to wrest control of the representation of African culture and history from colonial discourse. In Things Fall Apart, Achebe deliberately and systematically sets about challenging and subverting the standard racist representations of Africans as blood-thirsty savages who enjoyed torturing their enemies, lived like brute beasts without law and order, treated their women like slaves, cravenly worshipped demons and fetishes, were totally lacking in reason, wit and skill, etc.



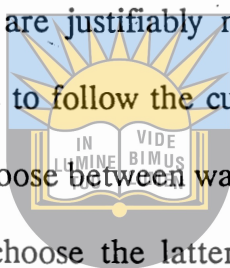
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Both Mqhayi and Achebe consequently begin their novels by depicting the harmony and glory of pre-colonial life in Africa. Part One of Things Fall Apart evokes a state of almost paradisaical bliss prior to the coming of the white man. It is the longest section of the book because Achebe seeks to paint a balanced portrait of a community, giving attention to every aspect of village life.

In the very first paragraph of his novel Achebe introduces us to Okonkwo, whose eminence in wrestling is indisputable. He tells us that Okonkwo became famous when he threw Amalinze the Cat, a champion who had dominated in this sport for seven years: "Amalinze was a wily craftsman but Okonkwo was as slippery as a fish in water" (3). Besides the skill of wrestling which Achebe pictures in different incidents in the book,

he also endows some of his characters with oratorical abilities to show that it is not true that Africans were a race without skill or art. He for instance portrays Ogbuefi Ezeugo as a skilful orator who is always chosen to speak when there is a crisis facing the community. He has the art of manipulating the people's emotions through the use of gestures, facial expressions and the tone of his voice. This is evidenced by the manner in which he reports the murder of Udo's wife. When he finishes his report the people are shouting with anger and thirsting for blood.

Although the people of Umuofia are justifiably maddened by this murder, reason triumphs in the end for they decide to follow the customary peaceful course of action. Mbaino is given an ultimatum to choose between war and the offer of a young man and a virgin as compensation. They choose the latter and thus war and the wholesale slaughter of people is averted - an eminently civilized resolution of the dispute.



Although the lad Ikemefuna is to be killed, his death is a symbolic and therefore sophisticated form of retribution, exacted for the sake of the community as a whole: he is sacrificed as an atonement for the crime of his tribe. The symbolic form of this social transaction, Achebe was no doubt aware, is similar to a myth at the heart of Western culture, the death of Christ for the sins of the world. The virgin is given to Udo as a form of compensation, and peace and order are restored.

The Ibo people had yet another way of resolving disputes and that was to take the matter to a court of law. Achebe tells us that the egwugwu conducted trials and resolved differences. Uzowulu's case is but one example of disputes which were amicably resolved by them. They were respected and revered for they were believed to be ancestral spirits

incarnated. Before they could conduct a case the leader would salute the litigants, to make sure that they still held them in high esteem. In this particular case Evil Forest, the leader of the egwugwu, salutes Uzowulu the complainant: "Uzowulu's body I salute you". Uzowulu responds by bending down to touch the ground saying: "Our father my hand has touched the ground" (64). Evil Forest does the same with Udukwe, the defendant, and receives the same response.

An atmosphere of mutual recognition conducive to the settlement of the dispute is thus created. The attitude the egwugwu adopt towards any case is expressed by Evil Forest when he says: "Our duty is not to blame this man or praise that, but to settle the dispute" (66). This means that they are agents of reconciliation who appropriately use the respect they enjoy in resolving individual, family and tribal conflicts.

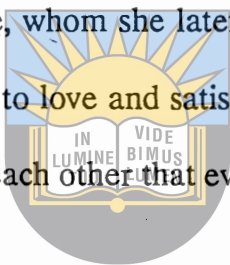


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In laying his charge against his in-laws, Uzowulu validates his case by citing the law of the clan. Obviously, the Ibos did have their own laws, which, although they were not written down, were known to everybody. In short, Uzowulu is filing a divorce case on grounds of desertion. Udukwe the defendant explains why they have to take their sister away from Uzowulu, which is tantamount to giving extenuating circumstances. After Udukwe has been given a chance to state his side of the story, witnesses are called. Thereafter the egwugwu go to their house to consult together. All this is done to make sure that the court arrives at a just decision.

The verdict passed by the egwugwu is in accordance with their express duty, which is not to blame this man and exonerate the other but to reconcile the two parties. Uzowulu,

who has made it his habit to beat his wife, is sternly rebuked and commanded to make a libation to his in-laws begging for his wife's return. Udukwe is ordered to let his sister go if Uzowulu brings wine to him. Thus divorce with its psychological trauma is avoided. This case also shows that a husband could not treat his wife as he pleased because he had paid a bride-price for her. The bride-price did not make her his slave. She could leave him for another man if she did not love him. Ekwefi, Okonkwo's second wife, had fallen in love with him when he threw Amalinze the Cat in their wrestling contest but could not marry him then because he was very poor and could not pay her bride-price. She was therefore married to Anene, whom she later deserted for Okonkwo, the man she loved. A husband was expected to love and satisfy his wife. Achebe tells us about Ndule and Ozoemena who so loved each other that even death could not separate them.

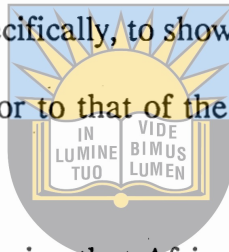


Work was distributed according to sex. Planting of yam, for instance, was the sole responsibility of men, and this distribution of work ensured that women were not made slaves by their husbands. The status accorded to Okonkwo because of his industriousness and the stigma attached to Unoka his father for his laziness show that this community cherished diligence and condemned laziness.

In refuting the stereotype that African religion is nothing but degrading demonology and fetishism Achebe demonstrates the genuineness of, and the logic behind, traditional Ibo religion. Through a dialogue between Mr Brown and Akunna he shows that the Ibos believed in God and called him Chukwu. When Mr Brown accuses them of worshipping idols made of wood such as the Ikenga, Akunna argues that the tree from which the Ikenga is carved was made by Chukwu and can therefore be taken to be representing its

maker. Mr Brown then alleges that the Ibos devote their worship to ancestors and gods. Akunna explains that these are merely intermediaries through whom they approach God: "we approach a great man through his servants" (127).

Through his evocation of a stable, just, gracious and humane social order, then, Achebe seeks to rehabilitate the history of precolonial Africa and to champion African cultural values and customs. Mqhayi's objective in Ityala Lamawele is similar. In his Introduction he states his intention: generally, to help stem the tide of destruction of African culture and dignity; more specifically, to show that Africans had their own legal system which was by no means inferior to that of the so-called civilized interloper.



Like Achebe, Mqhayi succeeds in showing that Africans knew and executed justice long before they met the white man. In fact he maintains that in the execution of justice Africans are not just as good as the white man but are much better. The plot of the first phase of Ityala Lamawele revolves around a lawsuit between twin brothers over the question of primogeniture. Through this lawsuit Mqhayi argues that unlike the white man's law, which is man-made, the African law came from Qamata(God). Violation of these sacred laws incurred the wrath of God and the ancestors, which was directed not only at the offender but at the community as a whole. These notions are succinctly expressed by Zolile the court bard after the verdict has been passed by king Hintsa (33-34). That is why great pains were taken to restore order when one of these laws was broken.

Just as in the court of the egwugwu, the complainant is given a chance to lodge his

complaint. Wele, the junior twin, introduces his case to the counsellors, saying: "Ndimangele"(I lay a charge) (1). In a Xhosa court it is the king and his counsellors who preside over cases. The ancestors are involved in the proceedings in the sense that the Xhosa court called "inkundla" is believed to be the habitat of the ancestral spirits. Wele is encouraged by the counsellors to explain further: "Hambisa"(say on). After laying his charge he is interrogated to ascertain the seriousness of the case. A meeting is then arranged.

During this meeting Babini, the senior twin brother, is given a chance to state his side of the story. In the cross-examination it becomes clear that the case has already been adjudicated by Lucangwana in the lower court, but Wele is not satisfied by the verdict of this court and is now appealing to the senior. It is worth noting that no money is paid when an appeal is lodged with the higher court. This shows that justice was within the reach of all in the traditional setting. When both sides have been heard the witnesses are called. The argument and counter-arguments baffle the court and this necessitates a reference to precedent. Thus Khulile Majeke, the oldest man alive in the whole of Xhosaland, is called to come and give his opinion about the case. After Khulile's powerful speech the litigants and their witnesses are asked to leave so that the king and counsellors can look at the merits of the case and give their collective opinion. They are then recalled and the verdict is made known to them. "Mqhayi's ingenuity lies in the fact that according to the decision none of the twins won the case", writes Kuse (1977, 223) explaining that: "As the purpose of the suit was not merely to identify the guilty party but to repair a breach in the fabric of society, the verdict was something of a no fault solution".

Both Mqhayi and Achebe contrast the decorum that characterized pre-colonial Africa with the mayhem ushered in by the advent of the white man. The slaughtering of King Hintsa in Ityala Lamawele exposes and condemns the barbarism of the white man. In part one of this novel Hintsa is portrayed as a righteous judge presiding over a lawsuit between twin brothers, Babini and Wele. Hintsa is presented as a very powerful exponent of traditional justice, a king who hates wickedness and loves peace. His abhorrence of evil is attested by his reaction to Ngqika's crime. Mqhayi tells us that Ngqika, another Xhosa chief, commits incest with Thuthula, the wife of Ndlambe, his senior uncle. Ndlambe reports this to king Hintsa. In capturing the King's reaction on hearing this, Dumisani, the king's bard, says (Hintsa is here referred as Zanzolo):



"Mhla wesuk'uZanzolo engenazwi lamlomo,
 Sesibon'ukuphuma kwamadangaye ngamehlo,
 Sesibon'ukuphokozeka kwemisi ngeempumlo,
 Sesisiv'inzwini yamakhwelo ngeendlebe,(66)

"...The day Zanzolo was utterles [sic] with fury, We saw only the leaping of flames through the eyes,
 We saw only the smoke coming through the nose,
 We heard only intense whistling through the ears".
 (translated by Qangule 1979, 209)

An army is sent to punish Ngqika. King Hintsa himself accompanies this army and Ngqika is defeated. Hintsa's love of peace is reflected in his response to the reports of the arrival of the Mfengu and white race in Xhosaland. When the arrival of the Mfengu tribe is brought to his notice, he orders his subjects to give them food and clothing and treat them cordially. He does the same when Ngqika's messengers report the arrival of a white race amongst the Xhosa. He

entreats Ngqika to show kindness to this race:

...lude luzibonise ngokwalo ukungabi bantu; luthi ukuba lungabantu abanobulumko, uthobe phantsi kulo, ungakhawulezi ukuphakamisa isandla side sive ngaLowo useNyangweni ukuba masithini na (55).

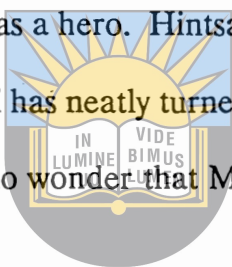
...until they reveal that they are inhuman; if it is a race of wise people, he should be humble and learn from it, until the Almighty decrees what should be done. (translated by Qangule 1979, 105)

This excerpt shows that Hintsa is not only a peace-loving king but also a God-fearing leader. Mqhayi tells us that many whites arrived in Xhosaland and formed a bellicose community. They declared a series of wars on flimsy pretexts. For instance they declared what was to be known as **Hintsa's War** on the grounds that the Xhosas had stolen their cattle. A wholesale slaughter of Xhosas is unleashed in which Xoxo, Ngqika's son, is seriously injured. Still Hintsa refuses to be dragged into a war. The white man's armies then cross the Kei river heading for Hintsa's Great Place. An emissary is sent to instruct him to see the Governor before five days elapse. Responding to this, Hintsa reluctantly goes to the place where the armies of the white man are stationed.

On arrival he is served with a list of outrageous demands which he is to fulfil before a specified time. One of these is that he must give the white man 50 000 cattle and 1 000 horses as compensation for those stolen by his people. The king agrees to do all this and requests that he be allowed to go and collect these from his people. He is refused permission to go. Throughout his stay in the white man's camps he is tortured and threatened with exile to Robben Island and death. After some days he attempts to escape but unfortunately he is seen and a large-scale chase ensues. Shots are fired at

him. Wounded and bleeding, he runs to Nqabara river. Unable to run any further, he stands upon a rock and pleads for mercy from his pursuers, saying: "Taruni maphakathi" (81) (Have mercy, counsellors). Southey, deaf to his pleadings, aims his gun and pulls the trigger, scattering Hintsa's brain all over.

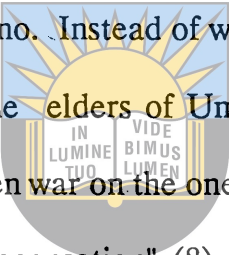
One white man cuts off Hintsa's ears and takes them to Grahamstown, where large numbers of whites have gathered in churches to conduct thanksgiving services. Another plucks out his teeth by cutting his lower gum. His head is severed from the body and sent to Cape Town. Southey is hailed as a hero. Hintsa is barbarously butchered under the banner of 'civilization', and Mqhayi has neatly turned the tables on the self-righteous hypocrisy of the colonial cause. It is no wonder that Maran says about this civilization:



civilization, civilization, pride of Europeans and their slaughter-house of the innocents...you build your kingdom on corpses. Whatever you wish, whatever you do, is steeped in lies... you are not a torch, but a fire. Whatever you touch you devour.(Cook and Henderson 1969, 23)

The savagery of the white man is also exposed by Achebe in Things Fall Apart. In chapter fifteen of this novel Obierika narrates the story of the destruction of the Abame clan. He starts his narration in typical African style by asking a question, "Have you heard?", after which he pauses; and when his listeners are all ears, he continues "that Abame is no more?" (97). This question has the desired effect of startling the listeners, and Uchendu and Okonkwo are visibly shocked. They exclaim: "How is that?" The shock experienced by Okonkwo and Uchendu typify the African response to the

encounter between black and white: the white man's way of doing things - his duplicity and brutality - was profoundly alien and shocking to Africans. In this incident one white man is killed because the Oracle has said many other white men are on their way. The whites are described as locusts, and this first man as the pioneer sent to explore the terrain. Without investigating why this man was killed, the white intruders retaliate by destroying almost the whole clan. When one reads about this event one cannot but recall and contrast the consequences of similar incident that occurs at the beginning of the novel before the arrival of white men. A wife of Ogbuefi Udo of Umuofia clan has been murdered by the people of Mbaino. Instead of waging war against the Mbaino as the white men did against Abame, the elders of Umuofia dispatch an ultimatum to Mbaino "asking them to choose between war on the one hand and on the other, the offer of a young man and a virgin as compensation" (8). Thus war and the consequent destruction of life are avoided.



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In this massacre a few fugitives are deliberately allowed to escape so as to spread the sad story to other villages. This gun-boat diplomacy became one of the strategies used by the white man to lower African resistance. The woeful story that the fugitives from Abame spread among the people of Umuofia has a paralyzing effect on them. Up to the end of the book, fear of the power of the white man divides the people of Umuofia. Even Okonkwo's impetuous killing of a white man's messenger fails to dissipate this fear. To divide and rule the Africans is exactly what the colonizers aimed at. Obierika expresses this when he says: "The white man is clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on

the things that held us together and we have fallen apart" (124-125).

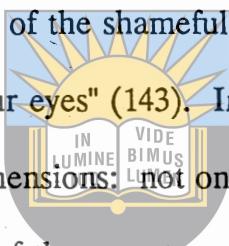
The incident of the unmasking of the egwugwu epitomizes the falling apart of the Ibo people. Enoch, a Christian convert, unmasks the egwugwu out of sheer arrogance and impudence. He starts desecrating the egwugwu cult by boasting aloud that they cannot touch Christian women, for to say something that reduces the cult's immortal prestige in the eyes of the uninitiated was seen as sacrilege by the Ibo people. As a mild rebuke he is given a "good stroke of the cane" by one of the egwugwu (131). Whereupon "Enoch fell on him and tore off his mask". His reaction is clearly out of all proportion to the mere stroke of the cane he receives; its exaggerated aggression captured through the use of verbs - "fell" and "tore" - that denote animal savagery.



Enoch's despicable behaviour is further made ridiculous by the fact that the egwugwu have already agreed to let the women pass when he taunts them. Their willingness to retire and let the women pass is a clear indication that the egwugwu, who represent the upholders of African tradition, favour peaceful co-existence with Christians. Palmer (1979, 66) has remarked on the high degree of religious tolerance shown by the people of Umuofia and Umuaro in Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God. He says that their general attitude of kindness and courtesy towards the new religion demonstrated "a sophisticated liberalism and modernity" not found in the new camp.

This religious tolerance is further confirmed by what the leader of the egwugwu says to Smith. Achebe tells us that, after all that Smith and his converts have done to the egwugwu, their leader still hopes for peaceful co-existence with Christianity. Extending

the hand of peace to Smith he says: "You can stay with us if you like our ways. You can worship your own god. It is good that a man should worship the gods and the spirit of his father" (134). The pathos is intensified when Achebe describes how the Mother of the Spirits bewails the death of her son: "That night the Mother of the Spirits walked the length and breadth of the clan, weeping for her murdered son. It seemed as if the very soul of the tribe wept for a great evil that was coming - its own death" (132). Intense tragedy is further evoked in Okika's speech where he says: "All our gods are weeping. Idemili is weeping. Ogwugwu is weeping, Agbala is weeping, and all others. Our dead fathers are weeping because of the shameful sacrilege they are suffering and the abomination we have seen with our eyes" (143). In the words of Peteni (1979, 74-75), "the tragedy now reaches epic dimensions: not only is the known world disturbed, but disaster reaches out to the abode of the ancestors and the seat of the gods...." The tragic death of Okonkwo, the champion of traditional values, further condemns the ruthlessness of the white man.



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In spite of all that Achebe and Mqhayi do in these historical novels to glorify the African past and condemn colonization, it is arguable that they do not go far enough to actually assist the African reader in regaining belief in himself. Ngugi, for instance, argues that "in a capitalist society, the past has a romantic glamour: gazing at it is often a means of escaping the present" (1982, 46). To elaborate an image of precolonial Africa as a kind of prelapsarian paradise is to provide only a symbolic solution to colonialism's legacy, the very real problems which face Africans today. A retreat into the past may be the first and necessary step in the reconstruction of a viable cultural identity, but to dwell nostalgically on the past can be a dangerous refusal of history itself: one can never

go back in time.

Cabral has pointed out that critique at the level of culture alone is not sufficient: he argues that there is no historical value in the return to the source if it does not advance the independence struggle and identify with the hopes of those who want the removal of foreign domination as a whole, not just of foreign culture (1973, 63). And according to Ngugi (1982, 45), "To gain the belief in ourselves that Achebe talks about, some of the younger African writers now realize not only that they must reclaim their past, but that the very condition of a successful and objective reclamation is the dismantling of all colonial institutions, and especially capitalism, as patterns of social and economic development."



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Perhaps Cabral and Ngugi go too far in their prescription for what qualifies as a politically acceptable strategy for the African writer. According to them, he must contest not only a warped view of his own culture but also an entire economic system (capitalis), which, as Achebe suggests in his portrayal of Okonkwo's material success in Things Fall Apart, is not necessarily alien to traditional African life. But I would "improve" on the example of writers like Mqhayi and Achebe: by portraying victorious African heroes (rather than victims), and by demonstrating the continuity of African culture from precolonial to postcolonial times.

As delineated in Things Fall Apart and Ityala Lamawele, the mayhem ushered in by the advent of the white man does not galvanise Africans into political activity, but paralyses them in fear. Indeed, the deaths of Okonkwo and Hintsá expose and condemn the

savagery of the white man, but they also unwittingly show the vulnerability of Africans against the white man. Africans have heard so much about this vulnerability from the white man's books that what is needed now are books that recount the victories of Africans over the white man. Ndebele's story entitled "Uncle" provides a good example of such a look at yesterday. Lovington, the narrator's uncle, teaches him many things including the history of the Basotho. He recounts: "Let me tell you something. Remember the king of the Basotho Mshoeshoe? Remember how he defeated the Boers by rolling rocks at them from the top of the mountain Thaba Bosin? Their guns, their cannons, were nothing compared to the terrible descent of rocks" (Fools and Other Stories, 98). Note, however, that Ndebele's exemplum of victorious endeavour is offered to the reader at a double remove, as a story recounted by a character within a story, thus demonstrating for the reader the way in which didactic use may be made of the glories of the African past. Perhaps the implication is that the urban reality of South Africa today is hardly the appropriate setting for the heroic deeds of a Mshoeshoe, however symbolically significant they remain. The somewhat more modest, moral victory of Mr Zamani in Ndebele's story "Fools" (see Fools, 275-76), would seem to instance the kind of continuity with the example of the pre-colonial warriors to which ordinary contemporary readers might aspire. The "return to the source" that will help Africans to regain belief in themselves because "a sense of historical continuity linking present struggles with past glories(victories) stiffens resolve, instils pride and enhances social consciousness" (Mackenzie 1990, 15).

Another way in which the "return to the source" can restore confidence to Africans is by showing that African culture is not time-bound, that although "African culture has had

to sustain severe blows and may have been battered nearly out of shape by the belligerent cultures it collided with, yet in essence even today one can easily find the fundamental aspects of pure African culture in the present day African" (Biko 1987,41). Studies such as Thuynsma's The Oral Tradition in Southern African Literature highlight this notion. Although the study focuses on literature, Thuynsma makes a brilliant observation about culture in general. Citing Mphahlele, he argues that the African personality is so strongly manifested today that Africans should not "think of a culture as an anthropological thing that belongs to the past and must be reconstructed as a mere landmark or a monument"(Thuynsma 1980, 200). He sums up his study by observing that oral tradition and modern African literature "exist side by side and are both quite alive; the modern feeds actively on the traditional in expression, sensibility and social ideology" (Thuynsma 1980, 205). What he says about modern African literature is also true of modern African culture generally. One can easily find fundamental aspects of traditional African culture in jazz, Monkey jive, Soul, etc. (Biko 1987, 45). The recognition that Africans continue to be creators of culture restores faith in themselves.



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During Okonkwo's thanksgiving ceremony in Mbanta, his maternal uncle Uchendu stands up and says: "It is good in these days ... to see a man doing things in the grand, old way" (Things Fall Apart, 118). It is evident that Uchendu holds his African culture in high esteem. In his speech he contrasts the unity which the communalism of African humanism fostered with the disunity encouraged by the individualism of European culture. The phrase "I fear" is repeated four times in the speech to impress upon the minds of the listeners the seriousness of the doom that is to befall them for forsaking their ancestors in favour of an abominable religion. The folly of such a step is

highlighted by the use of an Ibo proverb about the hunter's dog that suddenly goes mad and turns on his master (118). It is not strange that Achebe, whose avowed intention as a writer is to "teach his readers that their past ... was not one long night of savagery", should use Ibo proverbs as one of his stylistic features. These are not merely curious features exploited for their local color; they serve to dramatize the wisdom, morality and philosophy of the African people.

The language that Mqhayi uses in his novel shows that, on the one hand, he regards the coming of the white man as inaugurating a period of backwardness and moral degeneracy. He refers to it as a period of darkness. Thus he throws back at Europe the stigma of darkness with all its negative connotations which the white man has come to associate with Africa. In his novel it is the great sage, Khulile, who foretells the coming of the white man. He is recorded to have said on his deathbed: "Elo xesha ke liya kuba lixsha elifana nesifingo sokusa, lona libamnyama ngokugqithileyo ..." (Ityala Lamawele, 60) (That time will be like the hour before dawn, which is exceedingly dark ...). In showing that this era is indeed a period of darkness Khulile enumerates the evils that characterize it: dissension; the disobedience of children; the disintegration and subjugation of the Xhosa nation; the abrogation of chieftaincy and the obliteration of African culture. On the other hand, the diction he uses when describing the African culture connotes dignity and splendour. His novel is interspersed with poems about king Hintsá. Hintsá, the champion of African tradition, represents African culture and the praises that Mqhayi lavishes upon him are the praises of African culture. The love of peace, the abhorrence of evil, and the dignity with which Mqhayi endows Hintsá, are identified as the qualities of African culture. His intention, made explicit in his

Introduction, is to show how precious a treasure the African youth loses when it turns its back on its culture.

Although both Mqhayi and Achebe have portrayed the African past in positive terms, they have not sentimentalized and romanticized it. This is partly because these novels are written in the critical realist mode. Achebe, for instance, in accordance with the parameters of this mode, "gives a truthful account of the Ibo society without glossing over its weaknesses ... his art becomes a model of the triumph of realism over the claims of nationalism" (Ngara 1987, 112). Mqhayi, on the other hand, strikes a balance between ideology and art by showing that although colonialism was on the whole a disaster, it was not an unmitigated one. While he condemns the colonial era as a period of darkness he concedes that it will be a prelude to a prosperous period. He does this by invoking an idiom which says "Isifingo sandulela ukusa" (it is darkest just before dawn) (Ityala Lamawele, 60). This period of prosperity which Khulile foretells emerges when the good points of European tradition are reconciled with the strong points of African tradition. In the chapters entitled "Ubukumkani bukaXhosa" Mqhayi advocates this reconciliation. And "reconciliation", indeed, is the next theme to be examined.

The Theme of Reconciliation

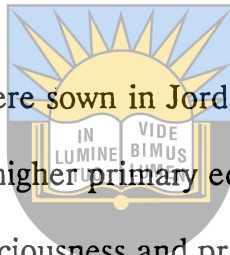
In the words of Gakwandi, "for the execution of its designs colonialism employs not only naked force but also persuasion" (1977, 13). This "persuasion", described by Gakwandi as an elaborate apparatus designed to incarcerate the minds of its victims, rested on two pillars: religion and education. It constituted a process of depreciating traditional

culture, and its effect was the degrading of the Old by the apparently irreconcilable New. It inflicted greater damage on African personalities than the colonizer's guns.

The complexes developed in the African psyche, as a result of this "persuasive" onslaught on indigenous cultures, have proved difficult to remove, even after the gaining of political independence. Some influential African writers (e.g. Fanon [1968] and Ngugi [1986]) have argued that psychic healing can only occur through the complete "decolonization" of the African mind. Yet other writers have espoused the reconciliation of African and European traditions as a way whereby the traumatic consequences of the invasion of African minds and psycho-social disunity can be avoided. Even while portraying the magnitude of the schism, and the confusion that reigns when First World models are forced on Third World existence, they yet show that aligning the two streams could prove therapeutic. The ethics of reconciliation propounded by these writers offers valuable lessons to all who seek solutions for the problems of colonized Africa. These lessons are perhaps especially pertinent to the post-independent situation, if black and white, friend and foe are to live together peacefully. They seem to include the following: that tolerance breeds unity and unity builds a nation; that any solution to the problems of colonized Africa demands sacrifice; that true settlement of disputes is achieved through consultation and negotiation; for reconciliation to be realized the conflicting parties have to be purged of things such as hatred, prejudice, complexes; and that when negotiations fail people will resort to violence.

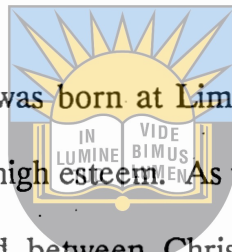
The novels that will be explored in this section are A.C. Jordan's Ingqumbo Yeminyanya and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's The River Between. Looking at the background of the authors

helps one to understand why they decided to make reconciliation one of the themes of their writings. A.C. Jordan was the son of Elijah Jordan, who was a devout Anglican teacher and the head of Mbokothwana Mission School, where A.C. Jordan received his primary education. Jordan was thus born and bred in a Christian home, nurtured in a Christian mission institution, and had first-hand experience of the severity with which Christian dogmas are inculcated in African converts. Denunciation of African culture and desecration of traditional symbols of worship are the corollary of what was taught in all Christian institutions.



Ironically, the seeds of race pride were sown in Jordan's mind at St Cuthbert's Higher Boarding School where he took his higher primary education. There he met Rev R.A. Scott who infused in him a race consciousness and pride through narrating "a good deal about African heroes ... even the 'Reds' whom we were inclined to despise" (Jordan in a letter to B.W. Vilakazi dated 10/9/1944). Love and reverence for African ways were further implanted by his involvement in community affairs during his university career. He used to attend community meetings whenever he went home for holidays. He learnt a great deal of African lore from three Hlubi leaders: Zondwa Jama, Tese Fulathela and Sikhephe Nomzanga. He gained a deeper insight into Mpondomise norms and customs when in 1933 he accompanied Mpondomise chiefs to a meeting in Transkei. It was during this journey that he was shown the deep pool in which Majola the Mpondomise chief was buried in Thina river. Jordan's thorough-going exposure to both African and European worlds no doubt lay at the heart of his attempt to reconcile the two in his novel Ingqumbo Yeminyanya.

His interest in African literature was generated at Lovedale where he read more literature in the vernacular and met two prominent Xhosa writers: Mqhayi and Sinxo. It was however the Winter School organised by Fort Hare Department of African Languages in 1938 that decided him to pursue further his studies in African Languages. In 1942 he obtained an MA Degree in African Languages from the University of South Africa. The fact that he made in-depth studies in African languages along with majoring in English contributed greatly to the artistry with which this novel is written (Vilakazi 1945, 334-35).



Unlike Jordan, Ngugi wa Thiong'o was born at Limuru, Kenya, in 1938 into a family where African tradition was held in high esteem. As was the case almost everywhere in Africa, the community was divided between Christian converts and traditionalists. Ngugi's experience as a young schoolboy - he attended the mission-run Kamaandura School before transferring to Karinga Gikuyu School, which protected certain aspects of African culture - taught him how acceptance or rejection of European culture was used to divide the Gikuyu people. It is no wonder that in the first novel he wrote The River Between, he advocates the reconciliation of African and European cultures to foster unity.

The dialogue with Gikuyu gods that his parents nurtured in him was broken by his sojourn at Christian institutions such as Alliance High School where he received his secondary education from 1954 to 1958. For all these years he was under the influence of characters such as Carey Francis, the headmaster with "a Spartan missionary stance and uncompromising western bias" (Cook & Okenimkpe 1983, 1). It was here that Ngugi

developed "a complex religious awareness reflected in the integral use of biblical references and Christian mythology in the novels" (Ibid, 2). The initial title of The River Between was revealingly, "The Black Messiah". The knowledge of the Christian faith and of Biblical leaders he acquired while in these institutions enabled him to make mocking criticism of religious characters such as Joshua in his novels, although in his first three novels the use he makes of religious allusion is never simply satirical and is often highly ambivalent.

By his own account, it was the sheer resilience of African humanism that made Ngugi "turn his back on the Christian god and resume the broken dialogue with the gods of his people" (Ngugi 1982, 43). The River Between was his first literary attempt (although published second) in this homecoming. In symbolic language Ngugi in this novel portrays the division that Christianity brought about in Gikuyu country. The rift between Gikuyu converts to Christianity and those who resisted Christianity is symbolized by the way the two ridges "faced each other like two rivals ready to come to blows in a life and death struggle for leadership of this isolated region" (1). One ridge is a Christian stronghold and is called Makuyu, the other is called Kameno and here tribal custom continues to hold sway. Flowing between these two ridges is the river Honia, which means "cure" or "bring back to life." It becomes clear that this river stands for something which the writer perceives as a life-giving force capable of healing the division between those who dwell on either side.

The symbolic referent of the river here is nothing else but what Mphahlele in his Raymond Dart Lecture calls African humanism. Mphahlele highlights the resilience of

African humanism when he says: "It has been challenged, fragmented, even devastated in places such as South Africa. But it still asserts a powerful presence, side by side with new politics, new economics and new social forces, especially in largely rural independent Africa" (1986, 8-9). The trees and bushes that cover the slopes and make certain parts of the river invisible represent the new modes of life that seem to have replaced the traditional ways. But African humanism can never be completely obliterated from the minds of Africans. Like the Honia river it never dries up. It scorns all the forces that connive, campaign and militate against it, as symbolised by Honia's persistent flow even in the face of severe droughts and weather changes. While modernists and traditionalists bicker and clash, the river of African humanism flows on, awaiting rediscovery, its healing and unifying power unimpaired.



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In Jordan's novel *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya*, Thembeke, the educated and sophisticated wife of Zwelinzima, the chief of the Mpondomise tribe, kills a brown cobra, a sacred snake which is believed to be an ancestral spirit of the Mpondomise. Jordan's skilful presentation of the incident condemns Thembeke's action. He makes it clear that it is not out of ignorance but out of sheer arrogance that Thembeke kills Majola. Ngxabane the old Mpondomise sage approaches her on this matter, but soon gives up when he discovers Thembeke does not understand what he means when he inquires about the "Animal of the House". He then assigns Nozihlwele to explain what he means. Nozihlwele, who herself is shocked by Thembeke's ignorance, fumbles for words: "wakha-mhm-uyamazi - u-uyayazi le nyoka kuthiwa yinkwakhwa?" (153). (Have you ever - I mean - do you know the snake called Inkwakhwa? (Translated by Jordan & Jordan 1980, 167). Thembeke arrogantly retorts: "Ndinani ukuba ndingayaz'inkwakhwa

ndimdala kangaka" (153). (Am I a baby that I should not know inkwakhwa?) (translated by Jordan & Jordan 1980, 168).

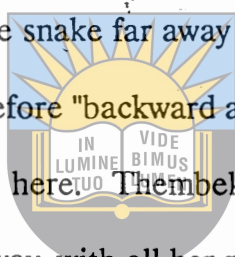
Thembeke's answer shows that she is not altogether ignorant about this Majola cult but she simply attaches no significance to it. This is further confirmed by the irreverent attitude she adopts when talking about this sacred snake. She says: "Arha! ngab'uthetha laa ntsomi yakudala kwakusithiwa kwath'inyoka enguMajola ehlonitshwayo ngamaMpondomise?" (154) (Can it be that you're talking about those idle tales about the Majola snake that the Mpondomise are said to hold in reverence?) (translated by Jordan & Jordan, 1980: 168).



Although Nozihlwele is visibly irritated by Thembeke's frivolous attitude towards such a crucial matter, she patiently explains the reverence with which Majola should be regarded (see, 154). The awe-inspiring description of the Majola cult makes Thembeke burst out laughing. Nozihlwele's elaborate explanation of the cult to Thembeke shows that her killing of Majola is inexcusable. Jordan tells us that on a hot summer day Thembeke, some women and the elders of Mpondomise were sitting under a big tree. Thembeke's son Zululiyazongoma slept peacefully at a respectable distance from them. There came two men with a lawsuit. The complainant, in accordance with the custom, was given a chance to lay his charge. In the process of stating his case he suddenly stopped and fell on his knees in an attitude of worship, looking in the direction of the sleeping child. All the men, following his example, knelt down and recited praises of the House of Majola. The women, covering their bodies and re-adjusting their head-cloths in reverence, started moving away. The reverence of all these people highlights by

contrast the irreverence of Thembeke, who, on seeing the inkwakhwa, became frantic. She seized the snake and threw it away. Jordan uses two ideophones in capturing her reaction: "wayithi xhakamfu jwi-i kude" (169). (She clutched it and threw it far away).

Qangule (1974, 166) explains the meaning of these ideophones: "The first ideophone illustrates the swoops of a furious assailant (Thembeke) upon a passive object (the snake). The second ideophone has extra length which indicates the distance to which the snake has been thrown". Thembeke's vicious action is made more heinous by the passivity of the snake. Throwing the snake far away enacts her wish to distance herself from all that is traditional and therefore "backward and evil". The resilience of African humanism is once more hinted at here. Thembeke, a modernist, throws Majola, a symbol of African humanism, far away, with all her might, but later meets it on her way to her room.



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Frustrated and infuriated by the sight of the snake, she dashes to the house, takes a stick and gallops back to the snake amid the cries and appeals of terror-stricken people and beats it repeatedly even when it is dead. This makes us sympathise with the snake and upholders of traditional values. Our sympathy towards the upholders of tradition is invoked further by the religious tolerance they display. Jongilanga, a traditionalist, after meticulously voicing all their grievances, concludes his powerful speech with an appeal for justice and fairness to both traditionalists and modernists (see, 200). In his list of grievances Jongilanga has pointed out that from the day Zwelinzima married an educated wife, quite against their will and his late father's dying wish, traditionalists have felt oppressed, ignored, discriminated against, spitefully treated by the King and the

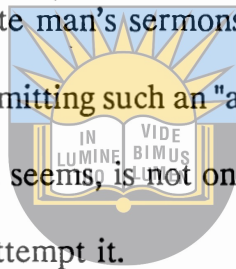
educated people. Although the traditionalists feel that they have been grossly ill-treated by the modernists, they do not seek vengeance upon them nor do they want to become oppressors in turn. But they clamour for justice, fairness and equality.

After this emotive speech we look forward anxiously to Zwelinzima's response. His open and genuine acknowledgement of having been ignorant of the grievances of traditionalists inspires hopes for a better future. He confesses that all along he (like his white mentors) thought he knew what was good for Africans, but now appreciates the need to consult with the people concerned to negotiate a settlement of the dispute between traditionalists and modernists. He solemnly promises to do anything they ask of him, to redress their grievances. After unsuccessfully pleading that his wife be forgiven, he then wants to know in what way he might 'feed' them. They respond by requesting that he should marry a second wife, the Bhaca princess, in accordance with the dying wish of his father, king Zanemvula. Zwelinzima is petrified with shock when he thinks about the implications of what the traditionalists perceive as a reasonable compromise and the only viable solution to their problems. Jordan in very picturesque language captures Zwelinzima's astonishment: UZwelinzima wasuka womela esihlalweni ngokomntu obethwe ngumbane. Akathetha, akashukuma, akahleka, akalila, wasuka wandwanya nje ..." (202-203). (He sat in his chair as if struck by lightning. He did not speak nor move. He did not laugh, he did not cry, but stared blankly into space ...) (translated by Jordan & Jordan 1980, 225).

The writer's repeated use of verbs that are in the negative form - "akathetha", "akashukuma" (he did not speak nor move) "akahleka" (he did not laugh) "akalila" (he

did not cry) suggests just how repugnant Zwelinzima finds the request of the traditionalists. The antithesis created by the juxtaposition of "akahleka" with "akalila" shows how benumbed Zwelinzima is.

He has thus sought to pacify the agitated traditionalists, only to find out that in order to achieve this he has to identify himself with African tradition by accepting polygamy. His Christianized and colonized mind revolts strongly against this. In a subsequent meeting with the upholders of African tradition he stubbornly refuses to marry the Bhaca princess as requested by them. All the white man's sermons about the sinfulness of polygamy make him recoil in horror from committing such an "abomination". Reconciliation of the European and African traditions, it seems, is not only difficult to achieve but demands a heavy sacrifice from those who attempt it.



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Ngugi in The River Between through Muthoni and Waiyaki gives us a graphic description of the sacrifice this reconciliation demands. Muthoni and her sister, Nyambura, are brought up in a strict Christian home. Their father Joshua is a renowned, rigorous and fanatical observer of all Christian practices. He vehemently condemns circumcision and believes it to be sinful. He fervently prays that his people should leave their "irreligious" ways and follow the ways of the white man. Like his teachers and missionaries, Joshua threatened, kicked, pushed, and dragged his daughters 'up' to the Christian god, to no avail. Muthoni still wants to be circumcised. When her sister Nyambura reminds her of her Christian obligations, she wittily says:

"Why! Are we fools?" she shook Nyambura. "Father and mother are circumcised. Are they not Christians? Circumcision did not prevent them from being Christians. I too have embraced

the white man's faith. However, I know it is beautiful, oh so beautiful to be initiated into womanhood. You learn the ways of the tribe. Yes, the whiteman's God does not quite satisfy me. I want, I need something more. My life and your life are here in the hills that you and I know. (26)

Muthoni's reversion to the African rites mocks Lothrop Stoddard's prophecy that: "The degrading fetishism and demonology which sum up the native pagan cults cannot stand and all Negroes will some day be either Christians or Moslems" (Soyinka 1979, 97). It is a wonder that Muthoni, who for the best part of her life has been spiritually assaulted by her fanatical father, still maintains: "I know it is beautiful, oh so beautiful to be initiated into womanhood". She further rejects "the claims of Christianity as a filler of spiritual holes" by saying "yes, the white man's God does not quite satisfy me" (Soyinka 1979, 97). She exhibits religious maturity which rebukes and ridicules her father's parrot-like and fanatical faith. Although she openly says she has "embraced the whiteman's faith" she still maintains that it lacks something, and that is African humanism, which is the very life-blood of any African; hence she says: "My life and your life are here in the hills that you know and I know." She seems to be of the opinion that if they abandoned African rites they would not be themselves, and "if you are not yourself, if you surrender your personality you have nothing left to give the world" (Mphahlele 1974, 40).

Her solution to the ambivalence caused by the black-white encounter is to attempt to embrace both traditions. She can be interpreted as saying that "there should be no convulsions in the process of aligning your [Christianity] with the culture of your people so that each informs the other" (Mphahlele 1974, 30). In line with her belief she runs away from her home at Makuyu to go and stay with her aunt at Kameno so that she can

be initiated. She joins the so-called "pagan" celebrations and dances. Strangely enough she finds herself at home. Waiyaki, the educated hero, is astonished when he sees Muthoni dance. He wonders where and when she learnt this art and it is only when his turn for dancing comes that he understands that "you did not have to learn. No, you just gave yourself to the dream in the rhythm" (The River Between, 43). But the Christian guilt complexes which have been rigorously inculcated in their minds will not easily let them be. Tormented by remorse they both wander away from the dancing group.

On top of this psychological suffering, they are still to suffer severe physical agony. In accordance with her expressed wish "to be a woman made beautiful in the manner of the tribe ...", Muthoni is circumcised. But unfortunately her wound does not heal. The anguish she sustains is such that at one stage she becomes delirious. After it has become clear that all the herbs that her aunt has given to her will not cure her, Waiyaki and some young man take her to Siriana Mission hospital. There she dies saying to Waiyaki "Tell Nyambura I see Jesus. And I am a woman beautiful in the tribe ..." (53).

Muthoni's attempt at reconciliation is a search for salvation for herself. Waiyaki on the other hand has been predestined to save the Gikuyu people. This is revealed to him by his father after the ceremony of his second birth. To impress Waiyaki with the sacredness of his calling Chege takes him in the early hours of the morning to the sacred grove. He tells him that he is the last in the line of the great Gikuyu seer, Mugo waKibiro, and so he must rise and save the people in their hour of need. Chege intuitively sees the reconciliation of African and European traditions as the only way by which the Gikuyu people can be saved. This is evidenced by his exhortation to his son:

"Arise. Heed the prophecy. Go to the Mission place, learn all the wisdom and all the secrets of the white man. But do not follow his vices. Be true to your people and the ancient rites" (20).

It is after many years that Waiyaki comes to understand his father's intentions. Incidentally it is on the hills in the sacred grove that everything becomes clear to him. There under the sacred tree it dawns on Waiyaki that not all the ways of the white man are bad, and that there are also spots of beauty and truth in the African way of life. The recognition of some good in both traditions is the cornerstone of reconciliation. It ridicules the rejection of the European tradition by the upholders of African tradition and satirizes the abolition of African tradition by modernists, for both these lines of action are tantamount to throwing overboard what ought to be cherished.

The logo of the University of Fort Hare is a shield-shaped emblem. At the top is a sun with rays. Below the sun is an open book. The book has the Latin motto "IN LUMINE VIDE BIMIUS" written on it. The shield is surrounded by a blue border.

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Ngugi is also fully cognizant of the weak points in both these ideologies and these weaknesses make reconciliation a necessity so that each may supplement the other. He further argues that the wholesale abrogation of traditional ways would only maim a man's soul, making him fanatically cling to whatever promised security. Joshua is a typical example of a man whose soul has been maimed in this way. We shall see more of Joshua's type in Chapter Three.

Ngugi not only sees the need to render the white man's religion more flexible and accommodating but also alludes to the necessity of abolishing some of the African customs such as the circumcision of women. He maintains that "circumcision of women was not important as a physical operation. It was what it did inside a person. It could

not be stopped overnight". This implies that it could be stopped but care, "patience and, above all, education, were needed" in doing this. Substitutes should be provided, for "if the white man's religion made you abandon custom and did not give something else of equal value you became lost" (142).

Reconciliation would bring about peace and unity between the two warring ridges, Makuyu, the stronghold of Christianity, and Kamenno, where tribal customs continued to hold sway. Then they could make a concerted effort to liberate themselves from their common enemy - the white man. It is only when they speak with one voice that they can be victorious over him. Waiyaki reinforces this idea by citing the great victories of Gikuyu heroes over Masai and other enemy tribes, and observing that "it is because the hills were united that such great victories were possible. People stood together in the hour of need, giving one another the warmth of their contact, the strength of their blood" (148). By removing the petty differences amongst Africans which accrue from conflicting ideological standpoints, reconciliation prepares the ground for them to stand "together in the hour of need". Waiyaki is also fully aware that reconciliation demands a sacrifice, as confirmed by his observation that "an attempt at resolution of the conflict would only kill as it did Muthoni" (142).

In Jordan's Ingqumbo Yeminyanya this attempt at resolution of the conflict claims the lives of Zwelinzima and Jongilanga. When Zwelinzima flatly refuses to reconcile the two traditions by marrying the Bhaca princess, the traditionalists resort to violence. They stop their children from going to school and when teachers try to persuade pupils to go back to school they are rudely chased away. The children who attend school because

they are secretly influenced by teachers are intimidated, molested and chased out of their classes by their parents. Violence escalates and in the whole Mpondomise country anarchy reigns. Ngubengwe, the educated Mpondomise statesman, is murdered while trying to save Father Williams. His death is mourned by many people and by Jongilanga in particular.

Jongilanga is so shocked by Ngubengwe's death that he renounces violence and advocates the return of the children to school, but still maintains that the reconciliation of the two worlds which would ensure the abolition of discrimination, is the only viable solution to their problems. On his way back home Jongilanga is murdered. He is, no doubt, assassinated for his attempt at resolving the conflict. His death throws Zwelinzima and the whole nation into complete confusion. After the burial of Jongilanga Dabula asks Zwelinzima how he proposes to intervene. His reply is: "Hayi Dlangamandla khawuyeke. Wobe uzivele" (218) (Please don't ask me yet Dabula, Dlangamandla. You will know soon enough) (translation by Jordan & Jordan 1980, 245). Early one morning he goes up the Ntibane ridge and over the Bulembu rising. There he stays alone the whole day. When he comes down he has resolved that he will agree to take a second wife if he is again urged to do so.

He subsequently calls a meeting of the traditionalists and once more pledges that he will do anything they demand of him if only they will promise that they will not indulge in any further acts of violence. They reiterate their request that he should marry the Bhaca princess in accordance with the dying wish of Zanemvula. He accedes to their request. It is worth noting that, whenever Zwelinzima is baffled and troubled by something, he

either goes to the river or up the mountain. In Ngugi's novel The River Between, we have noticed that when Waiyaki's life is threatened, he also goes up to the hills. Rivers and mountains are believed in many parts of Africa to be the abodes of the ancestors. These vigils at these shrines confirm what Mphahlele says about the modern African's belief in ancestors: " ... when we seek moral guidance and inspiration and hope, somewhere in the recesses of our being we grope around for some link with those spirits" (Down Second Avenue, 64). The mere fact that, when Zwelinzima and Waiyaki come from these shrines, they at least have some vision of what they are to do is a clear indication that Jordan and Ngugi implicitly endorse the claim that "our ancestors as part of history can if we allow them help us snap out of the trance into which we were thrown by western education so that we can use it to advance the interest of the whole nation" (Mphahlele 1974, 49).



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When Zwelinzima agrees to marry the Bhaca princess, one hopes that this at last will bring about peace, but it results only in more havoc. On the day a herd of cattle is driven to Bhacaland as lobola for the chief, Thembeke becomes mentally deranged and later drowns herself and her child Zululiyazongoma in the river Bedlana. The sorrow that Zwelinzima experiences defies description. Crushed by grief, he later commits suicide. One may wonder why these characters who attempt to resolve this conflict die. They die because African writers believe that any solution to the problems of colonized Africa, whether these are cultural or political, demands sacrifice. All who attempt to solve them should be prepared to sacrifice with their lives. If they die for a great cause, they undergo martyrdom.

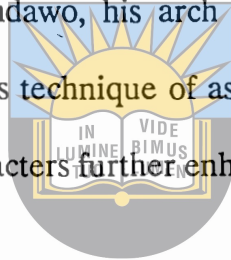
Besides the valuable lessons these novels present, they also have artistic quality. Both writers operate within the broad parameters of critical realism and retrieve and use elements of traditional African cultural practice. In Nama's (1984, 21) words they "exhibit signs of aesthetic dualism in their works".

This aesthetic dualism achieves unity between content and form. The reconciliation of European and African cultures which is the focus of the content is mirrored by the merging of European and African aesthetics in the form. In making out a case for reconciliation Ngugi uses the Gikuyu creation myth. He tries to prove that this myth is similar to the story of creation reflected in the Bible. In both cases the Creator is God who is called Murungu by the Gikuyus. He created man and woman, Adam and Eve in Judaeo-Christian tradition, Gikuyu and Mumbi in Gikuyu tradition. He gave Adam and Eve the garden of Eden to cultivate; Murungu gave Gikuyu and Mumbi Kenya to rule and till. Adam and Eve were instructed not to eat the fruit from the tree that was in the middle of the garden; Gikuyu and Mumbi were commanded to sacrifice to no other God but Murungu. It is as if Ngugi argues that if there are such similarities between African religion and Christianity, it means that they are reconcilable.

Jordan uses material from Mpondomise folklore to give his readers a background to the conflict between traditionalists and modernists. He for instance presents the Majola cult with such an aura of reverence that the killing of Majola by Thembeke is seen as a sacrilege. Another artistic innovation used by Ngugi and Jordan is to associate their heroes with both traditional legendary figures and Biblical characters. Wayaki, who is expected to achieve the mammoth task of reconciling the ridges, is presented in epic

terms by being associated with Mugo Wa Kibiro Demi and Christ. In this way "he is cast in the mould of the saviour, reminiscent of Christ"; hence the original title of the book, The Black Messiah (Nama 1984, 57).

In Ingqumbo Yeminyanya, Zwelinzima, who attempts to reconcile the traditionalists and modernists, is associated with Mpondomise legendary figures such as Majola and Mhlontlo. There is also an implicit association between him and David of the Bible. This is alluded to through the portrayal of the friendship between him and Vukuzumbethe, the son of Dingindawo, his arch rival, which is reminiscent of that between David and Jonathan. This technique of associating these heroes with African legendary figures and Biblical characters further enhances the unity of content and form.



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Above all, perhaps, the wide authorial sympathy extended to characters on both sides of the divide enacts the message of these texts. For instance the way Jordan portrays the pain suffered by traditionalists when their objects of worship are desecrated underscores the necessity for reconciliation. When Thembeke kills Majola, Ngxabane and the whole clan bemoan the death of their ancestor. In a mournful speech Ngxabane explains the tragic implications of this: "Hayi Jola, uthetha ngezihelegu wena. Ayisosihelegu esi! Izihelegu siyazazi. Le nto ingaphaya kwesihelegu kungasuka kuthiwe sisiqalekiso; kukufa; yimbhubho yesizwe. Ngubani onokuthetha xa isizwe sibhujisiwe! Sibhujisiwe mzi kwaNgwanya sijongile, kodwa kumhla nisathi masithethe. Siza kuthetha singobani, siphi? Andikwazi mna ukuthetha ndibhuhile" (emphasis mine) (172-173). (No Jola! you talk of calamities! This is no calamity, for calamities we know. This is worse than calamity. Say rather it is the curse of death. For it is the doom, aye, the very

annihilation of people. Who can speak when an entire people has been destroyed?

We the people of Ngwanya stood by and looked on at our own destruction. All this has come to pass and you still bid us speak! Who are we? It is not I who can speak) (translated by Jordan & Jordan 1980, 188-189).

The repetition of the verb "bhujisiwe" (annihilated) with a heavy sound (-bh), which is a partially devoiced bilabial plosive stop, brings to mind the blows which Thembeke rains on the sacred snake. That Thembeke's impulsive and unpremeditated action has widespread tragic repercussions is skilfully implied through the use of collective nouns such as "umzi" in "sibhujisiwe mzi kaNgwanya" and "Isizwe" in "ndibhubhe nesizwe sakowethu". The killing of Majola is tantamount to the destruction of the whole Mpondomise tribe.



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In line with my stated intention of assessing the merit of the texts discussed in terms of their social and political effectiveness - rather than on narrowly aesthetic or artistic grounds - it is necessary to consider the allegation that works like Ingqumbo Yeminyanya and The River Between are not politically "progressive". The problem is that these novels seek to solve the problem of disunity among Africans by offering a remedy for the symptoms rather than addressing the cause. If it is accepted that the major cause of disunity among Africans are political and economic domination - and this is a view which the later Ngugi comes to hold - then, even if the cultural reconciliation advocated in these novels could be achieved, Africans would still be disunited in frustration at their powerlessness: the white man "can easily concede to your black pride, give you the freedom to do your song and dance while the manipulates you from the position of political and economic strength" (Mphahlele 1974, 93).

When the cultural barriers between Africans are broken the white man is quick to create ethnic barriers(e.g. ethnic homelands in South Africa); when these are destroyed he is keen to sponsor African political parties to sow dissension amongst Africans; and when these are foiled he is quick to divide Africans into haves and have nots for "every hunter must dread the thought of what would happen if the hunted were ever to unite" (Ngugi 1982, xvii). The point I am trying to make is that literature that tries to resolve the problems of Africa at a cultural level misses the point because "cultural imperialism is only an outward superstructural manifestation of economic imperialism. The crucial task before Africa is economic(and political) liberation" (Amuta 1989, 47). Having said this, though, two qualifications are necessary. The first is that political "incompetence" should not be sufficient ground for the blanket dismissal of a literary text. These novels by Jordan and Ngugi are to be praised for their realistic and impressive attempts to dramatize and explain aspects of the African experience. A second point is that one should be wary of anachronism and give due attention to historical context. The kind of radical political and ideological analysis on which author and critic can draw today was perhaps not available to these writers at the time of writing. What they wrote responded appropriately to the felt needs and interests of their community at the time.

There is, however, a body of African writing which attempts to achieve political and economic liberation through exposing and condemning the evil consequences of colonialism and capitalism. This body of writing is what will in this context be termed Protest Literature.

The Theme of Protest

The aim of protest writers may range from an appeal to the conscience of the white man, to get him to remove the chains of colonial oppression, to an attempt to arouse indignation in Africans and galvanize them into a political awareness conducive to their joining the active struggle for political and economic liberation.

To characterize protest writing in terms of its function or potential impact on the reader suggests that "protest" is more of an orientation than a theme; the term "theme" must here sometimes be understood to include this wider sense of an overarching, unifying or cohering principle in a literary work. The novels that will comprise the basis of our discussion of the theme of protest are Mongo Beti's The Poor Christ of Bomba, Mwangi's Kill Me Quick, Oyono's Houseboy, Mphahlele's Down Second Avenue and Jolobe's Amathunzi Obomi.

Mongo Beti's novel The Poor Christ of Bomba is a cynical and satirical attack on the involvement of the church in the relentless exploitation and impoverishment of Africans. Since he was first educated at a Catholic mission he has first-hand information on the conditions under which Africans live in Catholic institutions. Reverend Father Superior Drumont, the "Christ" of Bomba, is his target of ridicule. Mongo Beti generously accords him the status of Jesus Christ. This immediately invites invidious comparison. We see that the priest's likeness to Jesus is only in outward appearance: "same beard soutane and same cord around the waist", but when we look at their character we find a different story. This "Christ" of Bomba, unlike Jesus, who is long-suffering, merciful and

compassionate, is pig-headed, quick to anger, and cruel. Unlike Jesus who fed thousands with bread, he expects his followers to feed him with gifts, offerings and dues. Unlike Jesus, who freely pardoned sinners, he tortures them and forces them to pay for confession.

Thus the hypocrisy of the Christian Church, which professes to be preaching love whilst practising cruelty, the church which claims to be benefiting people whilst benefiting from them, which pretends to be looking after the interests of the converts whilst exploiting them, is roundly condemned. The meaning of the novel's title becomes clearer: this "Christ" of Bomba is poor in love, mercy and all that the Christ of the Bible had to offer (Soyinka 1979, 97).

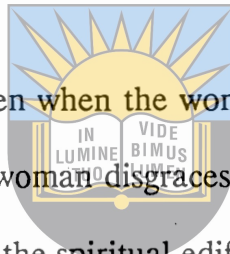


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What Beti does throughout this novel is show that the Father Superior is not like Jesus, as he initially thought himself to be, but just like any other colonizer who exploits, terrorizes, and oppresses Africans. Revealing him as a man who is tortured by increasing doubt reinforces his condemnation. It is because of this doubt that, as Denis puts it, "He lets [people] talk a lot of rubbish about God and religion, and he actually listens to them. And sometimes, instead of shouting them down, he tries to give them long and careful explanations almost beseeching them" (78). Through what Denis terms "rubbish" and through his "long and careful explanations" the Father also ironically and unwittingly condemns himself and the vulnerability of his faith.

Assailed by doubt he inquires from his catechist at Timbo: "How do the people think in general, what do they say of religion?" The catechist hesitantly replies: "Father they say

that a priest is not better than a Greek trader or any other colonialist. They say that all any of you are after is money" (20). The activities of Father Drumont during his tour of Tala country help to substantiate the views of these people. That the Father is "as greedy a tax-collector as the Administrator" is proved by the case of an old and wretched woman at Timbo who has to answer the charge of failing in her Easter offering for the last four years. She frankly and sorrowfully tells Father Drumont that "she lived only for the sacraments, but being now too old to work she had no money to pay her cult dues" (24). The narrator observes that the woman is visibly poor.



Father Drumont is not touched even when the woman tearfully pleads with him. His lack of mercy for the pathetic old woman disgraces himself and Christianity. It shows that he is not at all concerned with the spiritual edification of his converts but is simply after their money. Denis's comment on the Father's evident excitement when he divides the loads of wealth they have accumulated on the last stage of their journey is revealing: "He had lost that worried and tormented look he wore while talking to M.Vidal. He looked alert, full of vigour and even gaiety" (162). Father Drumont's enthusiasm and gaiety when dividing the spoils as contrasted with the "worried and tormented look he wore" while discussing theological matters with M Vidal show that he is more interested in material gain than in spiritual things. Christianity is little more than a camouflage for his real intention, which is to exploit and impoverish Africans. In this he is no different from other colonialists who justify their exploiting of Africans for gain by saying they do all this to civilize them.

One may even conclude that this very tour of the Tala country, which he claims to be

another opportunity he benevolently gives to these people "to repent, to abandon their vices and return to Christ", is in actual fact a cunning way of getting presents and accumulating wealth in preparation for his departure to France (5). This is evidenced by the collection of different items he loads on lorries when he leaves. Although this priest is poor in love, mercy and many other Christian virtues, he evidently is very rich in material things. Indeed the priests are just like other colonialists, who came to Africa with nothing but went away with everything. Towards the end of the novel, Father Drumont himself comes to recognise this. He says: "exploiters, foresters, Greek merchants, administrators ... a regular load of rubbish ... one must not forget one element in the rubbish-heap: the missionaries" (204-205).



This confession is squeezed out of him by his discovery that syphilis is rampant in the sixa and that almost all young women there are involved in what Goldberg (1981: 117) terms "an elaborate system of blackmail and corruption by means of which Raphael, the overseer of the sixa provides women (after sleeping with them himself first) to the workmen and even some of the older school boys at the mission". Dr Arnaud's report on the living conditions in the sixa brings home to Drumont the painful realization that he is "the guilty party in this whole affair" (204). Summing up the import of this confession Goldberg (1981, 117) says: "With bitter irony Father Drumont realises the extent to which the church and he personally have implicated themselves in and collaborated with the forces of oppression -not only with colonialism, but tradition - the church is no different, no better than either".

The pathetic example set by Father Drumont serves not only to indict the hypocrisy of

Christians, but also to slight Jesus, the very founder of Christianity. The satirical parallel implies that Christianity itself is effectively as cruel, exploitative and oppressive as its missionary representative. A skirmish between Father Drumont and an African chief at Evindi concerning drums and African dance indicates the extent to which Christ himself is reviled as a colonizer. In a heated exchange of words the Father tries to explain that he could not "allow them [Africans] to dance on the first Friday of the month because Jesus Christ ..." The chief rudely interrupts him and seething with venom says: "Go and stuff yourself with your first Fridays and all the other Fridays! Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ ... another damned white! Another that I'd like to crush with my left foot" (55).



Writers from South Africa like Mphahlele, Sinxo and others have also raised their voices against the church's involvement in the systematic exploitation and impoverishment of Africans. Sinxo, for instance, exposes the way in which Africans are robbed of their money by the church through the system of cult dues. In his short play "Umprofeti Owacima Ilanga", Kruxeshe (one of the characters) complains about the avarice of the ministers of religion. He likens them to vultures. His wife NoMonti joins him, and calls them ticks that suck the blood of cattle (Africans) until their stomachs threaten to burst open. When Velebhayi reprimands them for speaking ill of men of God, NoMonti retorts: "Singathini, Zangwa, xa kungaba kwasa selefika lo mfundisi ebiza ngenye imini iimali zokondla abafundisi, afike ngenye abize eyezakhiwo ..." (Imfene kaDebeza neminye Imidlalwana, 30) (How can we do otherwise, Zangwa, when today this priest demands money to feed ministers, tomorrow - money for harvest, the day after - money to build the church ...").

Mphahlele condemns the church for collaborating with the forces of exploitation and oppression and discrimination. He writes: "While the white preachers, through sermons broadcast over radio, told the contented suburban congregations the story of Calvary and individual salvation, white church-goers felt committed to group attitudes and maintenance of mythical white supremacy" (Down Second Avenue, 163). For the part it had played in this exploitation and plunder of Africans "to us the church has become a symbol of dishonesty of the West" (221). Ugly as it is, the exploitation and plunder of Africans in churches and church institutions is mild in comparison with what has happened on white men's farms and in cities.



The colonial governments who legislated Africans out of their villages through Land Acts, Labour Acts and Taxation, subsequently regulated them into servitude on farms owned by white men through pass laws, Master and Servants Ordinances, Resident Native Ordinances and other measures. These laws gave the white farmers virtually unlimited power over their servants, gruesome illtreatment, humiliation and exploitation abounded. Labourers were flogged, starved, raped and convicted, and many were killed. They were paid a pittance but they could not complain.

In his work Alitshoni Lingaphumi, P.T. Mtuzze describes an incident on Nkomiyahlaba's farm where boys are forced to work without having eaten for two days. Ndiphiwe, one of the working farm boys, complains: "Izolo kuthiwe akukho kutya. Namhlanje akukho kutya. Nangomso akukho kutya. Yintoni igama laloo nto? Singathini ukusebenza silambile?" (17). (Yesterday it was said there was no food. Today there is no food. Even tomorrow there will be no food. What's that? How can we work when we are

hungry?). The boys consequently stage a sit-in and when their master sees them he becomes mad with rage. After his threats fail to make them work he summons them to a nearby police station. Mpumlo, unfortunately for him, passes judgement in favour of the boys. Infuriated by this, Nkomiyahlaba sacks them with no further discussion. He can afford to do this, for the government through the Land Act, taxation and other machinery has made cheap African labour readily available to him. With their dismissal recorded in their passes as the law demands, it will not be easy for them to obtain any work. The stark realism of Mtuze's portrayal of the young men's helpless plight renders his protest extremely powerful.



One of the most evils of the colonial labour system was the virtual enslavement, by contract, not only of the men, but also of their wives, children and livestock. Through this system labourers' wives and children are physically and sexually assaulted by their masters and their overseers as there is "no provision made to protect them against molestation, while at work, by the employer or his overseers" (Gicaru 1958, 58). In a poem entitled "Si! Ndiyamkhumbula uMama" Dikana exposes this evil. He writes:

Langenwa kukungcola iBhulu
Lamqhatha udadethu
Baba nomntwana bobabini

Yamangala ke inkosikazi
Lachotshelwa ke ityala
Latyatyekwa kumsakwethu
Lakhululeka ke iBhulu

Wagwetyelwa intambo
Waza ke waxhonywa
Saxhaywa thina liBhulu.
Mna nomama sizintsizana
Singenandawo yokufudukela

Sahamba sincathama sifuna
Sicela indawo ebantwini (Impefumlelwano, 35).

(A wicked desire arose in the Boer's mind
He seduced my sister
They together had a child
His wife laid a charge
The case was tried
My sister was smeared with guilt
The Boer was exonerated from blame

My sister was condemned to hang.
She was then sent to the gallows.
We were sacked by the Boer.
Myself and mother became destitute
With no place to go to
We went hiding and begging
Asking for a place to stay from people.)



Again the emphasis falls on the helplessness of Africans in the face of Colonial "justice".

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In the cities, too, blacks are tortured, starved, arrested, exploited, humiliated and discriminated against. Just like farm labourers, Africans in the cities are expected always to carry their passes. The humiliation that Africans suffered because of these passes defies description. An African had to carry this pass wherever he went. In Kenya this pass was called "kipande". It was put inside a metal case and every African was expected to tie it around his neck or waist; hence Kenyans called it "mbugi" or "goat's bell" (Gicaru 1958, 60). In Bongela's Umzi Omtsha Nontando, a lady teacher, has left teaching because she has fallen pregnant; and because the government will not allow her back to the teaching profession, she goes to Johannesburg to look for a job. Since she is black and has no pass she cannot get a decent job. At last she is employed by a white woman to work in her kitchen. It is only after three months that this white woman manages to obtain a pass for her. One day she visits her friend and inadvertently leaves

her pass at home. On her way back she bumps into a policeman.

The harassing questions fired at Nontando by this policeman make her feel the same "deep humiliation felt by a black man, whether he be a labourer, an advocate, a nurse, a teacher or a professor, or even a minister of religion, when, over and over again, he hears the shout, Kaffir where is your pass? "Kaffir waars jou pas?" (Luthulli 1982, 218). That she is not only humiliated but also intimidated by these questions is expressed in "wambandaza ephatha eyeka" (she mumbled and fumbled) (Umzi Omtsha, 47). In "Lamqhuba laya kumngenisa evenini" (She was escorted and pushed into the police van) the writer intimates that she was **manhandled** by the policeman with typical brutality. At the police station she is cast into the company of women who have been convicted for illicit brewing of deadly concoctions such as 'izigomfane' 'inkumpa', and those arrested for drunkenness, street fighting and similar offences. For such a petty statutory offence as this one, of leaving her pass at home, Nontando is thrown into really bad company.

Mwangi in Kill Me Quick also portrays the depraving influence that prison life has on the morals of people who are otherwise law-abiding citizens but who, because of these petty "statutory offences", are undeservedly thrown into prison. This novel is about two educated boys, Meja and Maina, who are forced by poverty to leave their village homes and look for work in the city. Their dreams are shattered when with all their education they cannot find employment there. They are forced to live with mongrels in the backstreets, competing with them in getting food from rubbish bins. They are recruited by Boi to go and work on his master's farm, but there they are starved, flogged,

underpaid and finally sacked. Unemployment and destitution gradually change them from honest and well-meaning young boys into robbers and jailbirds.

After trying his luck in different jobs with little success Meja finally resorts to robbery. He is arrested, tortured and sentenced to one year and six months' imprisonment. He is dumped in cell number nine, "the den of the most crooked ruffians in the country, for being rude to the prison-warder" (117). He finds Maina, his rubbish-bin comrade, there in cell number nine with seven others. He has been convicted for stealing milk. Maina then introduces him to the inmates of cell number nine. It appears that the custom of this cell is that after a person has been introduced he is expected to salute and recount the story behind his conviction. With nothing else to do, this is an entertainment prisoners enjoy. But the result is that a person who initially dreaded prison ends up feeling so comfortable there that he does not mind going back again. In fact he finds life in prison far better than life in the backstreets or slums. Ngugi humorously explains to Meja: "Here we eat and sleep and get counted and locked in cells. Smooth life. Better than most hotels in town. There is no charge for it whatsoever" (119). Mwangi stresses the irony that prison, which is intended to rehabilitate criminals, has through the irrational and indiscriminate arrest of people become the breeding-ground for hardened criminals.

The Africans who go to the cities are humiliated further when they look for employment. Mwangi in his novel graphically portrays these hazards. In this novel Maina, the veteran of the backstreets, recounts to Meja the story of how he was harassed when he tried to get a job: "Well I tried to get a job ..." "What qualifications?" they would ask me.

"Second Division School Cert ..." I would start to say but before I had finished the man behind the desk would roar, "Get out, we have no jobs ..."" (1). Meja soon discovers that Maina is not exaggerating things, for as soon as he starts looking for a job, he suffers the same humiliation. On one occasion his hope of getting a job is so raised that "his voice trembled with ecstasy" (5).

This hope is roused by the manager, who has asked whether he can read. Full of excitement he says "yes ... yes" and adds "I can also write" (5). A messenger is then called and instructed to go with him. In capturing Meja's excitement the writer says: "Meja's thoughts were unfathomable, as he followed the messenger down the winding stairs his mind raced ahead of him. A job at last". The anti-climax comes when they reach the ground floor: "It took Meja one long minute to grasp the meaning of it all. And then he understood and could not believe. He could not believe the messenger had gone to all the trouble to show him this. Yet the letters were there staring boldly back at him. They screamed in two tongues. NO VACANCY. HAKUNA KAZI. Meja's legs felt wobbly and his lips twitched" (5). The mistake Meja and Maina committed was to display their learning when looking for a job during a time when the colonial governments "set out to ensure that this small vocal group [of educated Africans] would not undermine either the whites' view of their own superior status or cheap labour economy which had no place for educated Africans" (Lacey 1981, 245).

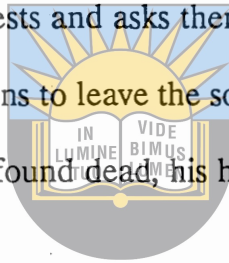
The harassment of Africans when they look for a job is nothing when compared with what they suffer when they are actually employed. The "fortunate" few who are employed are insulted, discriminated against, overworked but underpaid, suspected and

sent to prison by their white masters. The unfortunate part is that these insults create abnormal complexes and schizophrenic behaviour in Africans, as we shall see in Chapter Three. They also foster stereotypes in whites that are very difficult to eradicate. Oyono in Houseboy exposes these stereotypes and gives a graphic picture of the suffering they brought to Africans. One of the stereotypes the whites had about blacks is that they are thieves. In accordance with this stereotype two Africans in this novel are suspected of stealing from Janopoulos. They are sent to prison, tortured, battered and finally mortally injured.

In their gatherings the whites narrate and enjoy stories that demonstrate that the African is a child or a fool. Africans are driven to work like slaves because the white man believes that it is in their nature to be lazy. They are battered on the kidneys because their heads are believed to be hard; tortured at work because the whites are convinced that it is their nature to be dishonest. Through these stereotypes the life of Africans in European employment is made miserable.

Africans are not only insulted, discriminated against, sent to prison by their white masters but they are also overworked and underpaid. In some cases black men are forced to wash white women's chemises and sanitary towels. This so disgusts the black cook in Houseboy that he asks: "What would our ancestors say if they saw us washing things like that for the whites? ... What are we to these whites?" (81). All these things they did for meagre wages. And depressed wages had serious repercussions for Africans and their families.

It is the meagreness of his income that makes Buraimoh Ajikatu in Ekwensi's People of the City enrol with the Ufemfe society. In explaining why Buraimoh joins this society he says: "They said he had been finding it increasingly difficult to support his family. To him the city had been an enemy that raised the prices of its commodities without increasing his pay" (54). A friend introduces him to the Ufemfe society and he is enrolled without any fuss. From then onwards his life becomes smooth and bearable. His salary is increased and he is promoted to stores assistant with a promise of becoming a branch manager very soon, only to be shocked later when the society demands his first-born son as a sacrifice. When he protests and asks them to let him offer an alternative sacrifice, they refuse. When he threatens to leave the society, they tell him the only way out is through death (55). He is later found dead, his horribly swollen body floating on the lagoon.



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Sango, the crime reporter of "West African Sensation", is assigned by McMaster to cover the story behind the death of Buraimoh. The unravelling of this man's mysterious death is to be a revelation to Sango. The narrator says: "by uncovering this veil he [Sango] had discovered where all the depressed people of the city went for sustenance. They literally sold their souls to the devil" (55). There are many other devils - such as prostitution, drunkenness, dagga smoking, becoming a government informer - to which Africans through desperation and frustration sell their souls. Unfortunately the white man refuses to see these as unavoidable results of his exploitative economic system. He ascribes these to an inherent propensity to evil in blacks. Luthuli confirms this when he says: "The results in promiscuity, neglect and material trouble are read by whites as just another sign of African incapacity. They ignore our pain" (1982, 56).

In fact the white man not only ignores the black man's pain but he exacerbates it by frustrating all his efforts to lead a decent life. African writers paint a grim picture of how African women, trying to make life more bearable by brewing beer, are harassed by the police. Bare essentials such as education, clothing, food, which would be impossible to get through the meagre wages of the husbands are thus made obtainable. In a touching play entitled Amathunzi Obomi, Jolobe describes how a Christian widow, quite against her Christian convictions, is forced by poverty to resort to beer selling. Assailed by the nakedness of her two sons, by hunger, rent, church offerings, she "backslides". Things become worse and worse for her until she finally decides to sell beer.



Life begins to become barable for her family. She can now pay rent, buy books and clothes for her children and still have money for food. But the white man, who is intent on making the life of Africans miserable, declares the home beer brewing illegal. This is done specifically to ensure that whites who are licensed to establish beer halls in black locations have a monopoly in this business. As usual the police through their methods vigorously enforce this. In this way all the doors to decent living are closed to Africans; in fact "it is considered a crime for them to be decent" (Down Second Avenue, 178).

Of all the white man's cunningly devised machinations to frustrate Africans in the cities, so called "slum clearance" is among the worst. As might be expected, the white man gives 'good' reasons for inflicting such physical and psychological pain on Africans. The living conditions of Africans in these slums were understandably horrible. The white man, who through his economic system has condemned Africans to such a squalid life,

then pretends to be concerned about the black man's fate and so he enforces "slum clearance". In slashing at this hypocrisy Mphahlele says: "They call it slum clearance instead of conscience clearance - to fulfil a pact with conscience which says never be at rest as long as the Black man's giant shadow continues to fall on your house" (Down Second Avenue, 157). Mphahlele suggests that slum clearance was never meant to benefit a black man but was for the convenience of the white man. A major impetus to slum clearance was "the fear of having plague beds in the immediate vicinity of European population" (Lacey 1981, 250), The fact that the Shanty towns built by the government around the new segregated locations far away from white settlements were not different from the slums, is more evidence that slum clearance was actually intended further to disadvantage the black man. Those whose houses in slum areas were demolished received little or no compensation. They were not allowed to own houses in these new locations as they had in slum areas.



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It was for these and many other reasons that Africans vehemently protested against slum clearance and refused to leave their old homes. In line with the white man's belief that "a little dose of brutality" is the only cure for Africans' "uppishness", police were sent to terrorize Africans out of their homes (Gicarú 1958, 60). Dinku Dikae narrates a pathetic story of how they were thrown out of Prospect Township:

I thought these eyes had seen enough darkness in the world until Government of Johannesburg wanted to take away Prospect and build factories. Our people refused to move and God knows the police came in again and again more than ever before to throw out our beer. We cried and cried our arms on our heads and said Government of Johannesburg stop and the white police came again.....We cried with tears and then we cried with anger some of

us.....flung stones at the policemen. More of them came and shot bullets at us. A boy hardly your age comes out of the house next to us crying for help and a policeman points a gun his way and kills the child.....and the boy drops dead. Cold. Finished. (Down Second Avenue, 117)

We see from this excerpt that the initial response of Africans to "slum clearance" is passive resistance. They simply refuse to leave their homes. The government's answer to this is to send police to harass them. On these occasions the police in word or in actions "yell into [African's] ears all the time: move nigger or be fenced in but move anyhow" (157). This made Africans vocal in their protest as implied in "we cried and cried...", and that this was a non-violent protest is intimidated by "our arms on our heads". Instead of bringing relief this brought about an escalation of violence and provocation from the police as expressed in "police came again ..."



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Seething with anger and frustration Africans now "cried with tears and with anger" which means they resorted to violence, as confirmed by "some of us ... flung stones at the policemen". It is as if the trigger-happy police had long been waiting for this, for "more and more of them came" and a massacre ensued. The killing of a young boy who is not throwing stones but is pleading for help makes the brutality of the police more odious.

Grim pictures like this one of the blackman's suffering leave an indelible mark in the minds of readers, and, as we have pointed out earlier, they are intended to shock Africans out of their political slumber. Conton's novel The African dramatizes this. In this novel Kisimi Kamara, a brilliant young black man who is fortunate enough to obtain a scholarship to study in England, pledges with Samuel, another African scholar who is

also in England, "to work together ... to free [their] beloved country from the shackles of imperialism and lead it into self-government" (98-99). But when Kisimi returns home he finds that his people are so individualistic and engrossed in the pursuit of material things that he forgets all about their pledge and joins this mad race.

While basking in his materialistic complaisance he is rudely shocked by an article in a British paper. He recounts the incident:

I turned the page. There was a picture of white police in a South African town forcibly removing natives from their homes, for no other reason, the caption said, than that more elbow room was wanted for nearby white communities..... and the white police officer was photographed carrying a screaming protesting African woman to a waiting lorry. He was carrying her as if she was an animal..... the struggling woman was clearly in an advanced stage of pregnancy. Underneath the photograph was a question whose deliberate brutal pun struck me like a vicious blow in the stomach. WHAT SORT OF FUTURE CAN THIS WOMAN EXPECT? (105)

In describing his agitated mood after reading this article he says: "As I gazed in helpless and mounting agitation at the picture I felt first of all as if all blood were being drained out of my mind. Then a blind, choking fury swept into me clouding my senses and agitating my whole body" (106). It is only after a night's sleep that he calms down and makes the biggest decision of his life "to devote all [his] energies to politics, so that first in Songhai and then later, [he] hoped, throughout Africa, [he] could help free men from domination by peoples of other races" (108). This is the decision that many African writers who paint this grim and graphic picture of the black man's agony would like their readers to take and thus contribute to the struggle for "Uhuru". In the following chapter I am going to analyse what makes writers succeed and others fail in making their readers

take such a decision. The second and third methods used by African writers in expressing their protest (i.e. through the depiction of landscape and the portrayal of the image of the white man) will also be discussed in Chapter Three. The present section has been concerned merely to adumbrate the portrayal by some African writers of the appalling conditions in which Africans have been forced to live under the yoke of colonialism. These writers mount their protest by exposing the religious hypocrisy, social injustice and economic exploitation which characterize the colonial dispensation. What is repeatedly striking is the similarity of the experience which they narrate: whether the setting is South Africa, Kenya or West Africa, the mechanisms of oppression and the suffering of the people is essentially the same.



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CHAPTER 3

SOME RECURRENT LITERARY IMAGES

It is now time to examine in more detail how selected African writers typically treat the three principal players in the tragedy of colonialism: the setting or landscape, the white man, and the blackman.



The image of the landscape

In short, the literary image of landscape in colonized Africa is "hell for Africans and paradise for white men" (Gicaru 1958, 132). In their evocations of setting, African writers who portray this image aim a broadside at the white intruders "who allow Africans to languish in poverty, squalor and ignorance while they fatten themselves on their country's riches" (Palmer 1972, 135). There are many ways through which these writers depict the hideous conditions under which Africans lived in colonized Africa.

One of these ways is "by exploiting the potential of a central symbol ... of filth, putrefaction and excreta" (Palmer 1972, 130). It does not matter whether it is in the sixa, the slums, or on the white man's farm; the area where Africans live is invariably portrayed as a squalid place. Mphahlele gives us a graphic picture of filth when he describes Marabastad location:

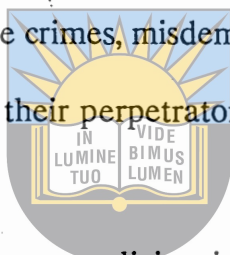
"farther into the location, dirty water and flies and dead cats and dogs and children's stools owned the streets" (Down Second Avenue, 33). Some writers magnify this sordidness by juxtaposing food and filth. Ngani tells us that unlicensed hawkers, who sell clothes and foods of different types, display these amidst dirt and dust (Umqol'uphandle, 18). Fanon (1968, 39) describes a native town "as a town wallowing in the mire".

One may wonder why is this the case. The white man would ascribe this to the African's supposed inherent inclination towards dirt. But the true reasons are not hard to find. African writers show that that Africans in the employment of whites are exposed to such back-breaking labour that it is virtually impossible for them to take good care of their own homes. Dr Arnaud, for example, tells us that the hands of sixa girls are red and calloused, a clear indication "of the heavy labours exceeding the strength of their sex, to which they are exposed ..." (The Poor Christ of Bomba, 201). It is no wonder that everything in their houses is covered in rubbish, for they do not have time and energy to clean them.

Secondly, there is the sparsity of toilet facilities. Ngani describes the horrid mess and stench that the scarcity of toilet facilities causes in Makeni Location in East London. He tells us that alongside these overflowing, foul-smelling and horrid-looking toilets are long queues of people waiting for those inside to finish (Umqol'uphandle, 18). The sparsity of these amenities is caused by the fact that "the main part of [African] taxation is appropriated for other purposes than improving [their] knowledge, conditions of living, housing, health and efficiency" (Lacey 1981, 253). This is a deliberate ploy to downgrade the African's image and expectations so that he is "kept as a degraded, exploitable

worker" (Lacey 1981, 253). This not only degrades Africans but also exposes them to the ravages of virulent diseases. Dr Arnauld explains that the venereal diseases in the sixa are spread "by the negligence of the sexual hygiene practised by these girls, a negligence which [he] attributes to the poor toilet facilities of the camp" (The Poor Christ of Bomba, 201).

The filth into which Africans are herded also leads to the eruption of violence and crime. As Mphahlele puts it, if you "put a man in a filthy place... you've condemned his soul to filth" (The Unbroken Song, 9). These crimes, misdemeanours, rapes, robberies etc. are almost a function of setting in which their perpetrators are forced to live.



Another way of showing that Africans are living in hell on earth is by graphically portraying the hovels in which they live. Mwangi mentions some of the odds and ends that are used in the building of these hovels: "the shacks were built of paper, tin, mud and anything that could keep out rain, thrown together in no particular pattern" (Kill Me Quick, 51). Looking at these one sees that it would be a great miracle if they could keep out rain or any other element of weather for that matter. In fact Mphahlele shows that the inhabitants of these hovels are tormented by bitter cold in winter: "children pushed and jostled one another to draw nearer the fire; little jaws quivered involuntary to the subtle rhythm of cold" (Down Second Avenue, 70). Exposure to the elements results in the outbreak of diseases such as tuberculosis, whooping cough, etc. The portrayal of these shacks becomes an eloquent condemnation of colonial capitalism.

Worse still, these hovels are so closely built that if one catches fire the whole area is set

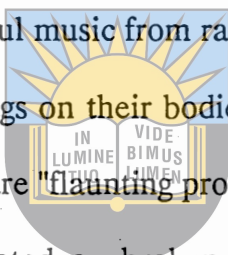
ablaze. Mwangi portrays how shanty land, a slum area, is burnt to ashes because one hovel has caught fire (80). It is not surprising that Fanon (1968, 39) describes a native town as "a world without spaciousness", a place where "men live on top of each other and their huts are built on top of the other." Mwangi suggests why these houses are crowded together: "the huts [in a farmhand's village] were crowded together to save land for the more important wheat and maize fields" (16). In some instances Africans are crowded together further away from their places of employment so that the white man can have enough space to build comfortable kennels for his dogs. To put more value on animals and material gain than human welfare shows how greed and racism pervert the sensibilities of a man.



Again, in these novels which depict the urban landscape the native quarter is described as "a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light" (Fanon 1968, 39). In this regard it is often contrasted to the white man's town, which is "a brightly lit town...a well fed town" (Fanon 1968, 39). The disparity that exists between the native town and the settlers' town is dramatized in the story of a tourist who is taken to all the beautiful centres of Kenya but still told that he should not go away with the idea that he has seen Kenya. It is when he is completely perplexed by this that an African who accompanies him on this journey explains: "Bwana, there is no such country as Kenya. There is hell for the African and a paradise for the white man. You have been visiting the paradise - the white man's Kenya - Out there in the East of Nairobi is hell, the black man's Kenya" (Gicaru 1958, 134). Mwangi graphically describes this disparity in his novel Kill Me Quick. He tells us of two boys, Maina and Meja, who exist in the filth and decay of the backstreets where blacks live. They eat from and sleep in rubbish-bins and

fight with mongrels for that privilege.

These boys are chased out of the backstreets by a supermarket attendant and a policeman for taking two rotten apples from the supermarket's rubbish-bins. Meja lands in hospital, for in his desperate flight he collides with a car. Maina dives into the white man's suburb. He tells us how different this place is from the backstreet. Whilst they live in rubbish-bins in the backstreet the whites here live in mansions. In the backstreet the only music these boys are accustomed to is the buzzing of flies. Here in the white man's suburb there is cha-cha and soul music from radios and gramophones. Meja and Maina's only clothes are the dirty rags on their bodies, but here, whites not only wear clean and decent clothes but others are "flaunting proudly, white and clean" on washing lines (46). The boys walk barefooted on broken bottles, stones and thorns in the backstreets; whites here wear shoes, or drive cars on tarred roads. Whilst there is a scarcity of food in the places where blacks live, there is plenty of it in the white man's town.



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The glaring disparities of this Mainchean world of contrasts causes bitter frustration among Africans, for "to live like this, out of work, poor and without home, while all around you are other people who are busy and happy and comfortable is one of the hardest things in the world to endure" (Ward 1960, 174). Mphahlele explains how the imagination of a writer is bogged down by this exasperation. Using electric lights to symbolize the settlers' town he writes: "electric lights! How beautiful they look from distance ... you want to write a story and while you think how to begin you look at electric lights ... Pictures, fantasies, strivings, wishes, desires, memories and all other

creatures of the intellect come to torment your being" (Down Second Avenue, 201-202).

Mphahlele explains that what is most exacerbating is the knowledge that these lights are beyond the reach of the black man.

The juxtaposition of the native town with the settlers' town is intended to be a constant reminder that the "glories of the city and the pleasures of its wealthy inhabitants [whites] are built over layers of poverty, illness and famine" (Metereau 1985, 21). The whole image of the landscape is portrayed in African literature to shock readers into a realization of the repulsiveness of discrimination, exploitation and oppression. It is also intended to galvanize the people into political activity that would redress the balance.



The image of the white man

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After all the inhumanity and injustice that Africans have suffered at the hands of the white man, to them there is no running away from the conclusion reached by Mugo that "a Mzungu [white man] is not a man ... he is a devil - devil" (A Grain of Wheat, 160). That is why African writers find it difficult to "portray the character of the white man in the round" but "simply enjoy engineering [their] own poetic justice against him" (Mphahlele 1974, 14-15). The usual targets of these writers' biting attacks and bitter satire are the missionary and the white settler.

The Missionary

The missionary is frequently portrayed as a stiff-necked, hypocritical, sexually perverted brute whose overriding concern is money and "collecting souls - black souls - in order to pickle them, preserve them for the good lord to collect in his own good time" (Mphahlele 1974, 27). He is invariably dejected and embittered by his failure in "dragging and pushing and kicking Africans up" to (his) Christian God" (Mphahlele 1974, 26-27). Such portrait is drawn to demolish this "pretender to cultural and spiritual superiority" (Soyinka 1976, 98).



In most of the African novels that portray the image of a missionary, hypocrisy seems to be the dominant characteristic. Beti's novel The Poor Christ of Bomba is but one example where this trait is denounced. In Chapter Two I showed how Beti denounces Father Drumont by showing how he closes his eyes to racial discrimination and remains indifferent to the oppression and persecution of the Africans whom he professes to have come to save.

Hypocrisy is depicted in the incident at Timbo where a tree has fallen upon Joseph "pinning him to the ground and crushing and piercing him below the belly" (26). The Father is called to the scene and, instead of helping to extricate the man, he says they should leave him quiet while he makes confession. This man's attempts at confessing his sins so sap him of his remaining energy that he dies whilst the Father is giving his absolution. Father Drumont also does not raise his voice, either, when Africans die in heaps while working on the Manding-zomba road. He simply goes there to demand

confession from those who are dying (41). This is good satire. A man who poses as a benefactor of the Africans is portrayed as a mere scavenger who searches, in the heaps of the dead, for the dying, not to save them but to confess them.

Zacharia, the Father's cook, explains that the missionaries are happy to see Africans suffering because in their misery they easily accept Christianity. He says this when the Father feigns concern after receiving news that the government is once again going to use the system of forced labour in building a road through Bitie. He says: "But Father you must be very happy about this, no? Isn't it just what you longed for? They'll be treated like beasts and in their misery they'll run to you saying: Father you alone are kind ..." (41). The Father simply groans and says nothing in his defence.

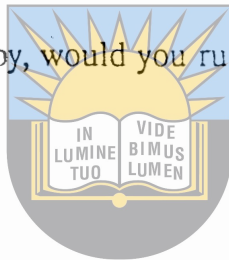


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The zeal with which Father Drumont and other missionaries demand confession from their converts and the enthusiasm "with which they castigate polygamists and adulterers is portrayed as a suppressed sexual desire or perversion" (Milbury -Steen 1980, 117). Father Drumont tortures all the girls in the sixa to make them confess every detail of their involvement in a sex scandal that he tries to uncover. It appears that he derives a sordid satisfaction from listening to these details, for even when Le Guen suggests that he should stop these interrogations he insists that he would rather press on (193). Vandermyer, another missionary in Oyono's Houseboy, also epitomizes this sexual perversion. Toundi, the narrator, reports that "he loves to beat the Christians who have committed adultery - native Christians of course He makes them undress in his office while he repeats in bad Ndjem "when you were kissing weren't you ashamed before God ...?" (Houseboy, 15).

From what Toundi says about this prelate it becomes clear that he is not only sexually perverted but is also a bigoted racist for it is only the "native Christians" that he castigates in this way. This seems to be also one of Father Drumont's traits. When Drumont has just rudely interrupted Africans holding a traditional dance before the chief's house. Dennis reports: "without a moment's hesitation the Father fell on the xylophones and scattered them in pieces" (The Poor Christ of Bomba, 53). A war of words erupts between the chief and the prelate. When this is over, a black man confronts the Father with this question: "suppose the whites were dancing here tonight instead of us and you were passing by, would you rush in and break their trumpets and their guitars?" (55-56).

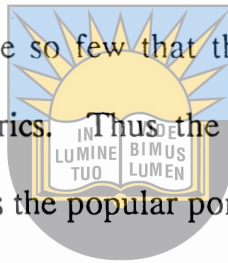


Father Drumont tries to justify this crude racism with a blatant lie. He explains that he beats and kicks Africans to accept Christianity because he believes that they are nearer to heaven than whites. But during the interrogations of the sixa girls it becomes clear that he pushes and kicks Africans "up" to his God because he believes that they are a rotten race. When Catherine, one of the girls he interrogates, explains that Monica, another girl in the sixa, has syphilis, the Father exclaims: "God in Heaven, what a race!" (173). It is only after Dr Arnauld's accurate and elaborate report about the living conditions of the sixa girls and is the cause of the outbreak of venereal disease, that it dawns on him that it is he who is to blame in this whole affair and not the race.

It is racism that makes these missionaries desecrate African shrines and downgrade their culture. Even the ones who are portrayed as "good" are basically racists. The only difference between them and the bad ones is that they are tactful and moderate in their

repression of African culture, which is tantamount to sugar-coating a bitter pill.

In fact some are "good" because they are still newcomers in the colonies. They sooner or later become as cruel and intransigent as the bad ones. Father Le Guen in The Poor Christ of Bomba is a good example of a missionary who shows understanding to Africans simply because he has not yet learned the rules of colonial society. Beti's subsequent novel King Lazarus shows that the same Le Guen has turned out to be as stiff-necked and authoritarian as other prelates. There are, however, some priests like Trevor Huddleston in Mphahlele's Down Second Avenue, who cared and sincerely fought for the welfare of Africans, but these are so few that they are unable to counteract the bigotry of the more intransigent clerics. Thus the stock image of the stiff-necked, hypocritical, cruel missionary, remains the popular portrait of a white prelate in African literature.

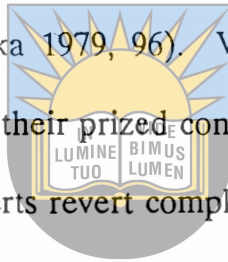


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African writers also enjoy engineering poetic justice against these clerics. They make them suffer ignoble deaths or let them fail dismally in their attempts to proselytize Africans. Father Gilbert, who has seduced Toundi through throwing little lumps of sugar to him, like throwing corn to chickens, is later found "bloody and crushed on his motor cycle by the side of a branch from the giant cotton tree that the natives call the "Hammer of the whites" (Houseboy, 16). He suffers the same fate as two Greeks who are crushed into "two pulpy masses ..." by a branch from the same tree (16). By making Father Gilbert suffer the same fate as the Greeks, who are notorious for their exploitation of Africans, Oyono implies that he is no different from them: they are all "a regular load of rubbish" and deserve the same punishment (The Poor Christ of Bomba, 205). Toundi's comment that the commandant's kick was even more painful

than the kick of the late Father Gilbert confirms this. It shows that besides being equally exploitative as other colonizers, the priest also brutalizes Africans just as any white man does.

These missionaries who believe that "the degrading fetishism and demonology which sum up the native pagan cults cannot stand and all Negroes will some day be either christians or moslems", are rudely shocked to discover that no smiles or tears, no threats or pleadings, no curses or blessings, no patting or beating can make Africans completely renounce their way of living (Soyinka 1979, 96). What drives these clerics to utter exasperation is to discover that even their prized converts are simply paying lip-service to Christianity. Some of these converts revert completely to their "pagan" practices.



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In Jordan's Ingqumbo Yeminyanya Christianity appears to be so successful that mission schools are established. All children are sent to school. Sister Monica and Father Williams even flatter themselves that they understand the black man. They are soon proved wrong when Thembeke, one of the Christian converts, commits the sacrilege of killing 'Majola', a snake sacred to the Mpondomises. This creates great indignation amongst the Mpondomises, who up to now appear to have accepted Christianity. They register their protest by preventing their children from attending school. Sister Monica, in her missionary zeal of enlightening the "benighted" Africans, jumps on her horse and rides to Jenca, confident that she will be able to bring the children back to school. She gets the shock of her life when angry men threaten to beat her.

On hearing this, Father Williams, possessed by the same zeal, decides to go to Jenca

himself. He is also rudely shocked when the Jenca headman refuses to see them, saying that as educated men they should have made an appointment beforehand. On their way back home they are assaulted by five strongly built Mpondomise young men. Ngubengwe, an educated Mpondomise headman, who accompanied him, is killed in the skirmish and Father Williams is saved from the same fate by a woman who throws herself bodily upon the prostrate prelate. Father Williams is not only disappointed by his failure to proselytize Africans; as if by divine punishment, he is humiliated by the victims of his spiritual assault.



Father Drumont in Beti's novel The Poor Christ of Bomba is another example of a missionary who has failed dismally in proselytizing Africans. He himself acknowledges this: "I have worked nearly twenty years in this country... It's been a pure waste of time ..." (111). Zacharia, his cook, who prays and stays with him, commits adultery with Catherine, one of the sixa girls, right under the Father's nose. Raphael, his catechist and the overseer of the sixa, sleeps with the girls in the sixa and turns the sixa into a brothel. No one in the mission is not involved in the sex scandal. Even his favourite houseboy Dennis is seduced by Catherine. There is an outbreak of syphilis in the sixa. Soyinka (1979, 98) sums this up in saying: "The ramifications of a venereal denouement cover the Father with the stench of failure."

By showing that Christianity does not take root in Africans but breeds corruption instead, African writers aim at eroding the myth that Christianity is "a filler of spiritual holes" (Soyinka 1979, 98). Zacharia frankly tells Father Drumont that the white man has brought Africans nothing new in the spiritual realm. He explains that those who

accepted Christianity were simply eager to learn the secret of his power, aeroplanes etc. But instead he "began talking to them of God, of the soul, of eternal life", things which they knew long before he came (30). The catechist of Timbo gives us yet another reason why many Africans accept Christianity but soon revert to their "pagan" practices. He tells Father Drumont that they accepted it because they were poor and the kingdom of Heaven belongs to the poor. As soon as they become rich they forget all about it. This reduces Christianity to being nothing but an opiate for the poor.

The exposure of the shortcomings of Christianity is also intended to help Africans "regain belief in [themselves] and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement" (Achebe 1982, 44). The portrayal of the image of the white settler is intended to achieve the same objective.



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The image of the white settler

The portrayal of the white settler assists in the African's psychic rehabilitation by persuading him that "his life, his breath, his beating heart are the same as those of the settler ... [and] that the settler's skin is not of any more value than the native's skin" (Fanon 1968, 45). One way through which African writers achieve this is by denigrating the physical features of the white man, such as colour, complexion, texture of hair, colour of eyes, shape of nose etc. It is worth noting that these features are those which the white man uses in propounding the myth of superiority of the white race. Nkuhlu in a poem entitled "Ukufika kwevangeli kwaXhosa" (The arrival of the Gospel in Xhosaland) describes the white man as follows

Aphuma phi na lo maGxwakugxwak' agwangqa?
 Ngath' aba bantu bathwasile, vumani madoda!.....
 Ntloko zabo ziyayephuzela vumani, bubulunga!!!.....
 Andilubonanga n'uBhel' olumpul' iqozolo
 Bade bafamnise bethi matwa nombon' okhozi,.....
 Aniwubonanga n' uMhloph' aseWhawha?
 Owathi mhla wafika kowethu bawuphehlelela,
 Kuyasa ngomso bathi nguNyhengane igama;
 (Isigidimi, 29-30).

(Wherefrom come these clumsy pale men?
 They look like diviners, do consent people!.....
 Soft hair hangs from their heads, consent people, it's
 plucked from the tail of a cow!!!...
 Didn't you see the smooth faced yellow man, with a nose
 protruding from his face? Which they claimed resembled
 the beak of an eagle.
 Didn't you see the white man of Whawha?
 Who when he arrived in our land was speedily baptised,
 The following day he was called The Granite).

The features of these "pale men" are characterized in terms of their resemblance to animals and inanimate objects. This is a good device for dehumanizing the white intruders who for a long time believed themselves to be more human than Africans. It is not only the features but also the general profile of the white man that is rendered in terms of animal imagery. In Oyono's novel The Old Man and the Medal, Meka maintains that there is a striking resemblance between the chief of the whites and the sow that feeds on his faeces every morning (144). It is noticeable that all the animals that the white man is likened to have unpleasant traits like viciousness, voraciousness, deceitfulness, stupidity. Through this device African writers aim a broadside at the white settlers for exhibiting the same bestial traits in their dealings with Africans.

They further poke fun at these people who are full of themselves by portraying them as huge, disproportionate and ugly. In Oyono's novel the great Chief of the Whites is

described as a very huge and clumsy man. The narrator tells us that Meka, a black man, "had never seen anything or anybody like him. All he noticed were voluminous folds of skin under his chin that almost concealed the knot of his tie" (The Old Man and the Medal, 91). The White chief has come to present medals to a Greek called M.Pipiniakis and Meka. After pinning the medal onto Pipiniakis, "the great Chief grasped his shoulders and put his cheeks one after the other against the cheeks of the Greek. At each movement the folds of the skin under his chin trembled like a withered dun-coloured breast" (92).



Sometimes white characters are portrayed as huge to berate their pugnacity and reliance on brute force even in matters that call for the exercise of the mind. In Mqhayi's uDon Jadu one of the Boers who harass and insult Dondolo is portrayed as a very hefty man. Dondolo says: "omnye esisiqololwane kwakanye isikhomfula seBhulu" (14), (another one is a strongly built and a hefty Boer). Mqhayi captures their vindictiveness by making them produce a serpent-like noise "fu-fu-fu-fu" (13). Generally the physical appearance of the white (man and woman) is described as very unattractive. For instance Mrs Reynecke is depicted as "an Afrikaner with a heavy bosom and dishevelled hair and podgy hands ... with a very little neck and indifferent supply of buttocks" (Down Second Avenue, 69).

The physical appearance of the white settler is deliberately denigrated and degraded to confirm that the white man's colour, complexion, texture of hair, colour of eyes, shape of the nose, etc., do not necessary make him a better human being. This is potentially liberating for Africans, who used to be paralysed by fear in the presence of a white man:

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African writers who portray the white man in this way are deliberately being didactic. Their aim is to restore the black man's self-confidence. Toundi is a good example of an African who undergoes a drastic change after discovering a defect in his white master. Toundi is introduced to us as young boy who has been so brainwashed that he naively believes that Africans were cannibals before the coming of the white man. Gakwandi (1977, 15) explains that it is Toundi's contact with Christianity which has conditioned him to believe that everything good comes from the whites and that everything black is primitive. This

belief makes him cringe before a white man. The discovery that the commandant is uncircumcised brings about a complete change in Toundi's attitude towards whites. He explains:

I was relieved by this discovery. It killed something inside ... I knew I should never be frightened of the commandant again ... I wondered why I used to tremble in his presence ... He shouted at me as he always did but I did not move. His eyes had once struck panic into me. Now I stood unconcerned under their gaze. (Houseboy, 28)

The exposure of the immorality of the white man is another way through which African writers show that he is not a demi-god. Their usual targets are white women. Oyono for instance uses Madame Decazy, the Commandant's wife, to show that whites are promiscuous. Unlike many white women, who are usually depicted as ugly, Madame Decazy is portrayed as a paragon of beauty. Africans, male and female, all agree that she is beautiful. Oyono lavishes such praise on the beauty of this woman that one suspects that there is something sinister about it. Thus we are not surprised when she commits adultery with M. Moreau. They let their passions so master them that Toundi comments: "these whites, once their passions get a hold, nothing else matters to them" (Houseboy, 64). In a very short time their illicit affair becomes a household topic in Dangan, particularly in the African quarter, for "what goes on underneath those corrugated-iron roofs is known down to the smallest detail inside the mud-wall huts" (71). This is so because the whites "who require the colonised to perform all of their household task ... have automatically forfeited their privacy" (Milbury - Steen 1980, 140). When Africans, old and young, get to know this, they strongly condemn it. M. Moreau's houseboy says: "none of these white women are

much good ... Even the wife of a great chief like Commandant lets herself be taken on the seat of her husband's car down some Dangan lane" (Houseboy, 71).

Through these comments Oyono tries to impress upon our mind that the behaviour of Madame Decazy epitomizes that of all white women. In fact, other white women in this novel are portrayed as being so promiscuous that even in church they cannot control their passions. In the middle of a church service Mme Salvain moves her legs "imperceptibly closer to the commandant's" (Houseboy, 34). Some of them even go to the extent of sleeping with their houseboys.



In Ngugi's novel Weep Not Child we are told that the white women practise prostitution. The barber (an African) tells an enthusiastic audience of Africans that during the Second World War Africans slept with white women for payment, in Jerusalem of all places. When one of the listeners exclaims: "Ha! How are they?" the barber answers "not different. Not different. I like a good fleshy black body with sweat. But they are ... you know ... so thin without flesh ... nothing" (9). From what these writers say it becomes clear that white women are characterised "as either frigid or nymphomaniacal" (Milbury - Steen 1980, 118). This is done to help Africans like Toundi overcome an inferiority complex which is "frequently expressed through an almost compulsive desire to marry a white European" (Potholm 1976, 44).

The exposure of the weaknesses of white people is intended to show that the whites are "not

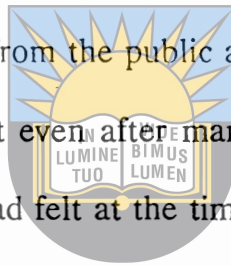
only godly missionaries or sober and ascetic wise men locked in the responsibility to civilize the savage. There are also drunkards and profligates, dissolute women and unfaithful housewives" (Nwankwo 1982, 163). It is the felonies that whites have committed and continue to commit against blacks under the banner of the superiority of the white race, which make African writers portray such a negative image of the white man. The common fate of these characters is failure, disappointment, death or some other violent end. Some writers portray them as having failed in taming and intimidating Africans. This is an affront to the whole process of colonization, which from its very inception was intended to intimidate Africans into submission.



Thompson in Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat is but one example of a white man who is infuriated and frustrated by his failure to impose his will on Africans. His success in Yala has caused him to be transferred to Rira. Detainees taken to Rira Camp are men who refuse to answer questions and have "sworn never to co-operate with the government" (115). His method of extorting confession differs from those of other prison-directors. While others would beat and bury a man naked in the hot sand for long periods, he lectures the detainees in groups about the joys of home. He tells them that they could go home to their wives and children if only they would confess the oath. This method has brought him success in other camps.

He tries the same method at Rira but the detainees there will not talk. The only detainee who agrees to answer questions is Mugo. The author tells us that "Thompson like a tick

stuck to Mugo. He questioned him daily ... He picked him up for punishment. Sometimes he would have the warder whip Mugo before the other detainees. Sometimes in naked fury he would snatch the whip from the warders and apply it himself" (117). All this is to no avail, for Mugo neither cries for mercy nor confesses anything. Thompson is beside himself with anger: "eliminate the vermin, he would grind his teeth at night" (117). The truculence and obduracy of these detainees drive him to the edge of madness and so he abandons his method and orders the white officer and warders to beat them. This beating continues for days and eleven detainees die, but still they will not confess the oath. News of this leaks out and he is subsequently removed from the public administration he loves. This inflicts a painful wound on his pride so that even after many years recollection of the incident brings back "all the humiliation he had felt at the time" (42).



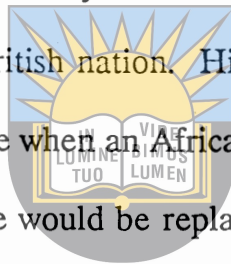
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His humiliation is nothing when compared to the disappointment he suffers on receiving the news that Kenya will be granted independence. This shatters the dream that made him leave Britain and come to Africa. Ngugi magnifies his disappointment by recounting the story of how he came to Africa. He tells us that Thompson first came to Africa during the Second World War as an officer, seconded to the King's African Rifles. After the war he returned to England to continue his interrupted studies at Oxford University. One of the courses for which he registered was History, and it was whilst pursuing this course that he found himself interested in the development of the British Empire. What started as an interest developed into a conviction, a dream, and finally an obsession. Possessed by what he calls the 'British Mission to the World', he sailed for East Africa to reorientate Africans

into the British way of life by altering their social and cultural environment.

One of the pillars of this Mission is an assumption that everything that is European is superior and anything that is African is inferior. Obviously, Thompson also believes that Africans are inferior. This is confirmed by what he says: "Dr Albert Schweitzer says 'The Negro is a child and with children nothing can be done without the use of authority.' I've now worked in Nyeri, Githima, Kisumu, Ngong. I agree" (49). The granting of independence to Kenya demolishes the very foundation of his philosophy of life and shatters his dream of the creation of one British nation. His stereotypes of Africans lead him to visualize a state of chaos in his office when an African takes over from him. Ngugi tells us that when his wife suggested that he would be replaced by an African "he became stiff as if a pin had pricked his buttocks. His earlier vision in the day came back now even more vividly: broken jars and test tubes on laboratory floors ..." (43). Broken-hearted, he resigns his job, drowns his sorrows in drink and returns to Britain vanquished



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The agony that these settlers feel when they come to realise that they are not indispensable after all is such that others would rather die than relinquish their jobs to Africans. Isnard and his wife Beatrice in Ousmane's God's Bits of Wood, for example, would rather die than leave Thies. They are both portrayed as bigoted racists who have "never thought of Negroes as anything but children" (149). The strike organised by the black railway workers proves them wrong and the government's yieldings to the demands of the striking workers deals a death blow to their myth of the superiority of the white race. But still they refuse to accept

Africans as equals, and when they are recalled (as one of the conditions of the agreement demands), Isnard exclaims: "but good God!...What's happening, that they let these savages, these children decide? They don't even know what's good for them!" (243:244). When other whites try to calm him down and persuade them to leave, Beatrice becomes hysterical, snatches a gun, rushes out of the house and fires blindly at African soldiers who are placed around their house to guard them. She is shot dead in the ensuing scuffle.

Most of these characters who are portrayed as evil by African writers die in the end. This is intended to show that the white man is just as vulnerable as any other human being or that there is no possible future for them in a changing Africa. This is what Ngugi aims to achieve in Weep Not Child. Here the barber tells other Africans that during the Second World War they carried guns and shot white men. One of them is so astonished by this that he exclaims: "White men?" and the barber reassures him, "Y e-e-e-s. They are not the gods we had thought them to be" (9).

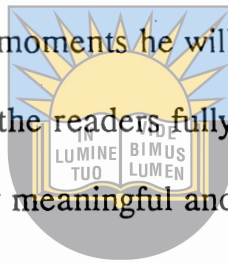
Another punishment which is meted out to these settlers is making their wives commit adultery and making this known to Africans. It seems that it is not the unfaithfulness of their wives that torments these people but the awareness that Africans know all about it. In Oyono's Houseboy Madame Decazy, the wife of the cruel commandant, commits adultery with M. Moreau. It seems that this is not the first time she has done this, for the commandant scolds her: "you didn't even give it a bit of time before you started deceiving me out here as well ..." (98). What makes things worse on this occasion is that "the natives

had to know all about it ..." They mockingly call him: "Ngovina ya ngal a vez zut bisalak a be metua" which means "the commandant whose wife opens her legs in ditches and in cars" (98). Whilst this unfaithfulness of his wife humiliates him, it liberates Toundi, who, after discovering this illicit affair, cannot "hide his contempt and feeling of moral superiority over her (Madame Decazy) ..." (Gakwandi 1977, 16).

In some instances the whites are merely outwitted by Africans and this serves as a kind of punishment. In Mqhayi's uDon Jadu for instance, Dondolo outwits the Boers who have caught him trespassing on their farm. They escort him to the police station. On the way they insult and threaten to brutalize him, saying, "Usibhadam sesidalwa! Siyatha semfene! sidenge sokafile!" (14) (You imbecile! Stupid baboon! Foolish kaffir!). Whilst they rain insults on him, his mind is working hard trying to think out a plan of escaping this harassment and the prospect of landing in prison. He then sees a contingent of black migrant labourers who are returning home. He waves and shouts at them to come and help him. In response to this they advance on the Boer family in a threatening manner. Noticing this the whole family dashes away. In capturing their flight Mqhayi says: "zaqhumis'uthuli iinkabi zamahashe, inguyise phambili! Yekoko ukuya kwela kwantsiza" (16) (the stallions churned up dust, their father leading, and they disappeared into oblivion). These "lines do not suggest the wilting away of the worthless only, but the melting of the illusion of race superiority" (Qangule 1979, 102).

At the beginning of the discussion of the theme of protest I proposed that the success or

failure of a protest writer depends on his ability or inability to strike a balance between protest aesthetics and orthodox Western literary aesthetics, between the text as a mere vehicle for a message and the text as an end in itself. When an author adopts either of these extremes his purposes may be defeated. If on the one hand he decides to make the dramatization of the message his major concern (a characteristic of protest aesthetics) then his work may "reduce, over-simplify or trivialize complex issues" (Cornwell 1979, 67). He may indeed, succeed in awakening the conscience of his readers, but as Krausnick puts it "a sleepy conscience is like a sleepy man: if a man is shaken hard enough he will wake up and then after one or two half-waking moments he will quickly go to sleep again" (Frazer 1976, 94). What is needed is to make the readers fully and truly understand the situation which is under attack for it to have any meaningful and lasting effect on them. According to Frazer (1976, 136-7);



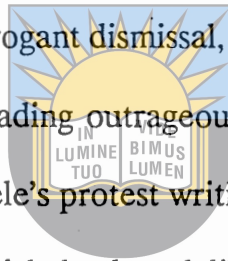
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What is under attack must be grasped as firmly and solidly as possible, which in turn means that it must have been observed precisely and in some real measure understood from the inside. Caricature and grotesquerie may serve in a rough fashion in the task of identifying enemies, but their effect is all too likely to wear off with the passing of time.

On the other hand, if a protest writer chooses to follow the path of sympathy and "balance" central to the Western literary tradition, his readers will be made to so understand what is under attack that revolutionary action is immobilized, for "if reader consciousness is transformed to the extent that it understands fully the social process that informs hegemonic practice [it] will [not] retain the political will to destroy the agents of [the system]" (Mackenzie 1990, 18). The sympathetic portrayal of white characters as fully human, fellow-

victims of an impersonal political or economic system, for instance, might have this result.

The critic should also take the middle position when assessing protest literature: if he maintains either of the extreme positions adumbrated he will tend to miss the mark. Choosing to use protest aesthetics as the only yardstick will lead to what Sachs terms "solidarity criticism" and "artists [will] not be pushed to improve the quality of their work, it will be enough that it be politically correct" (Sachs "From solidarity to artistic freedom": 23). Opting for the use of Eurocentric literary evaluation as the only standard of judgement may result in gross exaggeration or arrogant dismissal, such as when Nkosi describes protest literature as "the journalistic fact parading outrageously as imaginative literature" 8(1962, 19). To judge and condemn Mphahlele's protest writings, for example, by sole recourse to Eurocentric aesthetics - some of which he has deliberately jettisoned - is illogical and inappropriate (see Cornwell 1979, 67).



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As early as 1956 Mphahlele had made a study of characterization in South African fiction. To object that his white characters are all caricatures or only monsters, may be irrelevant. What we should do is ask why he does this, following Ndebele's suggestion that "once we begin to see an artistic convention emerging, once we see a body of writing exhibiting similar characteristics, we must attempt to identify its origins, its methods of operation and its effective audience" (1986, 148).

Protest literature tends to emerge in countries where racial discrimination, injustice,

oppression and exploitation are the order of the day. Where political organisations are banned and political leaders are gagged, exiled, imprisoned or murdered, politicization of creative works is inevitable. However, is not only political conditions which have given birth to protest literature but also the African cultural personality and the traditional, socially responsible orientation of African art. When one looks at the methods characteristic of this body of writing (discussed in Chapter Two and the beginning of Chapter Three) one finds that "the overwhelming form is the method of displaying the culture of oppression to the utmost in bewilderment" (Ndebele 1968, 144). Ndebele terms this display of the culture of oppression "spectacular representation" (1986, 144). In summing up the characteristics of the spectacular he says:



The spectacular documents, it indicts implicitly; it is demonstrative, preferring exteriority to interiority; it keeps the larger issues of society in our minds, obliterating the details; it provokes identification through recognition and feeling rather than through observation and analytical thought; it calls for emotion rather than conviction; it establishes a vast sense of presence without offering intimate knowledge; it confirms without necessarily offering a challenge. It is the literature of the powerless identifying the key factor responsible for their powerlessness. (1986, 149-150)

My argument is that a compromise between protest aesthetics and Eurocentric literary norms will result in a spectacular that documents imaginatively; that indicts explicitly, that is demonstrative but does not prefer exteriority to interiority, that keeps both the larger issues of society and the details in our minds; that provokes identification through recognition, feeling, observation and analytical thought; that calls for emotion and conviction; that establishes a vast sense of presence and offers intimate knowledge; that

confirms and offers challenge; that is the literature of the powerless identifying, analyzing and attempting to offer solutions to the factors responsible for their powerlessness. The discussion has now come full circle to an endorsement of my earlier contention that the question of the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of protest literature depends on whether the author succeeds in striking a balance between medium and message, form and content, artistry and ideology.

The assessment of the author's success hinges on the audience, because the objectives of protest literature (i.e. to arouse indignation in Africans and galvanize them into political awareness; to appeal to the conscience of the white man) are concerned with audience response. If the methods used by the author allow him to achieve his goals, his work is effective; and if not his work is ineffective. Jolobe's Amathunzi Obomi is ineffective as protest writing because it is shallow, and therefore neither arouses indignation in blacks nor galvanizes them into political awareness. The problems that besiege MaDlomo the main character, are reported in one paragraph. Instead of exposing the root cause of her financial predicament - the white man's economic system - we are made to believe that she is in this crisis simply because her husband has died. The perfunctory description of her predicament does not allow the reader to begin imaginatively to recreate for himself the suffering which leads to her decision to start selling liquor, so her action remains unjustified.

It is arguable that the real flaw in Jolobe's play is that it is premised on the results of the poverty of the black man and not on its causes. This approach works in the sense that it

corrects the distortions perpetrated by the white man that blacks sell beer because they are devious, they rob and murder people because they are savages, they practise prostitution because they have inherited sexual promiscuity from their parents. A skilful delineation of the ugliness of the black man's situation may arouse indignation, but this indignation is impotent when the causes of this situation are not properly presented. Such an approach seems geared to reform rather than to radical change.

And indeed, the way Jolobe concludes his play makes us believe that what he aims at in his book is reform rather than radical change. MaDlomo is arrested and is made to appear in court for illicit beer brewing. She explains to the magistrate why she has resorted to selling liquor. This "God sent" white magistrate is so "moved" by MaDlomo's sad story that he sentences her to a month's imprisonment or R20 fine. He also asks a white woman who is a social worker whether there is anything that can be done for MaDlomo. After paying the R20 fine she is offered a job at a factory. She is so grateful to God for creating such "good" people as these, that she repents of all her sins and becomes a Christian in good standing (i.e. pays cult dues). Ngxaki is also arrested for robbery and sent to a prison for delinquent children to be rehabilitated. Again, glory and honour go to the white man, who whilst creating poverty through his policy has ready solutions for problems that result from it.

Jolobe's reformist optimism seems outdated now, superseded by more radical renderings of black experience in South Africa. It is no longer consonant with the aspirations of his people, and can hardly even be characterized as protest writing. Yet it is important to

remember that this is the first Xhosa play set in an urban environment, and the historical context of its writing must be respected. A further consideration (see Chapter 5) is the gatekeeping influence of the African language publishing industry in South Africa, which until very recently has been monopolized by conservative interests. The orthodoxy and timorousness of Jolobe's approach may well be in part the result of "internal" censorship.

Mwangi also premises his novel Kill Me Quick on poverty and its results. Nothing - or very little - is said about its causes. Mwangi for instance does not tell us why the village people are so poor that their young ones decide to go to the city to seek employment, or why blacks have to pay dearly for their education. It is not made known why there is unemployment in the cities and why educated blacks struggle to get jobs. No reason is given for the cruelty of farmers, and their foremen. Mwangi leaves it entirely up to the reader to make the connections between these deplorable conditions and the oppressive system responsible for them. His novel is nevertheless a far more persuasive work of art than Jolobe's play. Through appealing to all the senses he at least succeeds in conveying a graphic picture of the abject poverty and squalor in areas where blacks live. In describing the food on which Maina and Meja are to live in the black streets he writes:

There were various kinds of fruit in various stages of decay. There were also slices of stale, smelly bread and a few pieces of dusty chocolate. Some rock-hard cakes gazed stonily back at them ... The oranges were no longer orange and beautiful but a deadly grey with mould. The cakes were no longer cakes but fragments of rock, and the chocolate looked like discarded shoe polish. (Kill Me Quick, 1)

Although Mwangi gives us vivid descriptions of the black man's horrible living conditions and suffering in different instances in the book, he avoids simply "cataloguing injustices, physical brutalities and the moral rage of victims ... which so often stultify fictional experiments into mere documentary", partly through recourse to acerbic humour (Gakwandi 1977, 21). A good example of this humour is seen when Maina and Meja analyze the implications of their halved ration and pay. Meja says: "A twelve-ounce pound flour and a few grains milk is the grand ration. I try to halve that to get our new diet, but I get decimals and you cannot eat decimals" (24). The point is that humour in the face of adversity is the positive gesture of a man who has not resigned himself to the lot of helpless victim. Throughout the novel, we see Meja and Maina responding rationally and creatively to their circumstances. They are not always cheerful: there are times when they are in pensive mood, particularly when they think about their shattered dreams and what life has made them to be. But unlike Jolobe, who lets his characters explain why they have become criminals, Mwangi dramatizes the process: he unfolds the story in such a manner that readers witness at first hand the course of events that changes the two well-meaning, good-natured and honest boys into hardened criminals and jailbirds. Even when they have become criminals we sympathize with them because Mwangi makes it a point that they retain their humanity. For instance, tears of pain and sorrow roll down Meja's face when he narrates to his cell inmates that Maina has murdered two people.

Beti's The Poor Christ of Bomba, Oyono's Houseboy and Mphahlele's Down Second Avenue are far more rigorous treatments of the colonial experience than Mwangi's Kill Me

Quick and Jolobe's Amathunzi Obomi. These writers make their readers grasp what is under attack as firmly and solidly as possible. Mongo Beti's novel is a protest against colonial rule. His intention is to demystify the supposed superiority of Christianity over African religion. Through his meticulous satirical presentation of Father Drumont and his missionary work he shows how debasing Christianity can be to Africans. In assessing Beti's form Irele (1981, 158) says: "Beti attempts to explore the psychology of his characters more fully, and the situations he presents are more complex ... His characters appear therefore more rounded and more human because they are seen to be more involved in their fates, more responsible for their actions ... (His) satire unfolds progressively and is to some extent employed as an instrument of reflection



Father Drumont, for instance, is not portrayed as a monster or a caricature. He is described as a man who though cruel, stiff-necked and authoritarian is tortured by inner doubts. It is not surprising therefore that he "repents" and confesses his crimes at the end of the book. Beti's novel is thus able to appeal to the conscience of the white reader because he manages to strike a balance between the polemic of protest and a "realistic" or rounded presentation of character with which his reader can engage imaginatively. Moreover, his artistry is such that the reader cannot reject his work on the pretext of crudeness of method.

The denonement of the novel suggests that Beti's aim is reform rather than revolution, as we might expect from a work in the satirical mode. In the end the mission at Bomba is not demolished but abandoned for a year or two after the exposure of the sex scandal. The six

girls are not cured but are driven away in their syphilitic state by the Father who has just owned responsibility for their condition. The forced labour system is not done away with, but the girls are replaced by Bishop's people who are left to stay in Bomba with nothing but what remains of the food supply. Father Drumont himself has not given up his proselytizing mission but goes away for some repose, possibly to come back at a later stage. These are all reformist manipulations of the status quo, and Beti seems unable to imagine a more radical transformation of the situation. Protest aimed at the conscience of the white oppressor operates within his frame of reference and can do no more than point out the discrepancies between principle and practice, so as to reform or correct the errors and excesses of the latter.



Oyono's portrait of the white man in *Houseboy* is somewhat less balanced and understanding. His portrayal of the white man in bold negative terms is intended to dethrone him from his demi-god or superhuman status and in the process help Africans to regain confidence in themselves. He hopes that when Africans have regained belief in themselves they will stand up and fight for their rights. The unfolding of the story, however, shows that knowledge of the frailties of the white man does not in itself necessarily make Africans regain belief in themselves nor is it a foregone conclusion that when they have regained confidence in themselves they will fight for their rights. Baku, the cook, and others know all about the white man's weakness but this has not made them regain belief in themselves. Again, while knowledge of the white man's shortcomings has evidently psychologically empowered Kalisa, Toundi and others, it produces no discernible political

consequences.

In so far as art is concerned, Oyono's novel may be judged inferior to Beti's book by those who appeal to orthodox Eurocentric evaluative norms because the development of characters I highlighted in Beti's novel is lacking in Oyono's characters, who are fixed types denied any initiative or autonomy. But when one takes the middle position one is able to see that "both are in their different ways effective and brilliant writers, infusing in their indictment of colonialism considerable passion, but Beti's method is through critical analysis, Oyono's through bitter demonstration" (Irele 1981, 158-59).



In terms of the criteria we have elaborated for this "middle position", Mphahlele's Down Second Avenue is superior to both of these novels. In his autobiography, Mphahlele clearly "goes beyond spectacle in order to reveal the necessary knowledge of actual reality so that we can purposefully deal with it" (Ndebele 1986, 152). He selects certain crucial issues from South African reality and scrutinizes them closely so as to help his readers to grasp them as firmly and solidly as possible. The question of slum clearance is a case in point. He starts by presenting Dinku Dikae as a man who has a morbid fear of the white man. This fear is traceable to the day he witnessed the brutality of the white police when they threw Africans out of Prospect Township and demolished their houses.

From that time onwards the mere sight of a white man is sought to make his whole body tremble. One day he is rudely woken by a white policeman. As usual he starts trembling

whilst the white policeman rampages through his house, raining insults on him. On this particular night the white man goes too far in his favourite game of insulting Africans and accuses Dinku of having sexual intercourse with his daughter Rebone. Infuriated by this Dinku takes a bread knife and stabs him to death, saying: "I'll never be afraid of a policeman again. God's my witness if my name is Dinku Dikae!" (Down Second Avenue, 142). For this crime he is sentenced to death but he dies a more composed, stronger and surer man.

Through this issue of slum clearance Mphahlele exposes the horrors of apartheid and at the same time shows the strategies used by blacks in their struggle for liberation. He implies that non-violence yields nothing but more repression and show how violence might be the inevitable alternative. He also suggests that freedom is not attained without a price, but that those who die for this cause undergo martyrdom. The story of Dinku Dikae dramatizes with psychological verisimilitude how an ordinary man might make the leap from cowed victim to courageous protagonist.

The dominant perspective in the autobiography confirms that Mphahlele is a humanist. In contrasting the affluence of whites and the poverty of blacks he says: "God, those lights are far away too far away for you to reach ... From down here in the pit of sordidness, you hear humanity wailing for help, for food, for shelter; humanity gasping for air" (204). His analysis of the apartheid situation is inscribed within this humanistic perspective. More concretely he sees apartheid as the elevation of one set of men at the expense of another

set. "In the same measure that the colonial master extends his human dimension - through economic advantage and the moral satisfaction that he derives from it - in the same measure is the colonized slave impoverished in body and soul, depersonalized, reduced in human stature and even nature" (Irele 1981, 140).

The imagery of lights, and darkness, the title of the book, humour and other devices that Mphahlele uses make his work "a memorable act of language with transcendental possibilities" (Mphahlele 1983, 14). Critics such as Obuke and Thuynsma have made brilliant observations on Mphahlele's methods of operation that it is not necessary for me to rehearse here. In an article entitled "Textures of Glasshouse" Thuynsma, for instance, argues inter alia that Mphahlele's humour is devised in such a manner that it produces "a self-conscious grin rather than a full bodied, indulgent laugh" (Thuynsma 1989, 95).

A good example of this is the manner in which Mphahlele narrates how he was brutalized by a black and a white policeman who nearly caught him red-handed with a tin of beer he was to bury in a hole. The manner in which Mphahlele presents this episode is humorous but the "context ... short-circuits the full potential of laughter, and we are left with little more than a laugh battling our inside" (Thuynsma 1989, 96).

The discussion of protest literature thus far has shown us two things: Firstly, that it is not enough that a writer's work be politically correct, it should also be artistically presented; for "works of art, however political progressive are powerless if they lack artistic quality. Therefore we are opposed to works with wrong political approaches and to the tendency

towards so called 'poster and slogan style' which is correct only in political approach but lacks power" (Mao 1967, 259). Secondly, that in writing and assessing protest literature, a balance between European tradition and African tradition should be struck. It is now time to continue my exploration of typical images in African writing. With these considerations in mind I propose now to examine some writings which are ostensibly revolutionary in intent, orientated more towards resistance than protest.

Ousmane's God's Bits of Wood, Siyongwana's Ubulumko Bezinja, Mtuze's Alitshoni Lingaphumi, La Guma's In the Fog of the Seasons' End, Ngugi's Weep Not Child and A Grain of Wheat are the novels that are going to be analyzed as examples of writings based on revolutionary moments. Ousmane's and La Guma's novels are informed by socialist ideology, for both writers had communist convictions. Ousmane joined the French Communist Party in 1950. The proletarian consciousness and the spirit of solidarity that permeates his work have been fostered by his work experience. He has worked as a fisherman, plumber, bricklayer, apprentice mechanic and dockworker. He also became a unionist leader for African dockers in France. He did not suffer from the abnormal complexes that Western higher education sometimes creates in the minds of those who attain it for he never had the opportunity of gaining a university education. That is why he prides himself on having received his education in the university of life. His solidarity with the masses led him to write God's Bits of Wood, which is a fictionalization of a historical event, namely the railway worker's strike of 1947-8 along the Dakar-Niger line.

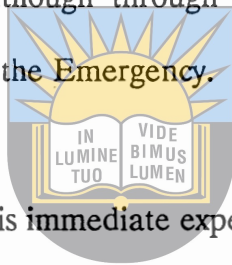
La Guma followed his father Jimmy's example and joined the Communist Party. He wrote some of his novels "under almost impossible conditions of incarceration and house arrest" (Cornwell 1979, 12). He sets his novel In the Fog of the Seasons' End in the period that starts from the Treason Trial arrests in 1956 up to about 1966 (Cornwell 1979, 158). This period includes historical events such as the Sharpeville massacre and the decision of the ANC and PAC to embark on the path of violence. La Guma uses these historical facts in creating his work of art.

Ngugi's, Siyongwana's and Mtuze's novels are not socialist art but are radicalized and revolution-orientated. This is evidenced by the fact that in all of these there is an "acceptance of guerrilla warfare or the armed struggle as the most effective method of ending Africa's political ills, a method which is characteristically communist" (Ngara 1987, 51). Ngugi's two novels are a dramatization of the events of Mau Mau. Weep Not Child (his first novel to be published) is set in the period between 1945 and 1956. This period encompasses two important historical events: the general strike which took place in May 1950 and the conviction of Jomo Kenyatta on April 8 1953.

Ngugi's family had its share in the suffering that characterized the Mau Mau uprising and this is reflected in this novel. Ngugi's father Nducu was an 'ahoi' on the estate of an African landowner just as Ngotho is. His real brother Wallace Mwangi went to the forest to join the Mau Mau forces as Boro Njoroge's brother does in the book. Ngugi's parents were put into detention just like Njoroge's parents (Cook & Okenimkpe 1983, 2). These parallels

have made some critics conclude that Weep Not Child is autobiographical. Ngugi does not deny that his writings are autobiographical. Responding to a question on this issue at Leeds he said: "Every writer's books are autobiographical, that is you write about your experience, your immediate experience" (1966, ii).

A Grain of Wheat also hinges around Mau Mau. This novel is "a transitional novel marking Ngugi's development from nationalist politics and critical realism to revolutionary politics and socialist art" (Ngara 1987, 61). The time span of the novel is primarily the last five days before Kenyan independence, although through a series of flashbacks Ngugi gives us information about the turmoil of the Emergency.



Like Ngugi, Mtuze writes about his immediate experience. His book is about farm life and some of the incidents in the book have their parallels in his real life. He was born at Leeuhoek farm in Middleberg, Cape. The incident about the farm boys who are expelled because they refuse to work on empty stomachs is based on what happened to his family. For days, they had been forced to work without a food ration. When his brother went to ask for food he was confronted by his master's son, who told him to go and ask for food from General Smuts. His brother retorted saying that they were not employed by General Smuts but by Wolfaard. This led to the expulsion of the entire family from that farm and they had to live at the station. (Indlel' Ebhek' Enkundleni, 3-4).

The destitution and homelessness that farm workers suffer in the book is what Mtuze had

experienced in real life. His parents were amongst the farm workers who were removed by force from Middleberg and sent to Ciskei in accordance with the homeland policy. In a telephone interview I had with him on August 23, 1991 he told me that his first-born son was two years old during this gruesome experience. He also employs the actual names of those who are close to him in this novel. Phangindawo who is the champion of non-violent resistance is a descendant of Melitafa. Melitafa is the name of Mtuze's ancestor (2). The events in Alitshoni Lingaphumi show that it probably begins just before 1945 (the year in which the Second World War ended) and stretches up to the tenth year of the settlement of farm workers at Dimbaza.



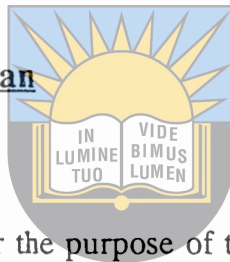
Siyongwana's Ubulumko Bezinja begins from about 1944, the year when the Youth League was founded. This is implied in the fact that the dogs that agitate for change are the militant young generation. Its fictional time span encompasses Sharpeville, the period of the armed struggle, the present era of negotiations and the return of the exiles. He started writing this novel in August 1958 and it was first published in 1962. To write a book about the struggle on its way to victory at that time must have demanded a great deal of imagination. What helped Siyongwana to look beyond political setbacks to the victory of the struggle was his involvement in the people's struggle for liberation.

In a taped interview held in the Centre for Cultural Studies at Fort Hare he reveals that when he wrote this novel he was a militant young man of about 30 years who was an active

member of the ANC and had participated in a number of defiance campaigns. This means that he knew why blacks had to resort to armed struggle and was aware that the aim of the armed struggle was to force the white minority government to a negotiation table.

In the novels that deal with revolutionary politics "the presence of saboteurs, backsliders and traitors as well as the reality of hardship and suffering fall into place as necessary aspects of a revolutionary situation" (Amuta 1989, 140). The mention of saboteurs, backsliders and traitors leads to the following subheading:

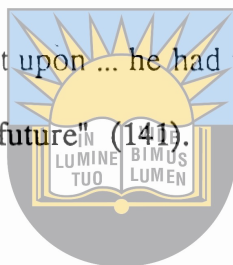
The image of the docile African



The term "docile African" will, for the purpose of this discussion, be used to designate all Africans who collaborate with the white man. The common characteristics of these people are the unquestioning acceptance of all that the white man says, willingness to go out of their way to prove their allegiance to their white masters, willingness to grovel at the feet of the white man for the few crumbs that may fall from his table, and a morbid fear of the white man.

The image of a docile African is portrayed to expose, ridicule and deplore these traits with all the contempt they deserve. These Africans collaborate with the white man in many ways and in different spheres. There are those who collaborate with the white man in obliterating African culture. Joshua in Ngugi's The River Between epitomizes this group.

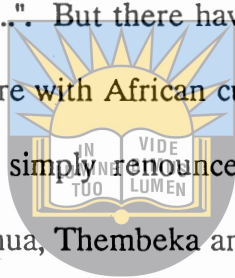
Throughout the novel he is described as a fanatic. His fanaticism stems from, amongst other things, the fact that he accepts without questioning everything that comes from the white man's mouth. This credulity emerges, for instance, in his response to the issue of polygamy. Commenting on Joshua's stand-point on this issue, Ngugi writes: "not that Joshua saw anything intrinsically wrong in having a second bride ... But the man at the mission had said this was sin. And so a sin it had to be" (99). He is so completely brain-washed by the white man that he disowns his own daughter, Muthoni, who against his teachings decides to be circumcised. Joshua is such a narrow-minded and comic character because "he renounced his past and cut himself from those life-giving traditions of the tribe. And because he had nothing to rest upon ... he had to cling with his hands to whatever the missionaries taught him promised future" (141).



These characters are sometimes portrayed as men and women of two cultures, and hence we see in some African novels what Metereau (1985, 41) terms the "myth of the man of two worlds suffering from intolerable internal stresses and liable to desert his education and civilization at a crisis". Zwelinzima in Jordan's Ingqumbo yeminyanya is a good example of such a character. In Chapter Two I showed how Zwelinzima suffers from these "intolerable internal stresses", to the extent that he finally commits suicide. I also observed that in this conflict between African and European cultures Zwelinzima and his wife Thembeke collaborate with the white man. This breeds anarchy and havoc in Mpondomise land.

Some writers and critics have made the ambivalence which this conflict created in the minds

of Africans such an issue that they explain the whole socio-economic chaos brought about by colonization "as being the result of the confusion created in little niggers' minds by the sheer impact of Western technological civilization ..." (Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born, IX). Of course this is ridiculous. Other writers and critics go to the extent of suggesting that all educated Africans are torn between African and European cultures. Mphahlele (1967, 75) objects to this view. He maintains that he is "nothing of the oversimplified and sensationalised Hollywood version of a man of two worlds". He goes on to say: "it is not as if I were pinned on a rock, my legs stretched in opposite directions. Education sets up conflicts but also reconciles them ...". But there have been a few Africans unable to align their education or European culture with African culture "so that each informs the other" (Mphahlele 1974, 30), who have simply renounced African culture. Such people are represented by characters like Joshua, Thembeke and others who "swallowed the Christian doctrine that encouraged them to accept permanent inferiority and to subordinate themselves utterly to their instructors" (Mphahlele 1974, 48).



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In the end these collaborators are humiliated and frustrated. Ngugi captures the humiliation and frustration that Joshua suffers when he is told that his daughter Muthoni has gone to Kameno to be circumcised. He writes: "he was almost mad and small foams of saliva could be seen at the sides of his mouth ... He looked like a beast of prey experiencing defeat and humiliation for the first time" (The River Between, 37). Thembeke becomes mentally deranged and commits suicide.

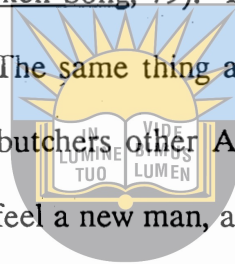
There is another group of docile Africans that can rightly be called the "errand boys" of the white man (Nwankwo 1982, 158). Unlike Joshua and his group, who are lulled into political and mental slumber by religion, these are stupefied into servitude by the white man's power and riches. Karanja in Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat is a good example of this group. It is after he has observed the vindictiveness of the white men in the way they killed Kihika that Karanja becomes convinced of the invincibility of the white man's power. Ngugi tells us that Karanja "had gone to see Kihika hang from a tree ... the body was hideous; the lips, over which a few flies played, were ugly" (199). This picture paralyses him with fear to the extent that throughout the novel we see him cringing and shaking in the presence of a white man.



The relationship between him and the Thompson family exposes his morbid fear of the white man. He is used by Thompson as his personal messenger. Some of the errands are trivial and humiliating, but Karanja would rather endure humiliation than offend the "omnipotent" white man. One day Thompson sends him to deliver a note to his wife, Margery. With a vague intention of seducing him, Margery invites him to come inside the house. His fear of the white man makes him sit on the edge of the seat, idly staring at the ceiling and walls to avoid looking at Margery's breasts. When he is asked whether he takes sugar in his coffee he automatically says "no" when in actual fact he "loathed coffee or tea without lots of sugar". This shows that these "errand boys" are sometimes put in good bargaining positions but instead of exploiting the situation they will try every means not to offend the white master. This is dramatized further by Karanja's holding of "his cup in both

hands afraid of spilling a drop on the carpet" (35).

This fear makes them suffer from a "deadly disease of slave mentality, manifesting itself in an inferiority complex" (Panaf 1975, 24). Whilst this inferiority complex makes these "errand boys" cringe and shake before the white man, it causes them to be ruthless towards their fellow Africans. Mphahlele in his short story "The Master of Doornvlei" tells us that Mfukeri, a black foreman, "had always felt inferior before a white man so he despised himself. The more he despised himself, the sterner and more ruthless he became towards his fellow-workers" (*The Unbroken Song*, 79). Inflicting severe punishment upon other blacks makes him feel a man. The same thing applies to Karanja, who, because of this inferiority complex, mercilessly butchers other Africans. Shooting and killing of blacks "thrilled Karanja and made him feel a new man, a part of an invisible might whose symbol was the white man" (*A Grain of Wheat*, 199).



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In a poem entitled "Intak' emlom' ubomvu" (The bird with a red beak) Burns Ncamashe levels a biting attack against "a homeland leader in Ciskei" (taped interview with the poet). He starts by showing how this collaborator tortures and butchers his kith and kin. Exploiting the bird symbol he writes:

Inxanxadi ngemikhwa
Ixhom' eziny' iintaka
Izihlom' emeveni
Izivis' ubuhlungu
Umxhomi wamawayo. (*Izibongo zakwaSesile*, 30)

(It is like the Fiscal shrike in habits
 It hangs other birds
 Pushing them onto thorns
 Torturing and tormenting them.....
 The executioner of his own kind.)

Burns-Ncamashe likens the movements of this bird to those of a snake, implying that the homeland leader who is symbolized by this bird is a traitor. He says:

Ngokuhamba yinyoka
 Inyathela ngesisu
 Irhubu-rhubuluze,
 Inge ayinanyawo,
 Irhubu-rhubuluze,
 Isidla izithende
 Apha - kweziny' iintaka (32).



(It moves like a snake
 crawling on its stomach
 creeping and crawling
 As if it has no feet
 creeping, crawling
 And back-biting
 Other birds.)

Burns-Ncamashe shows that this leader derives a sordid satisfaction from inflicting pain upon other Africans. He expresses this by showing that the bird rejoices and claps its wings after entrapping others.

Imandelwe intyewu,
 Ayolelwe umhlekazi,
 Aqhwab' amaphiko, (32).

(The rogue rejoices
 The honourable one jubilates
 He claps his wings.)

That the victims of this leader include women and children is captured in:

Le ntak' imlom' ubomvu
Ngudyakalash' onkone,
Ochwechwa ngamathunzi
Ambeth' ingub' egusha,
Egqume ubungcuka,
Ekhohlisa iigusha,
Azayamanise kuzo
Ukuze aziqwenge
Ixhwane nomdlezane! (33).

(This bird with a red beak,
is a treacherous jackal.
That walks softly in shadows
Clad in sheep skin
Hiding its identity
Misleading sheep
By coming closer to them
So that it can devour them
The lambs and the ewe.)



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In this excerpt the poet also alludes to sexual exploitation. This is intimated in "ochwechwa ngamathaunzi" (walks softly in shadows) "azayamanise nazo" (by coming closer to them) and "Ixhwane nomdlezane" (the lamb and the ewe). Burns-Ncamashe hints that this leader will one day be dethroned and humiliated by drawing our attention to the simmering anger and dissatisfaction among some of his subjects. He writes:

Ziqumb' eziny' iintaka
Zijwaqeke ngumsindo
Kuqumbe namathole. (38)

(Other birds are so infuriated
That they choke with anger
Their young are also enraged.)

What happened in Ciskei at the beginning of 1990 was a fulfilment of his prediction.

Besides deriving sordid satisfaction from inflicting pain upon their fellow Africans, these "errand boys" betray their kith and kin for the little crumbs that fall from the white man's table. Nwankwo (1982, 158) tells us that "the controlling impulse of their existence is profit and comfort and it does not matter how they came about it". In a poem entitled "Thanda Uhlanga" (Love the Nation) Cingo highlights this fact. He writes:

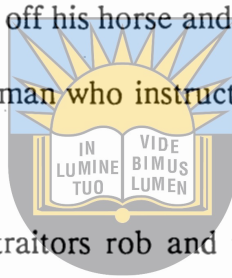
Ngubani na lo ungazi bantu?
Ongena nto nokufa kwabantu
Ongena nto nokutsha kwelizwe
Akenzi nto yokunceda isizwe
Into ayiqondayo yintlutha
Into eyiyo kuye vintsele: (emphasis mine)
(Imibengo, 218.)

(Who is this man who does not know people?
Who does not care when people die
Who is not, perturbed when the country is burning?
He has no contribution to the nation
What he cares for is food
What is paramount to him is liquor.)

Another example of such characters is Karanja who betrays his friends and joins the homeguards to get food and comfort. His change of sides from that of freedom fighters to that of whites is symbolised by the white sack with which he is covered when identifying the members of Mau Mau. The sack covers the whole body except the eyes, a symbolic white skin which signifies that Karanja has become a white man in every respect. Like the white man he feels no remorse when he kills Africans, for to him also "they seemed less like

human beings and more like animals" (A Grain of Wheat, 199). In fact these "errand boys" try to be whiter than whites. For instance, they are more brutal than whites in dealing with other blacks.

This is dramatized in an incident entitled "Amapolisa" (The Police) in Mqhayi's uDon Jadu. Here Dondolo, the hero, is on his way to see his aunt and is confronted by a black and a white policeman. The white policeman demands to see his pass. Dondolo defiantly tells him that he does not carry such a thing. The black policeman, infuriated by the way Dondolo answers his master, jumps off his horse and charges at him. A brief scuffle ensues and ironically it is the white policeman who instructs his colleague to let him go.



In their "exalted" positions these traitors rob and rape Africans. Karanja, for instance, sexually exploits black women who come to him for help: "women offered their naked bodies to him" (A Grain of Wheat, 182). He even goes to the extent of taking sexual advantage of Mumbi, a wife of his friend who has been detained. Nwankwo (1982, 160) sums up Karanja's ignoble nature:

Thus in Karanja Ngugi presents the most despicable qualities of a ruthless exploitative individual who uses all instruments at his disposal to master his environment. Opportunism, brutality, insensitivity and total disregard of the unpredictable aspects of human existence are not beyond him.

There is yet another breed of traitors who can be termed the fence-sitters. Unlike Karanja and his ilk these characters are not so much interested in preying on their fellows; but for

reasons of personal expediency they decide to be neutral in the struggle for liberation. Mugo in Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat typifies this group. He is portrayed as coming from a poor background. His father and mother had died poor, leaving him in the custody of a distant aunt, Waitherero, an alcoholic with "a pitiful persecution complex". She "incessantly tortures Mugo with the sad fact that he is an orphan unable to accomplish much in life" (Nwankwo 1982, 147). When his aunt dies he decides to turn to the soil with a vow to "labour and sweat and through success and wealth force society to recognise him" (9). This quest for recognition becomes an obsession. He will not allow anything or anybody to deter him from achieving this goal. This is the reason why he does not involve himself in the struggle for Uhuru. Anybody who threatens this ambition is an enemy and that is why he betrays Kihika. He explains to Mumbi: "I wanted to live my life. I never wanted to be involved in anything. Then he came into my life ... and pulled me into the stream. So I killed him" (161).



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Through this character Ngugi shows the danger of fence-sitting. He maintains that it is not possible to remain uncommitted during a social crisis for the contending parties will bump against your fence and you may fall on the wrong side. Kihika bumps against Mugo's fence and Mugo falls on the side of the white man and pays dearly for this. In fact all these traitors receive different types of punishment as a form of retribution. The most common of these is humiliation. The punishment meted out to Diara in Ousmane's God's Bits of Wood is a good example of how painful humiliation can be.

Diara, like all other black workers, has voted for the strike but because he would like "to find himself a niche in the arena where power resided" he decides to go back to work (Panaf 1975, 22). Tiemoko, one of the leaders of the strike, suggests that he should be brought before a tribunal to be tried. For the first time in the history of the Bambaras women are to be allowed to attend this meeting because Diara in his collaboration with the white man has harassed them. Sira, a woman who is called forward to testify, winds up her story by saying: "I tell you he is nothing but a slave of the toubabs! Tiemoko is right - he should be crucified in the market place!" (*God's Bits of Wood*, 92). All the women who are called forward denounce him as a traitor. He is so humiliated that "once or twice as the hearing went on he asked himself 'why did I do it'" (93). After listening to the accusations levelled against Diara, some suggest that he should be flogged publicly, whilst others maintain that he should be imprisoned. But the Old One, Fa Keita, argues that the humiliation he has suffered is sufficient. He says: "as for Diara you have already beaten him - you have struck him where every human worthy of the name is most vulnerable. You have shamed him before his friends and before the world, and in doing that you have hurt him more than you could by any bodily punishment" (94). This is how painful humiliation can be.

Karanja and Mugo in Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* have their share of humiliation. Karanja is humiliated by a woman for whom he has sold his manhood. He himself tells Mumbi that he has confessed the oath and joined the homeguards because of his love for her. Mumbi tauntingly calls him 'Judas' and berates him saying: "why don't you wear your mother's skirt

and Mwengu? When others went to fight, you remained behind to lick the feet of your white husbands". He is so humiliated by this that "his face changed shades from light to dark" (130). Karanja's humiliation is coupled with disappointment. He has so believed in the invincibility of the power of the white man that he has entrusted his whole life to them.

A few days before Uhuru celebrations he still will not believe that Thompson, who to him symbolizes this power, is leaving. When he finally gathers enough courage to inquire from Thompson about this, he is so disappointed by his confirmation of this rumour that "his gait to an observer, conjured up a picture of a dog that has been unexpectedly snubbed by the master it trusts" (140).



For all the humiliation and disappointment Karanja suffers he has himself to blame because his mother had warned him "don't go against the people. A man who ignores the voice of his own people comes to no good end" (196). Indeed he came to "no good end". Towards the end of the book it is intimated that out of frustration he intends to commit suicide by standing in front of a running train, but instead of running over him "it swished past him ... so close that the wind threw him back" (200). He has sold his soul and all his human rights to the Devil (the white man) and for this reason he is denied even the right to take his own life. He is forever going to be haunted by his guilty conscience and his failures.

Mugo on the other hand is humiliated by his new-found friend, the white man. As he blurts out to Thompson the story of how Kihika, a "terrorist", came to his hut, "he felt gratitude to the white man, a patient listener ..." (173). But to his surprise, when he finishes his story,

Thompson spits into his face and slaps him hard on the face. This same Thompson tortures him day and night at Rira detention camp even after he has looked at his file to see who he is. This shows that these traitors are hated by the whites to whom they betray their friend and sell their souls. They are merely used as pawns in the white man's game. On top of this humiliation Mugo is further tormented by his guilty conscience and in a trance-like state of mind he tells Mumbi of his hellish experience: "imagine all your life you cannot sleep - so many fingers touching your flesh, eyes always watching you - in dark places - ... sleeping, waking no rest- ah! ..." (161).



The examples of the ill-fated lives of white villains and their collaborators in African fiction are so many as to suggest that the authors consciously or subconsciously engineer these lives as poetic justice. Solilo in a poem entitled "Umthandi wesizwe" (The patriot), for example, wishes that all collaborators should be cursed. He writes:

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Tshikilani zinyanya nimnikel' umhlana
 Ziphambukele kuye indlala namashwa
 Vuka bulungisa ubenguz' ingubo.
 Vuthulula amashwa awele kulowo.
 (Izala, 40)

(Turn away ancestors, turn your back to him.
 Let hunger and misfortunes be his lot.
 Arise righteousness and shake your blankets.
 Shake out your blankets so that misfortunes befall him.)

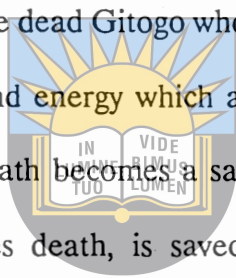
Some of the examples of unhappy endings are so severe that African writers have been accused of being "vindictive rather than redemptive" by some critics (Qangule 1979, 227).

This is, however, not the case, for some African writers are aware that these characters are what they are partly because of the white man. Thus they suggest some ways through which these "errand boys" can be redeemed.

Giving back economic power to blacks is one of these ways. Lack of economic power has caused many to resort to collaborating with the white man: "under the colonial regime, anything may be done for a loaf of bread or a miserable sheep" (Fanon 1968, 308). For instance it is the lack of economic power that makes the black policeman growl at his own kind. Mqhayi tells us that after being harassed by a black policeman Dondolo reflects upon the incident and is greatly perturbed by the behaviour of the policeman; but soon he remembers that: "... kanene impilo yalo mfo wakowethu neyentsapho yakhe ikuyo le nto, ngaphandle kokungqavula enjenje akukho kunyuselwa nakuthembeka kungakanani kuye" (uDon Jadu, 8) (... by the way the life of the man of my nation together with his family depends upon this thing, without growling like this there is neither promotion nor trust that he can receive" (translated by Qangule 1979, 95-96). When the same black policeman is given a well-paid job as an overseer of a black agricultural and educational complex, he changes his attitude towards blacks and becomes efficient in his work and is the pride of his own people.

Confession is another way through which these traitors can be saved. Mugo is a good example of a person who experiences change after publicly confessing his crime. All the attempts that he makes to expiate his crime fail to remove his fears and hallucinations. He

bravely saves a pregnant woman who is molested by one of the homeguards. He unflinchingly endures torture in detention as reparation, but his fears and hallucinations continue to torment him. He then decides to confess his crime. In capturing the relief he experiences when he does this, Ngugi says: "As soon as the first words were out, Mugo felt light. A load of many years was lifted from his shoulders. He was free, sure, confident" (A Grain of Wheat, 204). After this confession Gitogo's mother mistakes him for her deaf and dumb son who was butchered by the white man during Emergency and "if the old woman mistakes Mugo for Gitogo, it is because Mugo, having been cleansed, is a symbolic substitute for the virile image of the dead Gitogo who despite being deaf and dumb was the national embodiment of fitness and energy which all people identified with" (Nwankwo 1982, 155). When he dies, his death becomes a sacrifice for through it many are saved. Karanja, the traitor who deserves death, is saved by his confession and Mumbi and Gikonyo's marriage is rescued. He dies a hero and his heroism "is the opposite of the heroism of the battlefield: it is the heroism of admitting our guilt and weakness" (Cook 1977, 105).



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By suggesting these ways through which the "errand boys" of the colonial masters can be redeemed, these writers show that when they punish these traitors, they are not being vindictive but they are like a loving parent that is reluctantly compelled to punish the child that commits a serious wrong. They also would like to impress upon the minds of the readers that the consequences of collaborating with the forces of evil are too ghastly to contemplate and that betrayal is not worth emulating. They show what is worth emulating

by adulating African heroes.

The image of the African hero

Mphahlele (1974, 24) identifies three historical phases during which heroism was exhibited by Africans: the days before the advent of the white man, the early years of colonial occupation, and the phase of anti-colonial politics and nationalism.

Heroes in the days before the advent of the white man



The heroes of this phase are essentially military heroes and usually appear in oral poetry. These are heroes such as Chaka of Zulu, Rharhabe of Xhosa, and many others. Such figures are used to "excite images of heroism and fighting grit" in Africans who have been reduced to docile slaves of the white intruders (Mphahlele 1974: 212). The effect that contemplation of the example of these warrior-heroes might have on Africans is dramatized in Oyono's The Old Man and the Medal. Meka, a typical docile native, "gives" his lands and sons to the white man. For all this sacrifice he is to be given a medal by the Chief of the Whites. He looks forward to the day on which he is to receive this medal with great expectation, but it turns out to be a painful and humiliating occasion.

On this day he is made to stand for a very long time in the broiling sun. The clothes he has bought specially for this "grand" occasion make him extremely uncomfortable. In the

evening of the same day he is arrested and brutalized by police. He pleads and prays for forgiveness, to no avail. He is whisked to the Charge Office, where he is further molested and, because he has been indoctrinated by missionaries that vengeance is God's, he keeps on saying "God keeps you!" when he is kicked (128).

It is there in the darkness of the cell that Meka finds himself thinking about his valiant forefathers. He wonders "how could he, the descendant of the great Meka's, the Stock-unshakable-beneath-the storm, the River-without-fear-of-the-forest, the Pythons ... the son of men who had never bowed to another man's strength", be treated as a slave (131). This brings about a dramatic change in him. He now challenges the police who have molested him to come and face him. He shouts: "slaves of the uncircumcised! ... Open up, open up, see the real Meka ... Swine! Dare you face me? ..." (131). It is the recalling of the brave deeds of his forebears that brings about a complete change in Meka. Now he is no longer the same man who "dropped his eyes like a shy girl" in front of the policemen (127). When he is brought before Gullet, who asks who he is, he bravely says: "Tell him I am a very great fool, who yesterday still believed in the white man's friendship ..." (134-135).

The heroes during the arrival of the white man

The writers who portray these heroes intend firstly to expose the vulnerability of the white intruders, and secondly to decry the barbarism and savagery with which the heroes are deposed and killed. The vulnerability of the white man is exposed through the portrayal of

the victories of warrior kings such as Mhlontlo in Jordan's Ingqumbo yeminyanya. Ngxabane, a Mpondomise sage, recounts the legend of Mhlontlo and how he outmanoeuvred the white man. He tells us that Mhlontlo has gone to a medicine-man to be doctored to make him immune to witchcraft. As a test of his bravery he is locked up in a special hut (iphempe), which is then burnt down completely. As a reward for passing through this terrible ordeal the medicine-man promises him that: "akusayi kuze ubulawe yimbumbulu" (9) (... no bullet will ever have power to slay you) (translated by Jordan & Jordan 1980, 10). Ngxabane substantiates the validity of this prophecy by citing an incident during the Honis war where Mhlontlo is surrounded in a cave by white soldiers, who fire several shots at him but cannot kill him because two mysterious dogs catch and swallow the white men's bullets.



A taped interview with one of his sons, Isaac, held at the Centre for Cultural Studies at the University of Fort Hare, shows that the daring deeds of Mhlontlo, which Ngxabane ascribes to his power of magic, are of course nothing else but the escapades of a wily and wary warrior. Isaac tells us how Mhlontlo became involved in the Honis war. He recounts that there was turmoil in Mpondomise land. The chiefs of other tribes wanted to club together against Mhlontlo. Seeing that he could not withstand a joint attack from these tribes, Mhlontlo went to a white missionary to seek advice. Rev. Mr Davidson advised him to go and ask for a magistrate for his area in Umtata. By so doing he would be making his country a British protectorate. Without fully understanding the implications of such a move, Mhlontlo, having confidence in the man of God, obliged and Open was sent as the first

Magistrate. For a time things went well for Mhlontlo. But then came Hamilton Hope to replace Shaw, who had succeeded Open.

Hope made it clear from the outset that the days of chieftaincy had come to an end. He started by demanding that all criminal cases be brought to him and not to Mhlontlo. He introduced humiliating and oppressive laws such as "umthetho wekatsi", which empowered him publicly to flog all Africans who dared to break the white man's law. Observing that the white man had now usurped his power to rule, Mhlontlo started propagating the idea that all the whites in Transkei should be killed. Just at that time another chief revolted against the white man's rule. Hope instructed Mhlontlo to send his regiments to punish this chief. Mhlontlo refused, saying that he was still mourning the passing away of his relative. Hope was beside himself with rage; he openly told Mhlontlo that he had no choice in the matter for he was no longer the chief of the Mpondomise but was now his dog. He explained to him that he had surrendered his chieftaincy on the day he went to Umtata to ask for a Magistrate.

Infuriated by this, Mhlontlo retorted: "Ukuba andiyonkosi, thatha abantu bakho uye nabo emfazweni" (A taped interview with Isaac), (If I am no longer a chief then take your people [the Mpondomise] and lead them to war). Hope stubbornly went ahead to arrange another meeting to issue arms to the Mpondomise. Mhlontlo arranged that Hope and other whites should be killed during this meeting. He strategically saved the son of a missionary when other whites were killed. The Honis war started as white soldiers were sent to punish

Mhlontlo. A price was put on his head.

It was during this war that Mhlontlo showed that he was a military genius. He eluded the white soldiers on many occasions, including the one on which he was surrounded by white soldiers in a cave. They could not catch or kill him. He went to Lesotho and stayed there for a while. When the colonial authorities had given up hope of ever capturing Mhlontlo, he surrendered himself. A court case was arranged at King William's Town and even there Mhlontlo outwitted the white man, for the man he saved came forward to testify that Mhlontlo was not a murderer but a saviour. Showing that the white man can be duped by a black man is intended to demonstrate that he is in fact an ordinary human being and this "awareness that Europeans [are] only human, that they [are] fallible and even fragile....sets in motion the struggle for independence (Potholm 1976, 121) (emphasis mine). For instance, it is after Meka has recalled that his grandfather had killed a white man that he loudly says to his captors: "I am not afraid of white men!" (The Old Man and the Medal: 136). The skull of this white man was given to him by his grandfather on the day he killed his first panther. He threw it into the river on the day of his baptism.

Meka recalls all this on the night of his arrest. There in the darkness of the cell it dawns on him that the day he threw away what was to remind him of the vulnerability of the white man was the day he became a slave. On his way home on the following day it becomes clear that Meka has reverted to the traditional superstitions of his tribe: "all these superstitions had sprung up again in his mind like a great tide sweeping away the years of

Christian teaching and practice" (142). By the time he arrives home he will not allow anybody even to mention the name of Lord Jesus. This struggle for mental emancipation starts when he remembers that the white man is as fragile as any human being.

Heroism during the phase of anti-colonial politics and nationalism will be discussed in Chapter Four.

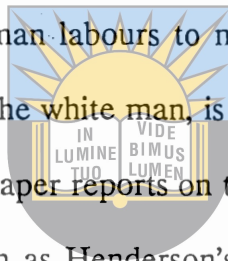


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CHAPTER 4

THE STRUGGLE FOR UHURU

For a very long time colonial writers have depicted the African struggle for liberation as "an atavistic, anti-white [movement] which is intent upon returning [Africa] to barbarism and primitivism" (Walker 1984, 157-158). They portray the freedom fighters as savages, black sheep, communists, and bloodthirsty murderers who aim at disrupting law and order, which the honourable and just white man labours to maintain. Thus the killing of a freedom fighter, labelled a "terrorist" by the white man, is regarded as ridding society of malignant rot. One has only to read newspaper reports on the clashes between freedom fighters and "security forces", and books such as Henderson's The Hunt for Dedan Kimati, Ruark's Uhuru etc., to see how prevalent this view is amongst whites.



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African writers who articulate this theme of the struggle for Uhuru are committed to giving us a completely different picture of the African struggle for liberation from what whites have left behind in their writings. They portray it as a heroic struggle against foreign domination, oppression and all the forces of evil unleashed by the white man. While they lionize and canonize the freedom fighters, they decry as savages and denounce as brutes all those who try to frustrate the people's struggle for liberation. In trying to put the record straight they trace the struggle from the non-violent to the violent stages of its evolution.

African writers tend to portray the leaders and masses who are involved in non-violent resistance as saints of the struggle. One way of doing this is by showing that they stand and die for what is right and reasonable. They 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.

In his allegorical novel Ubulumko Bezinja (The Wisdom of Dogs), Siyongwana sets out to demonstrate the reasonableness of the demands of Africans. The dogs in this novel represent blacks, and the humans who exploit and oppress them represent whites. After observing the unfair, unjust and cruel manner in which dogs are treated by human beings, Tawuse and Mthendevu, (Sibi's puppies), decide to air their grievances to their master, Kholisile. They approach him and enquire why it is that dogs do not have their fair share in a place they call their home. Kholisile wants to know what they mean by fair share. They then explain that when a sheep is slaughtered, they should be given meat instead of bones, and when food is dished out, they should be given food and not left-overs. Kholisile enquires further: "Okokukuthi ke Tawuse nifuna oku kutyiwa ngabantu?" (19) (All in all, Tawuse, what you mean is that you should be given the same food as that given to human beings?) Tawuse quickly replies: "Kanye ke nkosi" (Exactly master).

Kholisile informs them that their request is impracticable, for no dog has ever received the same treatment as human beings. When they insist that they deserve better treatment because they are the ones who work and protect the home at night, he threateningly chases

them away. In another meeting the dogs try to argue with their master, saying: "Khawusixelele ke nkosi, naku ukutya ninako kuninzi, nenyama nibanayo, nifuyile. Ningahleleleka na xa ninokusinika izinto esizicelelayo?" (34) (Tell us, master. You have plenty of food, and more than enough meat for you are farmers. Would you be impoverished if you granted us our request?) Kholisile tells them that they would not be impoverished but if the dogs were granted their requests, they would think that they were human beings and forget that they were dogs. He further informs them that the status quo (i.e. superiority of human beings to dogs) is normal, natural and dates back from the time of their forefathers and cannot be changed by puppies. Thus their request is tantamount to saying that he should reverse what has been divinely ordained.

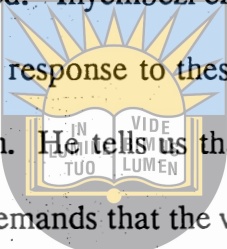


The reasonableness of the demands of Africans condemns the intransigence and insensitivity of the whites in dealing with their grievances. Considering the humiliation, oppression and exploitation that Africans have suffered and continue to suffer at the hands of whites, for them to demand nothing more than equality with whites shows how well-meaning they are in their struggle for freedom. They could demand the domination of whites by blacks out of sheer vengeance, but they clamour for the abolition of all forms of racism. They could try to drive the white man back to the sea as their forebears attempted to do, because Africa is indeed a black man's country, but they agitate for the peaceful co-existence of all races. In a poem entitled "Ingoma yabantwana baseAfrica" (The Song of the Children of Africa) Solilo describes how the children of Africa plead for the peaceful co-existence of all races. They say:

Masivane mlungu ngeAfrica
Sewendele ungenakunyothulwa
Ndoda ndife ndiyibang' iAfrica
Izwe lam lokuzalwa ngubawo (Izala, 28).

(Let us make an agreement white man about Africa
You have entrenched yourself and cannot be driven away.
I will die claiming Africa
My country of birth by my father.)

Deaf to the black men's reasonable demands, the white man continues to rain insults on them, perpetuating the stereotypes and prejudice through which he has justified their subjugation. Solilo, in a poem entitled: "Inyembezi ezingenaMsuli" (Tears that no one will wipe away), records the white man's response to these demands. He describes a dialogue between an African and a European. He tells us that they are seated next to a fireplace warming themselves. The African demands that the white man should move to one side so that he, too, can feel the warmth of the fire. He says:



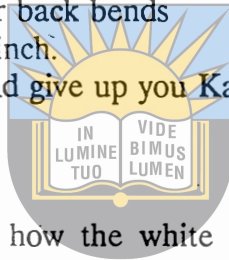
Nyawuka mlungu undisithile,
Ilitha ndiyalifuna, kwanebandezi.
Uva wedw' intsitho nokuhamba kwegazi
Nam ndingumntu mandiphil' elizweni.
Undicinezele, ndihleli kakubi.
Ndiyakuqabelisa kuwe unyaw' olumdaka (35).

(Move to one side white man you are denying me warmth.
I also want light and freedom.
You are the only one who enjoys
warmth and free flowing of blood.
I am also a human being let me have
the right to live in the world.
You are oppressing me, I have no freedom.
I will trample you with my dirty foot).

The white man responds:

Phang' eqhingeni you stupid Xhosa
Ulifa lam ndikunikwe phezulu.
Fund' isiBhalo, sikuxelele:-
"Nyana wam ndikuzele kunamhla
Abahedeni ndobapha wena ..." Indumiso II: 8
Phika ubhene andikunyawuka
Sel' amanzi uncamile Kafile. (35).

(Try some other means you stupid Xhosa
You are my inheritance you have been
given to me as a gift from Above
Read the Bible it will tell you:-
"My son today I have become your Father.
I will give heathens unto you.." Psalms II: 8
Complain until your back bends
I will not move an inch.
Console yourself and give up you Kaffir.)



This is yet another example of how the white man deliberately distorts the Bible to perpetuate the myth of the superiority of the white race. In the New International Version this verse is as follows: "You are my Son, today I have become your Father. Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance". The word Son starts with a capital letter to indicate that God is not referring to the white man but to Jesus his Son. This distortion is achieved through quoting a verse out of context. The white man further distorts the Bible by replacing the word "nations" with the word "heathens" (abahedeni) which does not appear in any of the versions I have read, including the Xhosa version.

Although the African is insultingly called a "Kaffir" by the white man, he continues to plead with him, saying:

Ndiphathe ngenceba uhlonel' uMdali
Noko ndimnyama ndisisidalwa senkosi
Odal' amabala, amhlophe namnyama
Ubabeke ndawonye phezu kwegada ...
(35)

(Treat me with mercy, in respect of the Creator
Although I am black, I am the Lord's creature
Who created black and white
He put them in one place, on the earth ...)

The African goes on to show that the white man has forsaken the Bible and has brought the Bottle (liquor) in its stead. He accuses him of atrocious crimes and maintains that his gospel is to hate the "Kaffirs". To all this the white man retorts:

.... Asiso sono ukubeth' imbongolo
Uyiqhub' ihambe, ikusebenzele
Iintlungu ozivayo zikufanele (37)

(It is no sin to beat an ass
To make it go, and work for you.
The pains you suffer are what you deserve...)

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After refusing point blank to redress the grievances of the African the white man then counsels him never to resort to violence. He says:

Ungasongeli ngokunyanzela
Akwakhi kangako ukunyanzel' izinto
Cela kakuhle noba kunzima (37)

(Do not resort to violence
It does not pay much to demand
things through violence.
Negotiate peacefully even when it is difficult ...)

African writers further present in a favourable light the masses who are involved in this first stage of the struggle by showing that they are intent on achieving their political goals through non-violent means. The peaceful negotiations and demonstrations are turned into blood-baths by the wicked designs of the white man. In Ngugi's Weep Not Child a peaceful strike, which is organised to demand a raise in salaries for blacks, deteriorates into violence because the whites use Jacobo, another black man, to break the strike. Ngugi tells us that while the strikers are addressed by speakers, police armed with guns, batons and tear-gas bombs, surround them. This act in itself is provocative. Karie, one of the speakers, is aware of this fact and exhorts the strikers to remain calm, saying: "remember this must be a peaceful strike ... If today you are hit don't hit back" (58).



Strikers are provoked to the limit when Jacobo ascends the platform and urges them to go back to work. To Ngotho, who for years has patiently waited for the whites to go away as Mugo, the great Gikuyu seer, had prophesied, "Jacobo crystallized into a concrete betrayal of the people. He became the physical personification of the long years of waiting and suffering" (58). Overwhelmed with rage, he rushes for Jacobo, shouting at the crowd to arise. Commotion ensues. The trigger-happy and bloodthirsty police start firing and throwing tear-gas bombs into the crowd.

Whilst African writers condemn police brutality, they commend the sacrificial death of Africans. Those Africans who are killed during peaceful demonstrations, strikes etc., are portrayed as people who so love freedom, their land, their leaders and their fellow-men that

they are willing to die for them. Describing the spirit of love that reigns in the hearts of the marchers who in 1923 walked to Nairobi to demand the release of their leader Harry Thuku, Warui recalls: "others did not bring food. We shared whatever crumbs we had brought. Great love I saw there. A bean fell to the ground and it was quickly split among children. For three days we gathered in Nairobi, with our blood we wrote vows to free Harry" (A Grain of Wheat, 13-14). The spirit of love and sharing that reigns in their hearts magnifies the peacefulness of the demonstration, for where there is love, there is peace. The raising of hands by those who are shot by police also signifies that they are not fighting, they are for peace; and the clutching of soil in their hands as they die symbolizes that they die for the recovery of their lost land and heritage.



Whenever African writers record the death or injury of Africans in this way, reference is made to the flowing or spurting of their blood. Blood is a universal symbol of suffering and sacrifice. Reference to it is intended to show that the victims of police brutality suffer or die as sacrifices for freedom. In the words of Ngugi their blood "rain[s] on and water[s] the tree of freedom" (17). Rivers of African blood have flowed in Africa during the stage of non-violence but the tree of freedom would not bear the desired fruits.

In Ngugi's novel A Grain of Wheat the blood of demonstrators flows freely but Harry Thuku is not released for seven years, and even then, only after he has promised to cooperate with his oppressors (92). The dead and the maimed during the anti-pass campaign in La Guma's In the Fog of the Seasons' End are found lying in puddles of their own blood

but the pass laws are not abolished. Looking back at the history of non-violent resistance in South Africa, Mandela says: "fifty years of non-violence had brought the African people nothing but more and more repressive legislation" (Karis & Carter 1977, 647).

Generally speaking all African writers concur with this view. Even those like Mtuze who seem to concede that non-violent methods do bring about some change, are in actual fact showing that gains achieved through these methods are so limited that they can be regarded as "tokenism". In the political sphere tokenism means that the oppressed people who agitate for change are not given genuine political freedom but its token. In the words of King (1964, 31) tokenism suggests that Africans "could be handed the glitter of metal symbolizing the true coin, and authorizing a short term trip to democracy. But he who sells you the token instead of the coin always retains the power to revoke its worth" (King 1964, 31). Bantustans or homelands in South Africa are good examples of tokenism. The oppressors would urge the oppressed to accept this state of affairs, arguing that half a loaf is better than no bread.

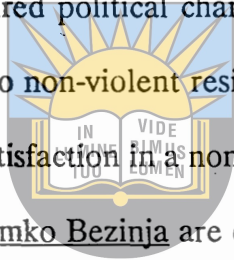
In Alitshoni Lingaphumi Mtuze shows how passive resistance leads to tokenism. In this novel Phangindawo is made a foreman on the farm of Nkwancube, a white man. Through his hard work and leadership, the harvest improves significantly on the farm. He uses this success in bargaining for a fair deal for the African labourers. By negotiating with his "benevolent" master he succeeds in establishing a church and a farm school. He changes the working conditions of the farm labourers. Widows are no longer thrown off the farm

at the death of their husbands, as they used to be. Farm-hands are now given pensions at a pensionable age and those who suffer injuries at work are compensated. The continued enjoyment of these privileges by farm labourers, however, depends solely on Nkwancube. A change of heart in him can mean their termination. Indeed this does happen: Nkwancube gets machines to replace the labourers when the country is drought-stricken, the privileges are withdrawn and all the farm labourers are sacked.

They become destitute and many die during the exodus from Cradock to Grootfontein. They decide to settle in that vicinity and a shanty town mushrooms on the outskirts of Middleburg. These shanty dwellers are confronted with problems such as the lack of water and toilet facilities. A deputation is sent to put their plight before the town councillors. Phangindawo, the champion of passive resistance, is one of them. After a series of meetings they are accorded the right to go and live in one of the black locations in Middleburg. Pass laws are waived for them. Again, this could be regarded as a success achieved through non-violence, but these people are later forcibly removed from Middelburg and resettled in Msobomvu in Ciskei in accordance with the Bantustan policy. In Msobomvu they once more encounter several difficulties. Many die of hunger and exposure to the fury of the elements. The failure of non-violence to bring about the desired political change is symbolized by the death of Phangindawo's children, Qaqambile and Nokamva, names which mean "bright" and "future", respectively.

This signifies that Phangindawo's dream that a bright future for Africans can be achieved

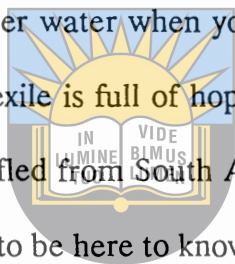
through non-violent means is shattered. Phangindawo is rewarded for the little gains he achieves through his passive resistance: a centre for the aged which is established at Msobomvu is named "Phangindawo Melitafa Centre for the aged" in recognition of his contribution to his society. But some blacks, such as Dwayi, believe that "half a loaf is no bread" (King 1964, 32). In a meeting which is held in honour of Phangindawo, Dwayi stands up and says that the suffering and losses inflicted on Africans by the white man's policies, such as forced removals, cannot be compensated for by the building of five schools, four shops, two beer hotels and six factories. Generally speaking, non-violent resistance has not only failed to bring about the desired political change but has made the oppressor. The reaction of colonial governments to non-violent resistance is to close all channels through which Africans can vent their dissatisfaction in a non-violent way. The dogs who agitate for their rights in Siyongwana's Ubulumko Bezinja are outlawed. This is a subtle reference to the banning of the ANC and PAC after the Anti-Pass Campaign in Sharpeville and Langa.



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When people's organisations like these are banned and their leaders detained, gagged, shadowed, hounded and exiled, it becomes impossible for people to use non-violent means to achieve their political goals. That is why Kgosana maintains that "after the results of the Anti-Pass campaign in Sharpeville and Langa, non-violence as a weapon for resistance in South Africa was buried" (Lest We Forget, 53). This is so because it would be unreasonable to expect people to be involved in non-violent resistance "in circumstances where it is considered a crime to be decent; where a policeman will run [a man] out of [his] house at the point of a sten gun when [he] tries to withhold his labour" (Down Second Avenue, 178).

Disillusionment with the ineffectiveness of non-violent tactics causes some intellectuals and political activists to flee and seek refuge in other countries. Some of the problems they encounter in exile are dramatized in Siyongwana's Ubulumko Bezinja: Tawuse, Bhaku and Mthendevu would like to leave the homes of human beings where exploitation and oppression are rife, to go and live underwater like otters. They solicit the help of one otter, which, although it is suspicious of them, tries to help them. It explains and demonstrates how they should dive deep into the water. They try to imitate but, because they are not made to live under water, all their attempts prove futile. The implication is that life in exile is as difficult as trying to live under water when you are made to live on land. In some novels the initial phase of life in exile is full of hope and promise. The exhilarating taste of freedom makes Timi, who has fled from South Africa, write to Karabo and others who are still in South Africa "you need to be here to know what it feels like - this freedom" (The Wanderers, 196). But the rigours of exile are such that after six months of his stay in this foreign country he suffers such alienation, loneliness and nostalgia that he longs "to be back in the fire just so long as he would be suffering along with others of his kind" (197). Exile provides no lasting solution.

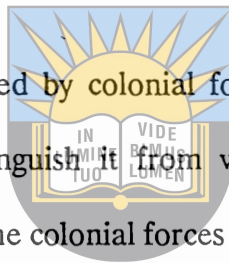


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The failure of non-violent resistance, therefore, leaves Africans with only two choices: to submit or fight. For people who have endured humiliation, oppression and exploitation for so many years, submission is unthinkable: to submit is to perish and to fight is to survive. Thus Africans turn to violence as a last resort. The delineation of the failure of non-violent tactics in African fiction is intended to justify obliquely the use of violence in trying to bring

about political change.

Most African writers who delineate the use of violence in the struggle for freedom aim at exposing and condemning violence perpetrated by colonial forces on the one hand, and at justifying violence committed by freedom fighters on the other. Ngugi (1982, 28) sums up the standpoint of many African writers when he says: "violence in order to change an intolerable, unjust social order is not savagery: it purifies man. Violence to protect and preserve an unjust, oppressive social order is criminal and diminishes man."



The form of violence perpetrated by colonial forces has been referred to as "force" by colonial commentators to distinguish it from what they call "violence" committed by "terrorists". They also describe the colonial forces as "security forces" to give the impression that they are for the security of society. On the contrary, African writers portray them as "licensed killers in uniform who tortured and murdered harmless African villagers" (Kaunda 1982, 92) and describe what is called "force" as "violence to protect and preserve an unjust, oppressive social order" (Ngugi 1982, 28). To them anything "which hurts a human being is violence" (Kaunda 1982, 41).

The white man started committing acts of violence from the day he set his foot on African soil and will continue to do so until all Africans obtain their independence. Fanon (1968, 36) confirms this when he says: "the first encounter [between blacks and whites] was marked by violence and their existence together - that is to say the exploitation of the native

- Iba iyaxakisa koko kuthiwe "Betha"
 Obotshiwey' uyinto yokudlala kwigala
 35 Kuba ndikubonile ukwenziwa komkhonzi
 Kwinkatyana yedyokhwe.
- VII. Ibe ngasadalala yalunywa emsileni.
 Xa limbi ndiyibone igweba nangophondo
 Kuwayo umqotyozwa wamzuzu begazinye.
 40 Ubunzima bedyokhwe budal' ugxeqwano
 Kuba ndikubonile ukwenziwa komkhonzi
 Kwinkatyana yedyokhwe.
- VIII. Lalingathi limnyam' izulu kukhumezela
 Ndiyongelundeni ndalibona libomvu,
 45 Kuthontsiza igazi, umkhondo woxhathiso
 Ibuzisa ikhaya umzi wenkululeko,
 Kuba ndikubonile ukwenziwa komkhonzi
 Kwinkatyana yedyokhwe.
- IX. Ime bhuxe kudinwa kungekho luvelwano,
 50 Yasitsho esikrakra isililo ibhonga.
 Kunyenyiswe kancinci ukuba iphefumle
 Kwabuya kwaqiniswa ibulawa umoya
 Kuba ndikubonile ukwenziwa komkhonzi
 Kwinkatyana yedyokhwe.
- X. Ndiyibone mva seyaqobozeka yathamba
 55 Itsal' umbaxa-mbini wekhuba etshoniswe
 Waphelela ikhonza, ikhefuza igcuma.
 Ukufa kukuqhutywa, impilo kuzenzela
 Kuba ndikubonile ukwenziwa komkhonzi
 60 Kwinkatyana yedyokhwe.
- XI. Ndiyibone inyuka iminqantsa yomendo
 Ithwele imithwalo enzima ixelenga,
 Iludaka kubila ingenisela omnye.
- 65 Incasa yomsebenzi yinxaxheba kuvuno
 Kuba ndikubonile ukwenziwa komkhonzi
 Kwinkatyana yedyokhwe.
- XII. Ndiyibon' ilambile ngaphantsi kwaloo mbuso

Iliso liyinyembezi umxhel' ujacekile,
Ibe ingasakwazi nokuchasa imbuna.
70 Ithemba yimigudu ezond' inkululeko
Kuba ndikubonile ukwenziwa komkhonzi
Kwinkatyana yedyokhwe (Umyezo, 111-113).

- I. I can no longer ask how it feels
To be choked by a yoke-rope
Because I have seen it for myself in the chained ox
The blindness has left my eyes. I have become aware,
5 I have seen the making of a servant
In the young yoke-ox.
- II. He was sleek, lovely, born for freedom,
Not asking anything from anyone, simply priding himself on being a
young ox,
Someone said: Let him be caught and trained and broken in,
10 Going about it as if he meant to help him.
I have seen the making of a servant
In the young yoke-ox.
- III. He tried to resist, fighting for his freedom,
He was surrounded, fenced in with wisdom and experience,
15 They overcame him by trickery: 'He must be trained'.
A good piece of rationalisation can camouflage evil.
I have seen the making of a servant
In the young yoke-ox.
- IV. He was bound with ropes that cut into his head,
20 He was bullied, kicked, now and again pelted,
But their aim was the same: to put a yoke on him.
Being trained in one's own interests is for the privileged.
I have the seen the making of a servant
In the young yoke-ox.
- V. 25 The last stage. The yoke is set on him.
They tie the halter round his neck, slightly choking him.
They say the job's done, he'll be put out to work with the others.
To obey the will of his owner and taskmaster.
I have seen the making of a servant
30 In the young yoke-ox.

- VI. He kicks out, trying to break away,
They speak with their whips. He turns backwards
Doing his best to resist but then they say: 'Hit him'.
A prisoner is a coward's plaything.
35 I have seen the making of a servant
In the young yoke-ox.
- VII. Though he stumbled and fell, he was bitten on the tail,
Sometimes I saw him raking at his yoke-make
With his horns - his friend of a minute, his blood-brother.
40 The suffering under the yoke makes for bad blood.
I have seen the making of a servant
In the young yoke-ox.
- VIII. The sky seemed black as soft rain fell.
I looked at his hump, it was red,
45 Dripping blood, the mark of resistance
He yearns for his home, where he was free.
I have seen the making of a servant
In the young yoke-ox.
- IX. Stockstill, tired, there was no sympathy.
50 He bellowed notes of bitterness.
They loosened his halter a little to let him breathe.
They tightened it again, snatching back his breath.
I have seen the making of a servant
In the young yoke-ox.
- X. 55 I saw him later, broken, trained
Pulling a double-shared plough through deep soil,
Serving, struggling for breath, in pain.
To be driven is death. Life is doing things for yourself.
I have seen the making of a servant
60 In the young yoke-ox.
- XI. I saw him climb the steepest of roads.
He carried heavy loads, staggering -
The mud of sweat which wins profit for another
The savour of working is a share in the harvest.
65 I have seen the making of a servant
In the young yoke-ox.
- XII. I saw him hungry with toil and sweat,

Eyes all tears, spirit crushed,
 No longer able to resist. He was tame.
 70 Hope lies in action aimed at freedom.
 I have seen the making of a servant
 In the young yoke-ox.

(Translated from Xhosa by Qangule & Kavanagh 1974).

In describing the colonizing process and the violence that accompanied it Jolobe uses the ox symbol. The first stanza indicates that the breaking of the ox that Jolobe talks about in this poem signifies a process which he has witnessed himself. He writes: "Andisenakubuza ndisithi kunjani na, Ukukhanywa yintambo yedyokhwe emqaleni. Kuba ndizibonele kwinkabi yomqokozo" (I can no longer ask how it feels, To be choked by a yoke-rope. Because I have seen it for myself in the chained ox). Since he was born on July 25 1902 in the Xhalanga district of Transkei, the form of exploitation and oppression he can justifiably claim to have witnessed is the colonizing process. His calling as a minister of religion might have blinded him for some time and made him justify colonization, but his other calling (that of being a writer) opened his eyes. He confesses this change of attitude: "Ubumfama bamehlo busukile ndagqala" (The blindness has left my eyes. I have become aware).

In the second stanza Jolobe portrays the state of paradisaal bliss in which Africans were before the coming of the white man. He writes: "Yabigudile intle, izalelw' inkululo, Ingaceli nto mntwini izingca ngobunkomo" (He was sleek, lovely, born for freedom, Not asking anything from anyone, simply priding himself on being a young ox). The description of the state of Africans before they were colonized is intended to demolish the myth that colonization was for the betterment of Africans. It shows that the colonizing process finds

its victims in freedom and reduces them to serfdom. In line 9 Jolobe exposes the hypocrisy of what the white man calls "a civilizing mission". He says: "Uthe umntu mayibanjwe iqeqeshwe ithambe" Ezilungiselela enga uyasiza (Someone said: Let him be caught and trained and broken in. Going about it as if he meant to help).

The third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and ninth stanzas delineate the efforts made by Africans to resist the curtailment of their freedom and describe the white man's response to these. From the third to the fifth stanza Jolobe deals with the first (black-white) encounter; in the sixth, seventh and ninth he describes their existence together. Jolobe confirms the fact that both these stages were marked by violence. In the third stanza he alludes to the war of resistance. He writes: "Inge ingamangala ikhusel' ilungelo" (He tried to resist, fighting for his freedom).

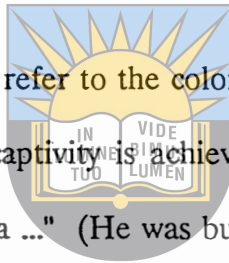


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Violence erupted because the white man was so keen to "civilize" the "savages" that he was prepared to kill them rather than to give up his God-given mission. This is confirmed by one colonial official who is recorded as having said: "unless we are to abrogate our civilizing mission in Africa, such expeditions with their attendant slaughter are necessary" (Davidson 1981, 87). After long, bitter and bloody wars African military resistance was crushed. Jolobe ascribes the success of the white man to trickery and his sophisticated weaponry. He writes: "Yangqingwa yabiyelwa ngobulumko namawa. Amaqhinga oyisa kufunw' iqobozeke" (He was surrounded, fenced in with wisdom and experience. They overcame him by trickery: He must be trained!). Jolobe goes on to tell us that the reasons the whites gave for declaring war were intended to justify their evil motives. He says: "Isizathu esihle singafihla ububi" (A good piece of rationalisation can camouflage evil).

In the fourth stanza he refers to what we termed "persuasion" in Chapter Two, described by Gakwandi (1977, 13) as "an elaborate apparatus designed to incarcerate the minds of its victims", involving mainly religion and education. About the effects of this method on Africans Pokela says: "Through ~~mis~~education, misuse of media and false propaganda the [white man] had succeeded in ~~crushing~~ the Africans' human dignity and personality" (unpublished manuscript entitled Mangaliso Sobukwe, 33). In referring to this method Jolobe says: "Irintyelwe ngeentambo zayidla ebuntloko" (He was bound with ropes that cut into his head).



The ropes that cut into the ox's head refer to the colonization of the African mind. What is striking is that even this mental captivity is achieved through the use of violence, as intimated in: "yangxoliswa yakhatywa ..." (He was bullied, kicked ...). Stanza five shows that through the use of naked force and persuasion the white man succeeded in reducing Africans to serfdom. Jolobe writes

Iqondo lokuphela ubekiwe loo mqobo,
 Yajikela nentambo entanyeni bukhanywa
 Kwathiwa igqityiwe yafakwa emkhondweni
 Ukufunda intando yomlawuli umniniyo.

(The last stage. The yoke is set on him
 They tie the halter round his neck, slightly choking him,
 They say the job is done, he'll be put out to work with others.
 To obey the will of his owner and taskmaster.)

Commenting on the state to which Africans were reduced, Pheko (1984, 72) says: "About 1881 the indigenous Africans lost everything - their land, wealth, political power, national sovereignty and human dignity. They had started a life of unwanted and exploited people

in the land of their forefathers". These facts lead us to what Fanon calls "their existence together - that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler". This, too, "was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons" (Fanon, 1968, 36).

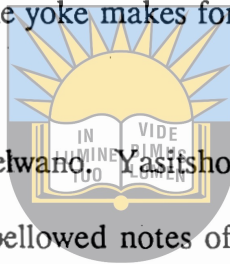
In the sixth stanza Jolobe alludes to the second or political stage of struggle. When military resistance was crushed, Africans resorted to political forms of struggle. Once again the white man's answer to this is violence. Jolobe recounts: "Ibe ngakhabalaza izam'ukuqhawula, kwathethwa ngeziniya" (He kicks out, trying to break away. They speak with their whips).



In the last part of the second line of this stanza the poet is possibly inferring to the fact that during this stage "Christian leaders began to break away from white churches" (Pheko 1984, 77). This breaking away was interpreted by the white man as reversion to barbarism. In alluding to this political strategy Jolobe says: "Ijonge ngasemva ..." (He turns backwards ...). Again the white man's response to this is violence, as reflected in "... Koko kwathiwa: Betha" (but then they say: 'Hit him'). Subsequent to this strategy, many others such as sit-ins and strikes were used and, as usual, the white man's reply to these was violence. The first line of the seventh stanza refers to these strategies and the white man's response to them. "Ibe ngasadalala yalunywa emsileni" (Though he stumbled and fell, he was bitten on the tail).

Tabata observes that during this time many political organisations sprang up and "the characteristic feature of this stage of development was mutual suspicion, rivalry and hatred between the various organisations. It became the duty of the leaders of one organisation to denounce all others not because of the difference in political policies or principles ...

Each one felt that the other organisations were not necessary and that everybody should join the particular organisation where he was the leader. Thus all political fights degenerated into personal squabbles and the leaders exhausted all their energies in fratricidal strife" (Karis & Carter 1987, 363-364). In capturing this rivalry Jolobe says: "Xa limbi ndiyibone igweba nangophondo kuwayo umqotywa wamzuzu begazinye" (Sometimes I saw him raking at his yoke-mate, with his horns - his friend of a minute, his blood-brother). Jolobe puts the blame for this rivalry on the white man, who has enslaved the Africans and by so doing prepared the ground for this conflict. He writes: "Ubunzima bomsebenzi budal'ingxekwano" (The suffering under the yoke makes for bad blood).



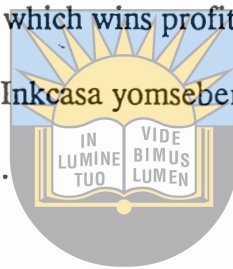
"Ime bhunxe kudinwa kungekho luvulwano. Yasitsho esikrakra isililo ibhonga" (Stockstill, tired, there was no sympathy. He bellowed notes of bitterness). The Africans' suffering evokes no sympathy from the oppressor, but when they give voice to this suffering, he relents momentarily, perhaps out of fear: "Kunyenysiswe kancinci ukuba iphefumle" (They loosened his halter a little to let him breathe). But soon the white man reverts to his policy of violence, as intimated in: "Kwabuya kwaqiniswa ibulawa umoya" (They tightened it again, snatching back his breath). This is yet another example that shows that the gains achieved through non-violent resistance are nothing more than tokenism.

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In the eighth and tenth stanzas the political suffering of Africans under the white man's regime is symbolised in physical pain. In the eighth stanza Jolobe says: "Ndijonge elundeni ndalibona libomvu kuthontsiza igazi umkhondo woxhathiso" (I looked at his hump, it was red, dripping blood, the mark of resistance). Commenting on these lines Mda (1979, 63) says: "This brings out the physical and spiritual torture inflicted upon the Africans. The

heavy yoke which has caused the swelling and red hue on the hump of the ox signifies, metaphorically speaking, the strokes or lashes of life dealt out to [Africans]." In the tenth stanza the physical pain which symbolizes political suffering is described in "... ikhefuza, igcuma" (... struggling for breath, in pain).

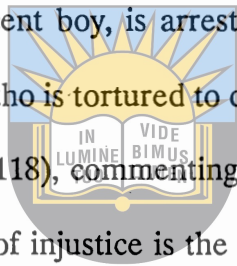
The eleventh stanza portrays the economic exploitation and the suffering this caused to Africans. Jolobe writes: "Ndiyibone inyuka iminqantsa, ithwele imithwalo enzima ixelenga. Imdaka kubila ingenisela omnye" (I saw him climb the steepest of roads. He carried heavy loads staggering - The mud of sweat which wins profit for another). Jolobe condemns this raping of African labour and says: "Inkcasa yomsebenzi yinxaxheba kuvuno" (The savour of working is a share in the harvest).



The twelfth and last stanza describes the condition into which Africans are driven by whites through violence. Jolobe writes: "Ndiyibonile ilambile ngaphantsi kwaloo mbuso. Iiso liinyembezi umxhel' ujacekile. Ibe ingasakwazi nokuchasa imbuna" (I saw him hungry with toil and sweat. Eyes all tears, spirit crushed. No longer able to resist. He was tame). Jolobe argues that the only hope left to Africans to liberate themselves from this bondage lies in violent action. This is intimated in "Ithemba yimigudu ezond' inkululeko". (Hope lies in action aimed at freedom).

In this poem Jolobe succinctly describes the acts of violence perpetrated by the white man on blacks during their first encounter and in their existence together. We have discussed some of these acts of violence in our preceding chapters. In this chapter we are going to concentrate only on those that are used to frustrate the aspirations of African nationalists.

African writers decry this form of violence by showing that those who are involved in it arrest, torture and kill innocent people. In Ngugi's Weep Not Child Jacobo conspires with Howlands to arrest Ngotho's sons to satisfy a private spite. Howlands, who apparently has experience in arresting Africans for technical offences, suggests that Jacobo should arrest them for curfew, tax or some other technical offence. Subsequent to this Kori and Njeri are arrested, allegedly for violating curfew regulations. Violating the curfew order was not a serious crime but Kori and Njeri are detained for this minor crime because Jacobo desires it to be so. Even when the fine for breaking the curfew is paid, only Njeri is released. In the same novel Njoroge, an innocent boy, is arrested and tortured to make him confess oaths he has never taken, and Ngotho is tortured to death by Howlands for a murder he has not committed. Nwankwo (1982, 118), commenting on the cases of injustice in this novel, says: "At the apex of these cases of injustice is the gradually pressing fact of the suffering of the innocent citizens".



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An innocent puppy is killed by humans in Ubulumko Bezinja. The narrator tells us that amongst the rebellious dogs are two puppies that do not understand what is taking place between dogs and humans. They have observed the struggle between the two sides but think that it is a kind of game. They join the race which is intended to taunt humans without fully comprehending the dangers involved. One of them is killed by merciless humans during this race. Portraying these puppies as young and immature is one way of suggesting their innocence.

There are many ways through which African writers suggest the innocence of some victims of this form of violence. Gitogo in Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat, for instance, is described as

a deaf mute whose only preoccupation in life is to provide food and shelter for his old and widowed mother. He is butchered whilst he hastens to the protection of his mother in one of the panic moments of the Emergency. The soldier who is responsible for his death feels no remorse, for to him "another Mau-Mau terrorist has been shot dead" (6). The pain suffered by the relatives of these innocent victims is vividly conveyed by the derangement of Gitogo's mother on hearing about the death of her son, her sole supporter in her widowhood.

Christianity is also used to suggest the innocence of some of the victims of this form of violence. This is based on the understanding that, if one is a Christian, it is axiomatic that one shuns politics and all acts of violence. That Christianity should never be adulterated by being mixed with politics is strongly inculcated by the white man in his converts, and yet when he is on his witch-hunt for terrorists, he does not take a belief in Jesus as enough evidence that a person is not a terrorist. In Ngugi's Weep Not Child we are introduced to a group of Christians going to a Christian gathering a few miles from Nairobi. Some are singing songs of praise to Jesus and others are discussing the saving power of Christ. All are clutching their Bibles and hymn books.

All of a sudden they find themselves surrounded by soldiers pointing machine-guns at them. One of the soldiers demands to see their documents. Two of them have left theirs at home. One of these is beaten so badly that he wets his trousers. As they beat him he pleads his innocence by constantly calling the name of Jesus. When Isaka, the other one who has left his documents at home, is accused of being a Mau Mau terrorist, he calmly says that Jesus had saved him and he could not exchange Jesus with Mau Mau. The singing about Jesus,

the clutching of Bibles and hymn books, the calling and confessing the name of Jesus are all intended to suggest the innocence of this group. In spite of all this Isaka is killed because the white soldier thinks that he is a Mau Mau. The very white man who continues to accuse the freedom fighters of killing "soft targets" is here described as killing a man who carries no weapons but a Bible and a hymn book.

African writers also portray those involved in this form of violence as sociopaths, fascists and sadists to show that this form of violence is criminal and diminishes man. They do this by graphically describing how these men torture and murder Africans. In Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat the people of Thabai are whipped and worked to death as a warning to other villages never to give food or any help to those fighting in the Forest. They are forced to dig a trench around their village. They work from sunrise to sunset with virtually no time to rest. Wambuku, Kihika's girl friend, who had refused to sleep with one of the homeguards, is beaten to death. Thereafter indiscriminate and incessant beating ensues. Old men, children and invalids who cannot work are made to sit around the trench to watch their wives and sons and daughters or mothers work and bear the whip. At the end of it all twenty-one men and women die of hunger, beating and sheer exhaustion. This punishment is meted out to them because Kihika, who has been arrested and hanged, happens to be from their village and they are therefore suspected of having given him food. The killing of twenty-one people merely because they are suspected of having given food to a person who is now dead vividly conveys the cruelty and vindictiveness of the colonial forces.

In Ubulumko Bezinja Siyongwana shows that the very demand that village people should not give food and help to their own sons and daughters who have gone to the forest for the

freedom of all, is outrageous. Sibi and Bambisela, who remain behind when other dogs flee to the forest after being outlawed, are killed by the master they have faithfully served. The reason for their death is that they have harboured "thieves" or "terrorists". It should be noted that the "thieves" or "terrorists" in question are their flesh and blood. When Kholisile confronts them with their offence, Sibi asks: "Nithetha ukuba oMthendevu abasenakuza na kuthi ngenxa yokuba bexabene nani ...? (133) (Do you mean to say that Mthendevu and others cannot pay us a visit because they have quarrelled with you ...?). Sensing that his answer to this question might expose his unfairness and deter the boys from executing his unjust and cruel judgement, Kholisile does not respond but simply urges the boys to go on with the killing.



Although he avoids the question, it is clear that he would like Sibi and Bambisela not only to shun these dogs but also to spy on them. Earlier on he has tried to flatter Bambisela into spying on Mthendevu and others. He says: "Ndiyazi uthembekile ngaphezu kukaSibi, kwaye uyeyona nja ndiyithanda gqitha ... Mhla uya kuze ubabone ke ubokuze ubaleke uze kundixelela" (121) (I know you are more trustworthy than Sibi, moreover you are my most beloved dog ... The day you see these dogs, you should quickly come and inform me). He sets Bambisela against these dogs knowing full well that he might be killed in the process. Hence he warns him never to go too close to them lest they kill him.

While Kholisile would not like his collaborator to be killed, Howlands in Weep Not Child sets blacks against blacks specifically to let them destroy one another. He derives a sordid satisfaction from seeing his wicked design working. The narrator comments: "Mr Howlands felt a certain gratifying pleasure. The machine he had set in motion was working. The

blacks were destroying the blacks" (97). Besides the satisfaction he derives from setting blacks against blacks, there are two other reasons why he indulges in such a wicked scheme. Firstly, he hopes that they will dissipate their energy in this senseless slaughter of one another so that the survivors will gladly accept the little crumbs that fall from the white man's table. Secondly, this would prove that the violence of the freedom fighters was not sparked by the righteous rage of people who had suffered for many years in bondage, but by the blind rage which is inherent in blacks. The exposure of this wicked design is intended to show that the white man is responsible for the brutal murders that are committed during what is currently known as "black on black violence".



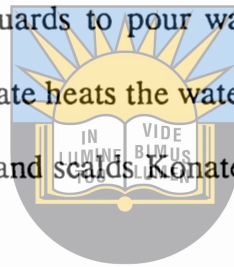
In some instances the colonial forces are described as maiming and killing Africans simply because of misplaced aggression. In Ubulumko Bezinja Kholisile, the terror of dogs, and other men suffer injury and defeat in a skirmish between them and dogs. They have gone to the forest where dogs live, and have attacked them for stealing their livestock. With the help of baboons, the dogs are able to drive them out of the forest, back to their territory bleeding, limping and defeated. They are so infuriated by this that they decide to kill every dog they come across in the village. Many of the dogs who have faithfully served their masters are maimed or killed. Some flee to the forest with three legs, one eye, one ear, etc. Worse still, when all this happens, there is not a single person who tries to protect his dogs. Instead they all express their gratitude to Kholisile and his group. This implies that the barbarity of colonial forces is condoned by the colonial civilians.

Many of the atrocities of which the colonial forces are guilty are committed in prisons and detention camps. In these places all sorts of methods are used to try to extort confession from prisoners and detainees. Enumerating some of the methods used by the white man and his collaborators on Gikuyu people in Kenya, Mandela says: "children are being burnt alive, women are raped, tortured, whipped and having boiling water poured on their breasts to force confessions from them that Jomo Kenyatta had administered the Mau Mau oath to them. Men are being castrated and shot dead" (Karis & Carter 1977, 114).

In Ngugi's Weep Not Child Njoroge, who is suspected of being a Mau Mau and of having a hand in the killing of Jacobo, is beaten and kicked by a white officer until he loses consciousness. When he regains it, he observes that his body is swollen all over. He is once more brought before his interrogators. Mr Howlands, who has been quiet all along, takes him by surprise and asks: "who murdered Jacobo?" (118). Njoroge is visibly shocked by this and in his shock he asks from his interrogators who has murdered him. The response is that he is the one who is going to tell them that. Whilst he still fumbles for an explanation, Howlands charges at him, growling: "I'll show you" (118). He holds Njoroge's private parts with a pair of pincers and presses tentatively, telling him that he will be castrated like his father.

Njoroge screams and collapses. It is an assertive desire to conquer and reduce Africans to submission that makes Howlands so brutish when eliciting confession from them. This desire makes him terrible to look at when he tortures Njoroge. The other officers are so humanly diminished by this type of violence that when Njoroge screams and collapses, they laugh derisively.

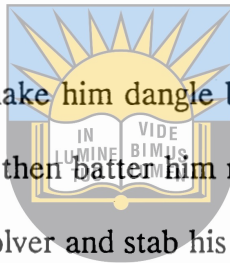
Bernadini in God's Bits of Wood designs another method of torturing his prisoners. He orders Salifou (one of the detainees) to dig a shallow pit about the size of a man's body in the hot sand. At the corners of this pit, pegs, on which a sheet of steel pierced with holes is to rest, are erected in such a way that they are about six inches high. Salifou is chained and put into this pit to test its effectiveness. When he is taken out he is "pissing blood" (231). Konate, the secretary of the local union at Bamako, is arrested, chained and put into this pit just so that Bernadini can hear him screaming. The heat and the sun's rays cannot make Konate scream. Bernadini then brags: "I've screwed tougher ones than you, you know" and orders one of the guards to pour water over the steel plate, which is now extremely hot (232). The steel plate heats the water to boiling-point. The water then falls drop by drop through the holes, and scalds Konate's skin.



Ousmane further condemns Bernadini's cruelty by showing how he kicks and tramples a praying man. He finds Fa Keita praying and orders to him to continue praying. Whenever Fa Keita kneels down to pray he kicks him headfirst into nearby strands of barbed wire. Fa Keita does not give up trying until his hands and body are badly torn by the steel pointed wires. When the old man finally manages to stretch out his hands, and his forehead rests on the sand, Bernadini puts his foot on his neck and mockingly says: "just look at how he prays, he is a real saint this one" (233).

It is no wonder that Tekwane says that the likes of Bernadini are "like rags from which all the water of humanity had been squeezed" (In the Fog of the Seasons' End, 170-171). What makes him arrive at such a conclusion is the savagery with which he is tortured by his white captors. After being arrested he is insulted and threatened by the white officers, who want

him to co-operate with them. One says: "shit ... we'll make you piss blood, you baboon". The Major, who initially tries to persuade him to co-operate with them, soon loses his hypocritical benignity and threatens him, saying: "Tell me what I want to know or I'll have your balls out" (6). When threats and insults fail to break him, they drag him to the top of the steps that lead to a basement room and kick him so that he rolls over and over down the stone steps. He cannot break his fall because his wrists are handcuffed and so he rolls down to the bottom of the steps. One of his tormentors "unzipped his fly and urinated off the steps into the prisoner's face" (7).



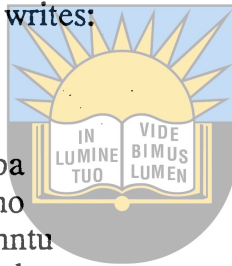
From there they take him and make him dangle by tying his handcuffed wrists above his head to a staple in the wall, and then batter him mercilessly with their fists. They strike his shins with the barrel of a revolver and stab his legs with a skinning knife, but Tekwane still refuses to talk. This so infuriates them that they manhandle him, cover him with a sack and run electrodes against his bare legs and genitals, saying: "We are at war and your life really means nothing to us". One of them even goes to the extent of saying: "if you die we can always say you committed suicide. After talking" (174) (emphasis mine). Commenting on the underlined remark, Shava (1989, 40) says: "The torturer's remark is ... more enlightening in that it exposes the suspicious manner in which real life political figures such as Steve Biko and several others are believed to have died".

The perpetrators of this type of violence are thus portrayed as villains devoid of all noble human attributes. In the end they are humiliated, disgraced and defeated, as seen in Chapter Three. African writers thus go to considerable lengths to demonstrate that "violence to protect and preserve an unjust, oppressive social order is criminal and

diminishes man" (Ngugi 1982, 28). The second form of violence is "violence in order to change an intolerable, unjust social order". African writers who delineate this form of violence attempt to show that it is not savagery, that it works, and that it unifies and purifies.

African writers maintain that it is not savagery, firstly because it aims at changing an intolerable, unjust social order. In a poem entitled "Imbumb' olutsha" (The Youth League) Jolobe explains that the African youths involve themselves in the struggle for liberation because they love freedom. He writes:

Okhala beli duli
Amadela - konwaba
Afikelwe ngumbono
Wenkululeko yomntu
Kanye ngexesha lethu.



(The vedettes of this army
The despisers of happiness
Have been overtaken by a vision
of freedom of man
exactly at our age.)

(Translated by Sirayi 1985, 193)

In describing the power of this vision of freedom Jolobe says:

Okwalanywe lulutsha
Akusayi kucima
Ngumlilo ethanjeni
Ophemba intliziyo
Ivuthe ngeAfrica.

(That which has been seen by the youths
Will never fade away
It is a fire in the bone
That kindles the heart
So that it burns about Africa.)

(Translated by Sirayi 1985, 195).

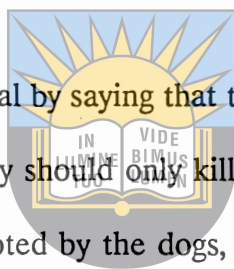
General R., one of the freedom fighters in A Grain of Wheat, in rhetorical language shows that Africans have resorted to violence because they hate injustice. He says:

You ask why we fought, why we lived in the forest with wild beasts. You ask why we killed and spilt blood. The white man went in cars. He lived in a big house. His children went to school. But who tilled the soil on which grew coffee, tea, pyrethrum and sisal? Who dug roads and paid taxes? The white man lived on our land. He ate what we grew and cooked. And even crumbs from the table he threw to his dogs. That is why we went into the forest. (A Grain of Wheat, 191-192)

Secondly, this form of violence is not indiscriminate; but is directed at the enemies of the black man's freedom. Mugo, a civilian, fears for his life when Kihika, a freedom fighter, enters his hut at night; but Kihika calms him down by saying: "we don't kill just anybody ... we are not murderers. We are not hangmen like Robson (a white man) killing men and women without cause or purpose. We only hit back." (A Grain of Wheat, 166) (emphasis mine). Many African writers justify the violence of the freedom fighters as a way of hitting back, a mode of self-defence.

In Ubulumko Bezinja the dogs bite Kholisile because he keeps on beating and taunting them. They bite the people from Njica ceremony because they have killed a puppy there. They steal from people because they have been used by them. Justifying the dogs' decision to go and steal sheep that belong to human beings, Xhonti (an old dog) says: "uKholisile lowa wandisebenzisa gqitha engekabikho uSibi. Ndifuna ukuba kukhe kubekho into endiyifumana sisulu kuye" (101) (Kholisile used me greatly before the birth of Sibi. I want to get something gratis from him in return).

Initially the dogs only take one sheep at a time, and so the loss incurred by human beings is not much. Kholisile confirms this when he reveals to Bambisela that after many years of stealing they have stolen only twenty sheep in Ntakana. It is only when men set fire to their forest that they decide to escalate the violence. In a heated meeting after this Tawuse proposes that they should steal sheep in large numbers as a form of retaliation. He says: "Masibulale yonke into efuyiweyo esidibene nayo ... Abantu baza kulihlawula igazi lezinja abaliphalazileyo" (137) (Let us kill everything reared by people that we come across ... Men are going to pay for spilling the blood of dogs).



Bekelentloko modifies this proposal by saying that they should no longer spare the lives of human beings. But even then they should only kill those who block their way. Although this proposal is unanimously adopted by the dogs, no mention is made of anyone who is killed by them, right to the end of the book. In fact when negotiations for peace start, the dogs enumerate all the dogs that have been killed by human beings, but Bhaku's former master cannot name a single person who has been killed by dogs. He only recalls people who have been bitten by dogs. Mthendevu dismisses this by saying biting and killing are not the same thing.

Mandela mentions four forms of violence: sabotage, guerrilla warfare, terrorism and open revolution (Karis & Carter 1977, 647). Of the four the dogs opt for sabotage. They adopt this form hoping that by sabotaging the economy they will succeed in forcing the people to redress their grievances without any loss of life. Considering the fact that Siyongwana is a self-confessed member of the ANC (Siyongwana 1988), it is understandable that these dogs who represent ANC freedom fighters should opt for sabotage. The novel itself was first

published in 1962, approximately a year after the leaders of ANC had decided to abandon its policy of non-violence and embark on sabotage, hoping that "whites could still be persuaded to change their policies by means short of revolutionary overthrow" (Karis & Carter 1977, 647).

If the freedom fighters do not choose sabotage, they opt for guerrilla warfare and avoid terrorism. The difference between guerrilla warfare and terrorism is that whilst a guerrilla soldier does not kill indiscriminately, "the aim of the terrorist is to strike fear into the people by killing indiscriminately" (Kaunda 1982, 157). The freedom fighters in Ngugi's novels Weep Not Child and A Grain of Wheat kill people in retaliation. In the former novel Boro kills Howlands because he has killed many Africans, raped black women and killed his father, Ngotho. Robson in the latter is killed by Kihika because he has persecuted and killed many Africans.

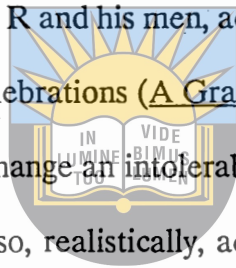


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Some blacks also become victims of this violence. As we have pointed out earlier, the white man brandishes this black on black violence as yet another proof that the violence of the freedom fighters is savagery. In explaining why freedom fighters kill other blacks General R. says: "He who is not on our side, was against us. That is why we killed our black brothers. Because inside they were white men" (A Grain of Wheat, 192). Jacobo in Weep Not Child, for instance, is killed because he and Howlands murder many Africans. Jackson is hacked to death with pangas because he collaborates with Robson in tarnishing the image of the struggle for Uhuru (A Grain of Wheat, 191).

Although freedom fighters have just reasons for killing the enemies of the black man's

freedom, this does not blunt their sense of right and wrong. They still know that killing, raping etc. are wrong. Ramatoulaye in God's Bits of Wood, for instance, feels no pride, no arrogance after killing the ram of El Hadji (a collaborator). There are tears in Kihika's voice when he whispers to Mugo that he has killed Robson (A Grain of Wheat, 165). Boro in Weep Not Child feels no triumph after killing Howlands. He becomes exultant only when he gives himself up to the police, which means that his sense of guilt is appeased only when he knows that he is going to be punished for his crime. Koinandu is for ever haunted by the ghost of Dr. Lynd, the woman he raped (A Grain of Wheat, 185). The ghost of Jackson, who was killed by General R and his men, accuses him of murder when he is about to make a speech during Uhuru celebrations (A Grain of Wheat, 191). All these examples suggest that "violence in order to change an intolerable, unjust social order is not savagery" (Ngugi 1982, 28), although they also, realistically, acknowledge that those who perpetrate violence are seldom guiltless.



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Those who oppose the use of violence to achieve political ends argue that "nothing can be achieved by violence that cannot be achieved as effectively by non-violent disobedience" (Lively 1984, 408). It is as if Jordan in a poem entitled "You tell me to sit quiet", which was originally written in Xhosa and translated into English by the author himself, is responding to this view which is allied to pacifism. He writes:

You tell me to sit quiet when robbed of my manhood,
With nowhere to live and nought to call my own,
Now coming, now going, wandering and waiting,
No life in my home save the drone of the beetle!

Go tell the worker bees,
True guards of their hive

Not to sting the rash hunter
Who grabs at their combs.

You tell me to sit quiet when robbed of my children
All offered as spoils to the rich of the land
To be hungered of body, retarded of mind,
And drained of all spirit of freedom and worth.

Go tell the mother hen
Who sits on her brood
Not to peck at the mongrel
That sniffs at her young ...

(Poems From Black Africa, 111-112)

Amongst the people who propagate this view are the colonialists whose statues "perched on colonial soil do not cease from proclaiming one and the same thing. We are here by the force of bayonets" Fanon (1968, 84). Paradoxically these colonialists espouse this argument after closing all other channels through which Africans can bring about any genuine political change. Miller disagrees with this notion and argues that "violence changes the state in a way that civil disobedience ... does not" (Lively 1984, 408). African writers concur with Miller and this is evidenced in their writings where they show violence succeeding where non-violence has failed.

In Ubulumko Bezinja, when all non-violent means fail to bring about change, the dogs resort to violence. They start by snatching meat from men's dishes. Kholisile accuses them of being riotous. They counter by saying they are demanding their rightful share. He then asks: "yiyona ndlela ningasifumana ngayo leyo yokusifuna ngenkani?" (Is demanding your share by force the only way through which you can get it?). The dogs retort: "Ngesisithini? kudala sithetha nani ningasihoyi (45) (What else can we do? we tried to negotiate with you for a long time but you simply disregarded us). It is after the dogs have embarked on

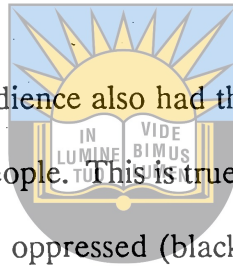
violence that for the first time in their lives they get enough meat. It dawns on them that if they do not use violence, they will get nothing from men. Hence Tawuse exhorts others: "ukuba asithanga sisebenzise amandla ethu asisayi kuzuza nto" (66) (If we do not use our strength, we will never get anything).

Their dealings with men have taught them a lesson which Africans in many colonies were forced to learn and that is "the colonialist understands nothing but force" (Fanon 1968, 84). It is only after the dogs have destroyed men's crops and emptied their kraals that their grievances are redressed. Men who initially refused to negotiate with dogs now initiate negotiations with them. Kholisile, who initiated the process of outlawing dogs, now regrets that he took such a step. Ngugi in his novel *A Grain of Wheat* also shows that violence works wonders. Kihika initially preaches that Africans in Kenya will get their independence through civil disobedience. He cites the case of India as an example to follow. He argues that in India "men and women and children threw themselves in front of moving trains and were run over. Blood flowed like water in that country. The bomb could not kill blood, red blood of people, crying out to be free". Whilst he is saying this a question keeps on nagging in his mind: "God! How many times must fatherless children howl, widowed women cry on this earth before this tyrant shall learn?" (77).

When Jomo Kenyatta and other leaders are arrested, he becomes convinced that "colonialism only loosens its hold when the knife is at its throat" (Fanon 1968, 61). He and a group of young men flee to the forest to engage in armed struggle against the white man. He now argues: "not words, not even miracles could make Pharoah let the children of Israel go. But at midnight the Lord smote all first born in the land of Egypt ... And the following

day he let them go ... That is our aim. Strike terror in the heart of the oppressor" (A Grain of Wheat, 166). It is after they have done this that they get their independence.

Furthermore, violence has the unique power of drawing the attention of the world to the suffering of the oppressed people. Baboons in Ubulumko Bezinja come to the assistance of dogs only when they see that dogs and men are locked together in a fierce struggle. In God's Bits of Wood the strikers receive help from French unions when they decide to use all means at their disposal, including violence, to reach their goals.

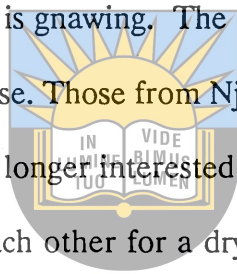


One may argue that civil disobedience also had the power to draw the world's attention to the suffering of the oppressed people. This is true, but in the case of civil disobedience, the casualties are on the side of the oppressed (blacks) and it is easy for ruthless tyrannies to hide this from the world, and "what the world does not know, it does not get worked up about" (Kaunda 1982, 25). But in the case of armed struggle, casualties are on both sides and therefore difficult to hide.

One of the methods used by colonialists in subjugating Africans is to compartmentalize the colonial world. Its aim is to divide and rule Africans. They doggedly follow this method in almost all their dealings with Africans. Thus Africans are confined in ethnic homelands, ethnic universities, ethnic compartments in the cities. This system has such tragic consequences for Africans that Mphahlele comments: "faction fights must be a source of amusement to some white supreme chief of the Bantu who decides to force people into ethnic compartments" (Down Second Avenue, 203). They also try to reduce Africans to a subhuman status. Walker (1984, 6) observes that "one crucial element in the effort to justify

Europe's brutal treatment of the African and alienation of his land was the need to "thingify" him, to make him an object of utilitarianism, rendering him cultureless, unnatural and ahistorical". Whilst colonialism divides and downgrades Africans, violence unifies and purifies them.

In his novel Ubulumko Bezinja Siyongwana shows how violence unifies. On the first day of the ceremony at Njica a fierce fight occurs between dogs from Ntakana and those from Njica. The fight starts when Bekelentloko, a dog from Ntakana, attacks a dog from Njica in the hope of getting the bone it is gnawing. The dogs from Njica and from Ntakana join the battle without knowing its cause. Those from Njica are defeated, but Bekelentloko is so tired at the end of it that he is no longer interested in the bone for which he has so fiercely fought. These dogs nearly kill each other for a dry bone and the irony of it all is that the victor does not get it either.



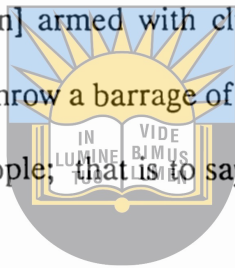
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When, however, violence erupts between Kholisile and the dogs from Ntakana, they set aside their petty quarrels and attack their common enemy. Those from Njica do not even know why Kholisile is bitten but they also bite him. Violence unifies them by galvanizing passive sympathizers like Sibi into activity. In the heat of the fight she also sinks her fangs and grabs Kholisile by the shoulder, holding on for a long time.

When this battle is over, the dogs are so united that they jointly embark on a strategy for snatching meat from women. Their plan is as follows: two dogs will go and create chaos near the fireplace by pretending to be fighting. Others will bite any person who is near the pots. In that confusion Tawuse and Bhaku will carry away one pot of meat and two dogs

from Njica will run away with the other one. The plan is accurately executed, although other dogs decide to push over the remaining pots to satisfy a private grudge. At a good distance from the place of ceremony the dogs share the spoils and all are satisfied. Now that there is plenty of meat, the dogs peacefully share it amongst themselves whereas on the previous day the same dogs nearly killed each other over one piece of dry bone.

In Ousmane's God's Bits of Wood men at Thies do not consult women before they decide on a strike, but when violence erupts among the strikers, they "like a band of Amazons ... came to the rescue [of their men] armed with clubs, with iron bars and bottles" (22). Children also join the battle and throw a barrage of pebbles at the soldiers. This shows that "armed struggle mobilizes the people; that is to say, it throws them in one way and in one direction" (Fanon 1968, 93).



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Violence also unites people by demolishing tribalism. In the same novel by Ousmane we are told that Africans at Dakar have always looked down upon those from Dahomey. When they are hit by the repercussions of the strike, they are helped by the people they have despised. No wonder Deume, one victim of tribalism, exclaims: "this strike has taught us a lot of things" (39). In Chapter Two we observed that colonialism makes Africans adore all that is European and abhor all that is African; revere the white man and reject themselves. Violence emancipates and purifies them from this slave or colonial mentality.

Armed struggle rids Bakayoko of this slave mentality and throughout Ousmane's novel he interacts with whites as equals. In one meeting between employers and strikers Dejean, the white director, threatens him, saying: "Be careful about what you say - your words may

cause you trouble." Bakayoko retorts: "Monsieur we are here for a discussion among equals and not to listen to your threats" (180). His great composure makes even his arch rival Beaugosse admire him. Dejean, who still believes that he has the "right to an absolute authority over beings whose colour made them not subordinates with whom one could discuss anything, but men of another inferior condition, fit only for unqualified obedience", becomes so enraged by his self-assurance that he slaps him across the face (177-178). Bakayoko, who is emancipated from the inferiority complex which breeds a morbid fear of whites in some blacks, jumps to his feet and grabs the director by his throat and will not release him until he is half dead with fear and pain.



In the place of fear violence breeds courage. It brings forth men "who shall not tremble or run away before the sword" (A Grain of Wheat, 166). In La Guma's novel Tekwane boldly says to his captors: "You are going to torture me, maybe kill me. But that is the only way you and your people can rule us. You shoot and kill and torture because you cannot rule in any other way a people who reject you" (In the Fog of the Seasons' End, 6). He is tortured to death, but he dies without co-operating with the white men. Beukes in the same novel is shot and badly wounded by police but still fulfils the assignment of arranging for three young men to cross the border to undergo military training. In Ngugi's novel Kihika is arrested and "the neck of a bottle is wedged into his body through the anus as the white people ... [try] to wrest the secrets of the forest from him ... But he would not speak" (A Grain of Wheat, 17).

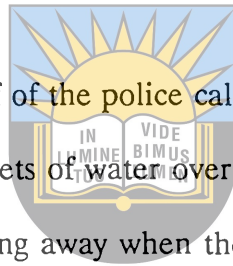
If violence brings forth a new breed of men, it also brings forth a new breed of women (God's Bits of Wood, 34). It is sheer desperation that makes women resort to violence. This

desperation spurs Ramatoulaye, an otherwise gentle and docile woman, into violence. In an attempt to force strikers back to work the white man has made life at Dakar a nightmare for Africans. Ramatoulaye goes to beg Hadrame, a shopkeeper, to give her rice on credit. He refuses because the white man has threatened with closure all shopkeepers who give food on credit to the families of the strikers. She then goes to her brother, El Hadji Mabigue, to ask him to act as a guarantor for her to get a hundred pounds of rice from Hadrame. Mabigue, whose chest is decorated with medals he received for collaborating with the white man, refuses, saying that their problems could be solved if they could drive their husbands back to work. Frustrated and infuriated by this, she gives him a piece of her mind and threatens to kill his ram if it ever enters her house again.



Other women are also forced by desperation to embark on violence. Left alone by their husbands, who go out early in the mornings to attend meetings and only come back in the evening, women are forced to protect themselves from police harassment. On hearing that Ramatoulaye has killed Vendredi, Mabigue runs to the police to lay a charge against her. Subsequent to this, the police arrive at her house to arrest her and take the ram's carcass. The women refuse them entry to her house and when the police threaten to use violence, a battle ensues. Women armed with bottles filled with sand attack them like tigresses and the police are forced to beat a hasty retreat. Again, when the police come back at night, on horseback, the women give them the same medicine. This time they also use fire to frighten the horses, but unfortunately one of their wooden hovels catches fire and in no time the whole street is blazing. Finally Ramatoulaye agrees to go to the police station to prevent further calamity.

Desperation makes women resort to violence, but in turn violence strengthens their characters and frees them from the timidity which has come to be associated with women. Violence and the victory it brings produce a dramatic metamorphosis in women. Women who under normal circumstances are afraid to go out at night now patrol the streets of Dakar at night, armed with bottles filled with sand. The narrator says: "still caught up in the excitement of the fight and a little drunk with victory, they accosted every man who appeared in their path" (109). When Ramatoulaye agrees to go with the police, the whole bevy of women, risking arrest, follow them to the station.



When they arrive there, the chief of the police calls for firemen to come and use hoses on them. They arrive and unleash jets of water over the crowd and Houdia M'baye is killed in the process. Instead of running away when they see her body lying on the ground, as women would normally do, they charge at the firemen, who then flee in panic. Violence transforms Ramatoulaye so drastically that when she confronts the police the other women "scarcely recognised the woman beside them as the Ramatoulaye they had always known ..." (74). Violence has made her character so strong that even when N'Dakarou, another white man's collaborator, secures her release on condition that she asks her brother's pardon, she refuses to fulfil this condition. She tells them point blank that if [she] had to do what she did to Vendridi again, she would do it gladly. Like many freedom fighters she refuses to obtain her release by licking her enemy's boots.

Transformed in this way by violence, women become reliable warriors of the struggle. They carry out important missions such as carrying guns, grenades etc. for their male counterparts. Wambui in Ngugi's novel A Grain of Wheat carries secrets from the villages to the forest

and back to the villages and towns. We are told of how she outwits a Gikuyu policeman and narrowly escapes arrest in one of her daring missions. She is taking a pistol to Nawasha. She has tied it to her thigh near the groin. On her way she is caught in one of the sporadic police searches. Her turn to be searched comes and the Gikuyu policeman starts searching from her chest and under her armpits. When he is about to touch the place where the pistol is hidden she screams and pretends to be indignant that he dares to touch her private parts. Whilst rebuking him for touching his mother's private parts just because the white man says he should do so, she acts as if she is lifting her dress so that he should see her nakedness. The policeman looks away in embarrassment and orders her to pass.



For women the impact of their involvement in armed struggle is double-edged. It rids them of the weakness traditionally attributed to their sex and also sets them free from the age-old "prejudice and taboos imposed on them by feudal patriarchal society" (Panaf 1975, 128). In Ousmane's novel *Lahbib* writes a letter to Bakayoko telling him that the women who have marched to Dakar are back. He tells him that they are giving their men all sorts of trouble as they want to run things themselves. He suggests that men will have to reckon with them in whatever [they] do in future.

In fact some men, in recognition of the role of women in the struggle, are quick to disregard feudal customs and grant women equal status. In a public meeting just before the march to Dakar, Penda is given a chance to speak. This is the "first time in living memory that a woman had spoken in public in Thies". In Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* Wambui is made a judge in Mugo's trial in recognition of the role she has played in the struggle. But some of these feudal customs are so resilient that they will "only really disappear when Africa [is]

reborn and free" (God's Bits of Wood, 222).

Violence makes the militants men of faith and integrity. The knowledge that they can die at any time drives them closer to their God and ancestors. Koinandu in Ngugi's novel explains to Wambui that in the forest they sacrificed pigs and ate the meat afterwards. He tells her that they prayed twice a day and an extra time before any expedition to wrest arms from European farms. Whenever they prayed, they used to stand up facing Mount Kenya and say:

Mwenanyanga we pray that you may protect our hideouts.
Mwenanyanga we pray that you may hold a soft cloud over us.
Mwenanyanga we pray that you may defend us behind and front
from our enemies. Mwenanyanga we pray that you may give us
courage in our hearts. Thai thathaiya Ngai Thaa.

After praying they would sing:

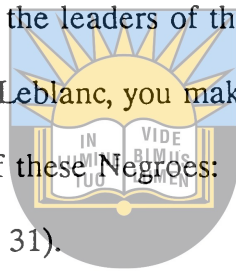
We shall never rest
Without land *Together in Excellence*
Without Freedom true
Kenya is a country of black people.
(A Grain of Wheat, 20)

It is worth noting that the reconciliation of traditional religion and Christianity, which proved to be difficult to achieve in times of peace, as observed in Chapter Two, is now in times of war realised without any fuss. In the forest the freedom fighters offer sacrifices and pray facing Mount Kenya in a traditional fashion, while Kihika also reads and derives inspiration from his Bible, without experiencing any conflict.

Amongst other things it is their strong faith in God and ancestors that makes them endure the hardships that are characteristic of armed struggle. In La Guma's novel, Tekwane is

able to endure torture courageously because the ghosts of his gallant ancestors seem to insulate him from pain. Whenever he wants to give in to his captors, his ancestors appear in his mind dressed in traditional attire for war. It is as if he hears the rushing sound of their tramping feet, the rattling of their spears and shields. This tremendous spectacle gives him courage to endure unto death.

The militants are also men of integrity, "men who cannot be bought nor sold" (White 1952, 57). In Ousmane's novel *Leblanc*, a liberal white, enrages his white friends by referring to Doudou, Lahbib and Bakayoko, the leaders of the strike, as honest and trustworthy men. Déjean barks at him: "Honest! Leblanc, you make me laugh: you're just a youngster out here. You can buy every one of these Negroes: Do you hear me? Any of them, and all of them!" (*God's Bits of Wood*, 31).



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In line with Déjean's stereotype about blacks, Isnard approaches Doudou with a bribe. He promises him promotion, three million francs, ten-minute breaks for tea and many other things. He pats him on the back and flatters him, saying that he likes blacks. None of these approaches impresses Doudou, who replies that Bakayoko, their leader, has told them that anyone who says he likes Negroes is a liar for "a black man isn't an object to be liked or disliked like an orange or a pear or a piece of furniture" (149). Like most of his white counterparts, who believe that blacks refuse bribes not because they have strong moral fibre but because of fear, Isnard then promises to transfer him and make him a supervisor in another town if he so wishes. The only condition for all these "favours" is that he should influence other strikers to go back to work. Doudou refuses point blank to be bought, and tells him that he should go "and tell Déjean that whenever he wants to talk about men going

back to work the committee will be at his disposition" (150).

Indeed "the 'thing' which has been colonized becomes man during the process by which it frees itself" (Fanon 1968, 37). Whilst running a race during Uhuru celebrations, Koinandu recalls that "the fight for freedom had given him a purpose. It had made him man" (A Grain of Wheat, 185). The oppressors themselves are finally forced to agree that Africans are fully human, hence they give them all their human rights.

When dogs have successfully crippled the economy of men in Ubulumko Bezinja, a meeting is organised to discuss what can be done to resolve the crisis. Jongani proposes that a delegation should be sent to the dogs to ask for forgiveness. Kholisile wants to know whether the dogs would not take advantage of them if they went and humbled themselves before them. Jongani replies that when one goes to a man and asks for forgiveness, healthy relations are restored. Kholisile retorts: "Asithethi ngabantu apha mfondini sithetha ngezinja" (148) (We are not talking about men here, man! we are talking about dogs). Jongani argues that the mere fact that these dogs have agitated for human rights means that they think like men and are therefore not different from them.

Ultimately the meeting unanimously agrees that the dogs should henceforth be treated as human beings. A delegation is sent to persuade them to come back. For the first time dogs and men meet and talk as equals. When the dogs have satisfied themselves that all their demands will be met, they agree to go back. Some dogs, however, like Bekelentloko, are very reluctant to go back as they cannot believe that cruel and bigoted people like Kholisile can ever treat dogs (blacks) as equals. These are finally won over and after Mthendevu,

their leader, has strongly warned them never again to bow down to man's domination, all the dogs jubilantly go back to their former homes. Kholisile welcomes them with a false smile for he still harbours a grudge against them. Some people can never be redeemed from their racial bigotry.

Lastly, this form of violence purges all those who are involved in it of their moral blemishes. Penda in Ousmane's novel is referred to as a whore by other woman because she goes out with different men. She is enlisted by Lahbib to help distribute food to families of strikers. She becomes so active in the strike that she is made the leader of the women who march from Thies to Dakar. Her unflinching courage and leadership make this march a great success. Unfortunately she is killed by soldiers on the way to Dakar. Her death is mourned by many, including Bakayoko. In a smear campaign N'Deye Fouti tells Bakayoko that Penda was a whore; to her surprise he replies: "You will probably never be worth as much as Penda, and I know what she was worth. She was a real friend and she lost her life because of it" (God's Bits of Wood, 221).

Violence has so purged her of her moral blemishes, which, of course, are brought about by oppression and exploitation, that even after knowing that she was a whore Bakayoko still thinks he would have made her his second wife. Lahbib is so impressed by her heroism that he feels that something must be done to commemorate her valiant contribution to the struggle. All those who die for the liberation of their people will ever be remembered. Kihika dies in line with his conviction that "a few shall die that many shall live" (A Grain of Wheat, 167). Those who are left behind vow that they "cannot let Kihika's name die. He will be in our memory and history will carry his name to our children in years to come"

(A Grain of Wheat, 22).

Let us conclude this chapter by recalling the words of John Bright, who in 1866 declared:

I have never said a word in favour of force. All I have said has been against it but I am at liberty to warn those in authority that justice long delayed, or long continued injustice provokes the employment of force to obtain redress. It is in the order of nature and therefore of the Supreme that this is so, and all preaching to the contrary is of no avail ...

I may say too that Force, to prevent freedom and to deny rights, is not more moral than force to gain freedom and secure rights" (Mboya 1963, 52).




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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Given the enormous impact of colonialism on the history and culture of the entire African continent, it is hardly surprising that there has been considerable unanimity in the literary responses of African writers, whatever their country of origin or whether they have written in their own or the colonizer's language. Exposure to colonization and racism, indeed, has been so integral to the experience of being black, that even writers of the African diaspora with several generations of acculturation to non-African soil behind them seem to participate in the expression of a single cultural and historical experience. As Cook puts it,



Accepting the old definition of literature as the expression of a society, we cannot be surprised that Africans and persons of African descent, exposed to racism in places as distant as Mali, Martinique, Mississippi or Manhattan, Pretoria, Pittsburgh or Paris, should sometimes voice their protest in somewhat similar terms (Brown 1973, 119).

The aim of this study has been to identify and examine prominent parallel themes and preoccupations in a range of representative African literary texts. Both the selection of texts and the commentary on them has been motivated by a set of evaluative criteria which combine aesthetic considerations with the political imperative of decolonization. In Chapter 2 it was noted that the range of appropriate Xhosa prose fictional texts was extremely limited in comparison with the rich profusion of African novels available in European

languages. A resultant imbalance in the critical treatment of the material has therefore been unavoidable, although I have sought to redress it to some extent by covering also some poems and a play written in Xhosa.

In some ways the conclusion is inescapable that, despite several fine achievements, the modern Xhosa literary tradition is a stunted one. There are three major, related reasons for this. In the first place, several writers who might have written in Xhosa have chosen instead to write in English. Again, there are several reasons why this should have been the case. First, English - with its long tradition of written literature - has presented itself as the 'natural' literary language. Most of the books South African writers have read have been in English, and most of the literary techniques and devices which they might have sought to emulate (or rebel against) have been encountered through the medium of English. The extent to which writing is the logical response in the first instance to other writing rather than to immediate experience should not be underestimated, nor should the challenge of adapting a predominantly spoken language to the demands of foreign literary genres.

Secondly, the mastery of English (the prestige language of the conqueror) was, in the first half of this century especially, an important way in which a black writer might demonstrate his equality with the white man. This was an important cultural dimension of the then dominant reformist or liberal political ideology, which assumed that acceptance by whites depended only on demonstration of equal or superior cultural and intellectual achievement. In the apartheid era, to this reason for writing in English was added the desire to repudiate

the ghetto-ization of "separate development", especially the Bantustan and Bantu Education policies. To write in one's mother tongue seemed to many tantamount to embracing the ethnic identity imposed on them by the Verwoerdian dream. The affirmative revaluation of African culture and tradition only really commenced with the impact of Black Consciousness ideology in the 1970s. Thirdly, English became a vital lifeline to the outside world for writers intent on protesting about conditions in South Africa, and it was black writers of the 1950s and beyond who gave readers around the world a true picture of what life was like on the wrong side of the colour bar in South Africa.



The second main reason for the relatively retarded development of modern African-language literature in South Africa has been institutional: "missionaries and publishing houses often rejected literature which they regarded as inimical to the cause of the government and the church (Siray 1989, 335). Pre-publication censorship or "gatekeeping" by South Africa publishers has been extremely effective in ensuring that, for the most part, only the most tame, politically neutral or collaboratorist works have been published. Unlike their counterparts who write in English, African language authors have had to rely upon a mere handful of publishers specialising in educational and devotional material. Now that there are African-controlled publishers like Skotaville and COSAW and attitudes towards mother-tongue literature are being revised, the auspices are good for a renaissance of Xhosa writing. If the experience of Ngugi since he began writing in Gikuyu and Swahili is anything to go by, there is an avid demand amongst the people for literature which speaks to them about their own experience in their own language.

Finally, there is the more general factor of state censorship. Government proscription of oppositional literature in South Africa has been notorious: in 1972 Mphahlele could maintain that "writers who must publish inside the country are liable to be forced either into silence or superficiality" by the Publications and Entertainments Act of 1963 and a series of other laws used to muzzle writers (Mphahlele 1972, 203). Those who wrote at all did so "in spite of the punitive sanction of censorship, the arbitrary threat of banning and detention, as well as the indirect pressure of a social, political and economic system inimical to the realisation and free expression of cultural aspirations (Cornwell 1979, 3).



Jordan's Inqumbo Yeminyanya, provides a good example of the sort of interference which writing in African languages has encountered at the missionary presses. The book was nearly rejected because the missionaries felt that he made evil triumph over good. By this they meant that in the conflict between traditional (African) and modern (European) values, he vindicated the upholders of tradition and thus sanctioned it. Jordan fought bravely to save his book and finally convinced Bennie (an influential white man) of the novel's artistic integrity. Shepherd, the Manager of Lovedale Press at that time grudgingly, had to concede that it should be published. He wrote Jordan a letter saying:

We would have preferred to see the story end in a different fashion. There is a suggestion of the triumph of evil over good. I understand, however that you have fully discussed this matter with Mr Bennie and that you do not see your way, from an artistic point of view, to alter the end.
(MS 338/86/40)

Besides showing the hurdles that a Xhosa novel has to surmount, the case of Jordan's novel

also demonstrates how a novel of outstanding quality could be disqualified on the recommendation of an ill-informed, ill-trained and irresponsible reader of manuscripts. Sirayi (MS 89/25/33) points out that the above assessment of Jordan's novel was not Shepherd's but was the view of a certain Oldjohn, who "in spite of the fact that he was barely suited for the work of assessing a manuscript ... did not even give himself enough time to go through the manuscript". Had he been a more qualified and responsible man, he would have seen that Jordan's concern was not the vindication of any side but the validation of his premise, which, in the words of Qangule (1974, 35) is: "failure to compromise leads to destruction".



Zwelinzima and Thembeke (champions of western values) do die towards the end of the narrative but their death is caused by their failure to compromise and not by the cause for which they stand. This point is emphasised by the naming of the son of Mphuthumi and Nomvuyo (modernists with some understanding and tact) Zwelethemba, a "name compounded out of the names of Zwelinzima and Thembeke" with the intention "to carry them gloriously into the future age of promise" (Sirayi MS 89/25/33; Riordan 1961, 56).

We also owe the existence of the few novels with political themes to the ingenuity of our writers, who, when confronted by censorship, concealed their message through the use of certain literary devices. Mqhayi and Siyongwana are good examples of such authors. Sirayi (1989, 336) avers, "Mqhayi's and Siyongwana's novels escaped banning orders mainly because the censorship agencies did not understand their contents, since they were couched

in allegorical terms". This fictional strategy did not disguise their biting protest for long, and when the censors discovered that they aimed a broadside at the ruling white minority, they suppressed them. Thus Mqhayi's uSamson, a novel which would have helped us a great deal in this study, is impossible to obtain because it is out of print. Kuse (1977, 14) explains why this novel ceased publication and circulation:

His [Mqhayi's] countrymen consumed it (uSamson) avidly. However, no new editions were printed by Lovedale Press in spite of the demand. The columns of Imvo in the first decade of the twentieth century make it clear that missionary publishing houses determined not to promote those ideas of Mqhayi which registered his observations that political interests of the Xhosa were being betrayed by white Christians and white men of the liberal persuasion in collusion with the white racists.

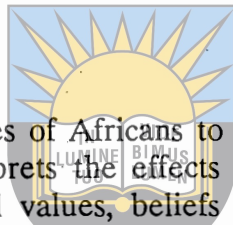
His other novel, Ityala Lamawele, published in 1914, was abridged in 1930. Sirayi (1989, 337) maintains that "the criterion followed in the abridgement of the book testifies to the fact that it was a form of censorship. Qangule (1979, 261) points out that this work of abridgement was done by an ill-qualified person. He says:

Conscientious readers of Mqhayi's works must surely regret the practice of abridging some of his published works. The "editor" of these already slim volumes seems to respond to directions from ill-informed sources. There is no doubt in our minds that the "editor" himself is not a writer and that his knowledge of literary science is very limited. (emphasis mine)

Siyongwana's Ubulumko Bezinja, which was used extensively in Chapter Four of this study, was for some time out of circulation because "the agencies of the National Government realized that the novel focusses on the condemnation of the present apartheid system"

(Sirayi 1989, 337). These facts show that the paucity of novels that articulate 'sensitive' themes in African language fiction does not invalidate our hypothesis but attests to the harsh, repressive circumstances under which such fiction is written. The publication of poems like Jolobe's "The Making of a Servant" can perhaps be attributed to the fact that poetry is a genre which gives writers a greater latitude for disguising "the shrillness of their protest on political issues" (Mtuze 1991, 15).

Our examination of the parallel themes and preoccupations has revealed that African literature:



depicts the struggles of Africans to affirm their humanity; it analyses and interprets the effects of the destruction of the indigenous cultural values, beliefs and practices of African people who have been ravaged by capitalism and racism; it seeks to combat the movement of the dispossessed into the pale shadow of alienation. It depicts a struggle to change the nature of those social institutions, modes of thought, and cultural practices that impede human and societal growth". (Walker 1984, 4)

In Chapter Two I discussed how the African writers portray colonization as "a tragic story of military suppression, political oppression, economic exploitation and social degradation of a people" (Pheko 1972, 1). I explained that this view is contrary to the one propagated by colonial commentators, who would like us believe that colonization with its evil concomitants was the only way through which Western Christian civilization could be brought to the benighted Africans. This distortion of history has made Pheko (1972, 33) say: "European settlers never brought civilization to Azania (South Africa) they brought

syphilisation..... These writers who claim that the Boers brought civilization with them, equate aggression and invasion by settlers against the indigenous people with Western Christian civilization. The truth is that the torch-bearers of this civilization had reverted to barbarism".

In Chapter Three I analysed how African writers expose and counteract the assaults of capitalism and racism on African dignity and personality through the portrayal of African images. I observed that the landscape is portrayed through images that describe the hideous living conditions into which Africans are driven by capitalism and racism. The image of the white man is depicted to exercise the inferiority complex in Africans who believe that whites are a superior race. The physical appearance of the white settler is deliberately ridiculed to confirm that the white man's physical attributes do not necessarily make him a better human being, while his moral frailty and turpitude is mercilessly exposed and condemned.



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The depiction of the black man achieves two things:- First, it warns the readers of the consequences of docility. Whilst African writers condemn collaboration they nevertheless suggest some ways through which its protagonists can be redeemed. Secondly, it gives the readers examples to emulate in the portrayal of the image of African heroes. The portrayal of the image of the African hero is, in the words of Sobukhwe, a journey

down the corridor of time ... renewing our acquaintance with heroes of Africa's past - those men and women who nourished the tree of African freedom and independence with their blood; those great Sons and Daughters of Africa who died in order

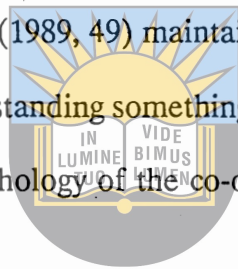
that we may be free in the land of our birth. [This is intended to make the readers] draw inspiration from heroes of Thaba Bosiu, Isandlwana, Sandile's Kop, Keiskamma Hoek, Blood River, and numerous other battlefields where our forefathers fell before the bullets of the foreign invader ... to draw inspiration from Sons and Daughters of Afrika who gave their all to the cause and were physically broken in the struggle. (Pheko 1984, 6)

It is clear that most African writers are deliberately and consistently didactic (i.e. they want to drive home moral, political and social lessons). In the works of some authors the message is overtly didactic whilst in the fiction of others it is subtly engineered. About the former group Mphahlele (1983, 14) says: "the dramatization of a message is the major concern. The intention to make literature is either ignored or subdued. I mean literature in the sense in which we speak of a process of tradition and refinement, a memorable act of language with transcendental possibilities". Ousmane's portrayal of docile Africans in God's Bits of Wood is a good example of this category of writers. His aim in depicting these characters is simply to "identify the symbol of oppression, mobilise the mob, kill off the symbol identified" (Mackenzie 1990, 18).

Diara is one example of such characters. We know virtually nothing about this character except that he is accused of scabbing when other Africans go on strike. He is the sort of character of whom Ndebele has said: This is so because "all of these symbols [such as Diara] appear in most of our writings as finished products often without personal history" (1984, 44). Worse still, Ousmane tells us that there is no apparent reason why Diara decides on this course of action. During his trial he once or twice asks himself "why did I

do it?" Ousmane goes on to tell us that this question disturbs Diara for he cannot provide an answer. Diara is therefore a "flat" character stripped of individuality and psychological significance (Mackenzie 1990, 17).

Since it is only "round people who are fit to perform tragically for any length of time and can move us to any feelings except humour and appropriateness", our condemnation of Diara must remain very superficial. For the image of a docile African to leave an indelible mark on the minds of the readers the writer should make them understand something about his or her motivations. Ndebele (1989, 49) maintains that "the artist should help the reader condemn the stooge while understanding something of his motivations. That way the reader learns something about the psychology of the co-opted".



In novels where characters such as Diara are used the didactic tone eclipses or deforms all other features of the narrative because it is too heavy-handed, obvious or blunt. Such characters are usually unidimensional and therefore easy to describe and manipulate. The writer who uses them in articulating his message does not need to exert his artistic ingenuity in handling them. They offer an easy medium for the blatant propagation of a message. Ntuli's (1984, 34) comment on verse where there is no balance between didacticism and aesthetics is also applicable to novels that suffer from this flaw. He maintains that "such verse is likely to rouse the emotions because of its topicality and bluntness, but may not last as a work of art. One great danger of its becoming extinct lies in the fact that when conditions change the verse may become irrelevant".

It is the portrayal of characters that are fully developed understandable human beings which helps other features of the fiction receive due attention and achieve due importance. In such a case the message takes the form of revelation. The author who uses these multidimensional characters simply arouses awareness in the reader of the situation he is depicting, leaving it to the reader to draw his or her own conclusion. Ngugi, Mphahlele and Jordan are just a few examples of writers who portray docile Africans in the round.

Karanja in Ngugi's novel A Grain of Wheat is fully developed in the sense that Ngugi gives us his personal and psychological history. Ngugi has to rely on his artistic resourcefulness to succeed in this mammoth task of unfolding the personal history of Karanja before the eyes of the reader. One of the devices he uses is a series of flashbacks. Through this device and many others he gives us the following reasons for Karanja's decision to collaborate with the white man: First, he thinks that the white man is supreme and sees no point in opposing that which is divinely willed (vide an interview with Ngugi dated 18 November 1966 at Leeds University). He sells his soul to the white man because he thinks that he will provide him with security forever, only to be disappointed when Thompson, who to him is a symbol of white power, confirms the rumour that he is vacating his post and will be replaced by a black man. Secondly, he decides to align himself with the white man because he hopes to win Mumbi. Wright (1973, 114) says: "Driven by his rejected love for Mumbi he compromises too much In fact he compromises his manhood and self respect because of love for a woman". And thirdly, it is also because of the vision of universal selfishness he once had that he decides to join the home guard to save his own life. As Palmer (1979,

29) says: "It is not only Karanja's disillusionment with love but also this vision of universal selfishness, callousness, preoccupation with self-preservation that shapes his determination to himself for the struggle of life".

While giving us the reasons for Karanja's collaboration Ngugi also shows us the consequences of such a course of action. Through balancing the reasons and consequences he leaves it to the reader to draw his or her own conclusion. Zwelinzima in Jordan's Ingqumbo Yeminyanya is so complex that it is difficult to see him as a quisling because he has both good and bad qualities. One has to look carefully at the reforms he introduces to see that he has been co-opted through acculturation. For instance, he supports the delimitation of stock, a strategy initiated by the white man to impoverish the Africans. He also argues in favour of the extermination of goats, which is a calculated move of the white man to deliver a death blow to African culture, for goats are used in many African rituals.



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Although we condemn Zwelinzima for these "reforms", our knowledge that he has been cut off from his roots (i.e. taken away from an African setting) and placed in the custody of missionaries and Christian converts at a very tender age, makes us sympathize with him. Furthermore, there are times when he doubts the wisdom of championing western values. For instance, there is a marked change of attitude in Zwelinzima after an eye-opening discussion between himself and an educated Thembu chief who has more diplomacy than he. The portrayal of Zwelinzima makes us believe that he is a real person whose weaknesses and strengths we share.

Some of these characters are shown to be docile and yet ironically possess saving features. Mphahlele's Mfukeri in "The Master of Doornvlei" is a good example of such characters. Portraying a character in this way is very demanding on the part of the author for, whilst he convinces us that this character is indeed a quisling, he should also hint at the possibility of his redemption. Mphahlele, for instance, shows us that, although Mfukeri is docile, he is still offended by the white man's superior airs.

When Sarel Britz, his white master, orders him to make sure that his bull Donker does not mix with the cows because to him it is of inferior stock, he becomes so indignant that there is a detectable difference in his tone from that which he usually adopts when acceding to his master's orders. Mphahlele comments: "He [Britz] was sensitive enough to catch the tone of the last 'baas' when Mfukeri left: it was such an indifferent echo of what 'baas' sounded like years before" (*The Unbroken Song*, 80). Mfukeri's rebellious spirit also becomes observable in the manner in which he stands before his master. In capturing this Mphahlele says: "The farmer thought how overwhelming his servant was when he stood before him. Something in him quaked" (80). Thus the change in his character at the end of the story does not take us by surprise.

These details show that writers like Jordan, Mphahlele and Ngugi are artists and not propagandists, for in the words of (Ndebele 1989,47):

The propagandist generally aims at immediate action. His intentions are entirely practical. The artist, on the other hand, although desiring action, often with as much passion as the

propagandist, can never be entirely free from the rules of irony. Irony is the literary manifestation of the principle of contradiction. Its fundamental law, for the literary arts in particular, is that everything involving human society is in a constant state of flux; that the dialectic between appearance and reality in the conduct of human affairs is always operative and constantly problematic, and that consequently, in the representation of human reality, nothing can be taken for granted.

We expect to see the artistry of the writer not only in the portrayal of docile Africans but also in the depiction of African heroes. The portrayal of heroes like Moshoeshoe, Hintsa, Dingaan encourages "a sense of historical continuity linking present struggles with past glories, [it] stiffens resolve, instils pride and enhances social consciousness" (Mackenzie 1990, 15). For us to be able to identify ourselves with them they should be portrayed as "fully human, capable of heroism as well as self doubt, nobility as well as selfishness, generosity as well as meanness" (Mackenzie 1990, 8). When African writers portray these heroes in this way they not only provide us with examples to emulate but also refute the stereotyped portraits of these heroes in the white man's history books and literature. Thus Shaka will be portrayed as a blood-thirsty savage in white man's fiction and as a military genius with a tragic flaw in African literature.

Ngugi's portrayal of the heroes of the third phase (i.e. the phase of anti-colonial politics and nationalism) is but one example of how a writer can lead us carefully to accept that man is neither angel nor beast and thus give us a completely different picture of the freedom fighters from what whites have left behind in their writings. We discussed some of these

heroes in Chapter Four. There are some African writers who aim at the same goal as Ngugi but portray their heroes as flat caricatures instead of round characters. Ousmane's portrayal of Bakayoko is a good example of this kind of writing. Bakayoko is depicted as a fearless man whose dealings with other people are so mechanical that even his friends doubt if he has a heart (God's Bits of Wood, 226). While such writers succeed in showing that freedom fighters are heroes and not villains, their fiction is unlikely to outlive the political situation which it addresses and endure as a work of art.

The struggle to change the nature of social institutions, modes of thought and cultural practices that impede human and societal growth, as delineated by African writers, is discussed in Chapter Four. It was observed that according to African writers this struggle evolved from non-violent to violent forms, and the consensus amongst the writers covered is that violence is in the context of decolonization both necessary and justified.



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Since the topic we have chosen invites a multitude of comparisons and the area of our study is potentially so wide, we cannot claim that this study is exhaustive. It is an attempt to open up yet another avenue of exploration in African language fiction. Let it be noted that the existence of parallel themes and preoccupations is not a phenomenon found only in the literatures of African countries. It is also found in African and Caribbean literatures; in African and black American literatures. In fact one may go further and claim that there are parallel themes and preoccupations in the literatures of the whole world where there has been colonial and/or racial oppression. To track these down and account for them would

be a fascinating and rewarding exercise, but one which is beyond the scope of this study.

As a final word I can say that the discrepancy in the production of novels with significant political themes between African language fiction and African English literature poses a challenge to Xhosa writers. As I have argued, the superficiality and timorousness evident in their works can be laid at the door of the systems of publication and censorship which have retarded the development of African language literatures in South Africa. But now that the Nationalist government is at long last promising to abolish the laws that have muzzled them for so long, they should brace themselves for the battle to bridge the gap. I also hope that publishers will facilitate this, by *inter alia* employing readers who are qualified and progressive to scrutinize their manuscripts. The English-African writers who through their books have persistently waged war against injustice and oppression should continue to do so even in independent Africa, for "writers and artists are the last people who should be taken in by the assertion that 'we've never had it so good'" (Adereth 1968, 20). They should not let themselves "sink to the degenerate level of Afrikaans writers in South Africa who have always censored themselves and not dared to challenge the government because it has Calvinistic Boer origins, like themselves, because they are of a tribe" (Mphahlele 1972, 196). In their battle against social evils they should bear in mind that:

Moral ideology tends to ossify complex social problems into symbols which are perceived as finished forms of good or evil, instead of leading us towards important and necessary insights into social processes leading to those finished forms. Thus showing no more than surfaces, writings influenced by such an ideology tend to inform without involving readers in a truly transforming experience (Ndebele 1984, 44).

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