

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SOME XHOSA

DRAMAS

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at highlighting some crucial aspects of Xhosa drama. These aspects are of great significance for the understanding of Xhosa drama. It also aims to historicize and contextualize examinations of traditional Xhosa drama and modern Xhosa drama. The study is divided into seven chapters.

The first chapter introduces the aim, the scope, the theories and the methods of the study. Chapter 2 establishes the existence of Xhosa traditional drama or theatre. The relation between ritual and drama, and the forces that disabled traditional South African drama are examined. Chapter 3 analyses Xhosa traditional drama. The social functions of traditional drama are also considered. Three kinds of contexts for Xhosa modern drama are investigated in Chapter 4. These contexts are the social, the geographical and the historical. Chapter 5 presents a detailed examination of characterisation in Xhosa modern drama, which examination has led to the conclusion that characters do not represent free-floating individuals, but rather individuals reflecting different social beliefs of African communities. The structural dynamics of Xhosa modern drama is the focus of Chapter 6. The structural pattern of African drama, and of Xhosa modern drama in particular, is cyclic in nature.

The last chapter, Chapter 7, summarizes the findings of the study, and predicts the future of Xhosa drama in general.

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This thesis is dedicated to my loving wife, Lindi, and our two children, Inathi and Luvo. My parents Jolinkomo and Dlomo, my younger brother Mfe, and his wife Sphoki. My sisters Mafikso and Fikile.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

AIM OF THE STUDY

By analysing the various aspects Xhosa drama the study hopes to prove the existence, in South Africa, of African traditional drama or theatre, in particular Xhosa traditional drama or theatre, and to place Xhosa modern drama in context. It is emphasized that the study hopes to demonstrate, by means of a detailed discussion, that African traditional drama was performed during the Southern African precolonial era.

There are five crucial reasons why a study of this nature is necessary:

- * to expose the harm done, in South Africa, to African traditional culture by imperialism with its artificial boundaries, its alien legal system, and its imported cultural institutions. African drama, for example, "was not performed in special buildings set aside for the purpose. It could take place anywhere where there was an empty space. The missionaries in their proselytising zeal saw many of these traditions as works of the devil. They had to be fought before the bible could hold sway in the hearts of the natives. The colonial administration also collaborated. Any gathering of the natives needed a license. Both the missionaries and the colonial administration used the school system to destroy the concept of the 'empty space' among the people by trying to capture and confine it in

government-supervised urban community halls, schoolhalls, church-buildings, and in actual theatre buildings with the proscenium stage. Activities of the boys' youth organisation (**umtshotsho**) had been prohibited by the local Tribal Authority ..." (Ngugi 1987:37 & McAllister 1991:140).

- * to highlight the cultural imperialist's misunderstanding of, and ignorance concerning, African traditional culture in South Africa: "When the white people first settled in Africa the majority of them regarded the life of the black people with indifference, inconsequence and disdain; and the few who showed any interest in the ways of black people generally misunderstood and misinterpreted them" (Leshoai, 1981:241).
- * to disclose the ignorance, even in academic circles, concerning African traditional drama or theatre in South Africa, and Xhosa traditional drama or theatre in particular: some scholars of the African language have argued that "so far we cannot say modern drama in African languages had a traditional forerunner."¹
- * to encourage South African scholars of drama to acknowledge the existence of African traditional drama or theatre in South Africa.
- * to place the analysis of Xhosa modern drama or theatre within the relevant South African context.

¹ (MODDRO-N only Study Guide 1987:55).

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

For some time South African scholars of indigenous drama or theatre paid little attention to the relation between African traditional and modern drama or theatre. The emphasis was on African modern drama, which was regarded as a branch of literature that had developed out of European literature. As Götrick (1984:16) remarks: "In the beginning, lack of indigenous African theatre was taken for granted, hence modern drama and theatre were analysed as parts of the production of the colonial masters." However, it is important to note that Jafta, in her M.A. thesis, surveys both traditional and modern drama or theatre. She does not assume that traditional African drama has been obliterated. She assumes that both traditional and modern drama have been influenced by Eurocentric criticism. Conversely, some critics, evaluate modern Xhosa drama or theatre unfairly because of their use of foreign literary standards in judging Xhosa drama, and their lack of understanding of the socio-cultural aspects that have shaped African drama, and because of their Eurocentric obsession.

Furthermore their notion is guided by* "the Aristotelien model." It has been maintained, for example, that some playwrights, especially Tamsanqa and Mtywaku, seem to have been ignorant of the principles governing plot construction of a play and have paid little or no attention to the three unities, namely, time, place and action. The problem with such an assertion, is that it is judging African creative works by Western tradition regardless of the different cultural backgrounds. It seems to be chained to the sentimental tastes of the Western cultural values. Amuta (1989:17) rightly points out that

* See page 16.

the danger posed by such critics arises from the fact that, owing to a certain lack of proper political education and commitment, they may in fact be unaware of whose values they are promoting or espousing.

It is against such a background that this study will proceed:

Chapter 2 will investigate and examine the existence, in South Africa, of traditional African drama or theatre, Xhosa traditional drama or theatre in particular. It will consider the relation between ritual and drama. This chapter will also describe and examine the forces that disabled or disrupted African traditional drama.

Chapter 3 will analyse Xhosa traditional drama and deal with the social functions of traditional drama.

Chapter 4 will investigate three kinds of contexts: the social, geographical and historical. This analysis is based on Xhosa modern drama.

Chapter 5 will present a detailed interpretation and evaluation of characterisation in Xhosa modern drama.

Chapter 6 discusses the structural dynamics of Xhosa modern drama.

The last chapter, chapter 7, will summarize the main observations, and outline a few predictions regarding African drama - Xhosa drama in particular - in South Africa.

The critical analysis of dramatic concepts, such as context, characterisation, and structure, will be based on observations of the following Xhosa modern dramas: *Buzani kubawo* (1958) by W.K. Tamsanqa; *Mamfene* (1962) by L.M. Mbulawa; *Umkhonto kaTshiwo* (1964) by M.A.P. Ngani; *Inene Nasi Isibhozo* (1965) by A. Mtingane; *Amaza* (1974) by Z.S. Qangule; *UNgodongwana* (1976) by P.M. Ntloko. *UFeziwe Okanye Inkohlakalo* (1982) by D.T. Mtywaku and *Ingalo* (1982) by K.S. Bongela.

THEORIES AND METHODS USED IN THE STUDY

The approach employed in this study follows that suggested by Onoge in his discussion of Marxism and African literature (Gugelberger 1985:60-61):

Marxist criticism also goes beyond a formal and content analysis of artistic works, to a consideration of the very institutional processes of art creation and art-criticism. Marxist critics are concerned to struggle for a democratization of the structures of artistic production and criticism ... The Marxist critics' dream is for a community where all can be artists and art-appreciators... . Characterization, which is crucial to literature, has been an especial focus. The Marxist concern for characterization goes beyond a mere descriptive reproduction of the surface material into a critique of the class representations. Marxist critics have not seen the imagined characters simply as free-floating individuals. On the contrary, the characters who populate a writer's fictional universe also belong to a social class.

Such views dismiss the notion of art-for-art's-sake criticism or the reduction of literature to a formalistic entity. Thus in this study the notion of context may

be taken to mean social, historical, political and economic formations of the community. Creative works reflect either the writer's socio-political position or the community's socio-cultural condition. This suggests that the researcher should consider all social and economic formations as he examines African traditional and modern drama or theatre in South Africa-literary context, character portrayal and structural dynamics.

In an attempt to give the study an African Marxist theoretical basis, the theories of the following critics will be employed: Onoge (Gugelberger 1985), Amuta (1989), Ngara (1990), and Kunene (his handouts on "Theory of African Literature")².

These African theories are propounded by African critics for the purpose of examining African literature through African eyes. Adopting these theories means that the vitality of African literature will never be overlooked and its context never neglected. These theories are also to be used to analyse Xhosa literature.

Onoge's theory is a revolutionary theory which is meant to liberate African literature. However, it is also concerned with literary "formal structures". In this study "formal structure" means characterisation, plot construction, and other related literary aspects. As noted above, Onoge maintains that characterisation is crucial to literature and has been an especial focus. He goes on to say that Marxism goes beyond the mere description of characters as if they were free-floating individuals. To a large extent characters, according to Onoge's theory, represent a particular social class or community.

² E. Kezilahabi, *African Philosophy and the Problem of Literary Interpretation* 1985:138.

Amuta maintains that Marxist criticism can competently handle all literary events from oral tales to science fiction (Amuta 1989:61). He implies earlier (p. 9) that the form of literature derives from its characterisation, language or diction, setting or context, etc. In this regard Amuta's theory can be utilized in any analysis of literary aspects. He maintains that form is the totality of images, symbols, structures, or other significations (Amuta 1989:86).

Ngara's theory is also relevant to this study because it liberates African literature and places literature in its context:

While Marxism originated in Europe historically, it is a truly revolutionary theory which is well suited to the task of liberating African literature and criticism from Eurocentricism ... it also emphasizes the absolute necessity for the critic to analyse any literature in relation to its historical context. A Marxist analysis of African literature cannot but emphasize the historical and social conditions which have given rise to African literature (Ngara 1990:7).

It goes without saying that Ngara's theory is relevant for all genres in African literature, especially those that were ignored, disrupted and discarded by missionaries, administrative officers, and conservative or traditional intellectuals.

Kunene's theory, as modified by Kezilahabi, is cyclical. According to Kezilahabi, Kunene's analysis of the African concept of time and space is based on African oral narratives. Kunene considers the journey motif on three levels: physical movement, psychological movement, which leads to intellectual movement, and narrative movement which moves along with the plot (Kezilahabi 1985:138). Kunene also propounds the idea of the return of

the hero, which is based on the following sub-types: a false return, no intention of return, a thwarted return, and an implied return (Kunene as cited by Kezilahabi 1985:139).

In terms of Kunene's theory the African concept of time and space, which is based on African oral narratives, is different from the European concept of time and space: African time is cyclical while European time is linear. The African concept of time and space is concerned with structural dynamics, that is, how the characters are related to one another, the relationship between the dead and the living. Kunene's theory will be applied and illustrated in Chapter 6.

Taken together, the foregoing theories may be regarded as the African Marxist approach to literature and African structuralism. They are relevant for this study.

The data for this study was obtained from libraries. In addition the writer interviewed various ordinary Xhosa people, who come from widely-scattered Xhosa communities, and with whom I had illuminating and inspiring discussions concerning the existence of traditional drama in South Africa: among others, F. Hobongwana of Kwanobuhle, Uitenhage; T. Helesi of Alice, Melani village; T.A. Ndungane, who is involved in the Xhosa dictionary project at the University of Fort Hare, Alice; and E.N. Sirayi of Mbono village, Lusikisiki.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that this study is a preliminary effort, not only because it cannot close the gaps pointed out in the introduction and illustrated

in the study as a whole, but because a study of this nature is new, particularly as it historicizes and contextualizes examinations of certain aspects of Xhosa drama. Although I have been enthused by these gaps, there have been academic limitations that have prevented me from expanding my examination of Xhosa traditional and modern drama. It is hoped, therefore that this study will prepare the way for further research.

CHAPTER 2

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL DRAMA OR THEATRE IN SOUTH AFRICA

For decades foreign missionaries, teachers and administrative officers argued that there was no African traditional drama as Europeans understood drama; there was merely dancing, singing, story-telling and drumming, all of which were of a dramatic nature. These claims have been contested by a number of scholars of drama, particularly African scholars. As a result of such objections certain African societies, such as Nigeria, Kenya and Ghana, were recognised as having traditional drama (Owomoyela 1985:29-33, & Ngugi 1987:34-67). However, certain scholars continue to claim that in Africa, African societies, such as the Xhosa, Zulu, Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, Venda, Tsonga, Tswana and Swazi, have religious ceremonies and festivities that are "dramatic" but which do not constitute "drama". It is thus still maintained that African traditional drama does not exist in South Africa.

This chapter will examine the controversy concerning the existence of traditional drama or theatre in South Africa, with special reference to Xhosa traditional drama or theatre. The problems surrounding certain literary critical concepts and terminology, such as universalism, theatre or drama, and art, which have contributed to the notion that African societies in South Africa are without traditional drama or theatre, will also be examined. Discussion will also focus on the dichotomy between ritual and drama, and on the development of drama from ritual. Finally, the problems of perspective will be addressed.

THE EXISTENCE OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL DRAMA OR THEATRE IN SOUTH AFRICA

In 1932 certain missionaries, teachers and administrative officers concluded that there was no drama in Africa. This conclusion is reported by Kamlongera (1986:16):

In 1932 the Village Drama Section of the British Drama League held a conference, "attended by missionaries, teachers and administrative officers from all parts of Africa" which arrived at the following conclusion on Traditional Drama in Africa: that no drama, as such, was so far known to exist among the raw natives, but that all dancing, singing, story-telling and drumming was intensely dramatic ...

Finnegan (1978:516-617) writes in a similar vein:

... there is no tradition in Africa of artistic performances which include all the elements which might be demanded in a strict definition of drama ... though there may be no 'plays' in the quite Western sense, these indigenous artistic forms nevertheless possess some of the elements we associate with drama.

Such statements can be attributed to the fact that the foreign missionaries, teachers, administrative officers and scholars were using various criteria and values to judge something they did not understand. Such claims are used as tools in what may be seen as the colonial strategy to destroy the dramatic tradition of indigenous African people and to replace it with European drama, without the consent of the community. Furthermore, it becomes clear, if one investigates the definitions of drama used in their assessments, their claims were based on arrogance and ignorance: "After all, the interest shown by

these 'missionaries, teachers, and administrative officers' in African performances was not really for 'study' purposes. In most cases it was only incidental to their other duties" (Kamlongera 1986:16).

And, as Graham-White (1974:14) avers:

... most observers of traditional performances in Africa who wrote about them have, unfortunately, had no interest in drama. To complicate matters, Europeans were quick to label much that they saw "dramatic". ... The casual use of the adjective "dramatic" has led to a lack of discrimination between types of performance, even in scholarly discussions.

Such scholars of drama realized that missionaries, teachers and administrative officers, as well as scholars who were opposed to the notion of the existence of African indigenous drama during the precolonial period, were destructive and misleading. To a very large extent missionaries, teachers and administrative officers misled many people, including African scholars. Kamlongera (1986:16) also criticizes certain Africans, newly-educated because they wanted to be equal to the "masters" who had colonised them:

No decent African with an average intelligence and liberal training will brook a description of what an African play does look like, or should look like, when that description takes it for granted that in Africa everything is still of the Stone Age ... The Drama League (should) collect from the African himself themes and information which fairly represent him in his state of development instead of seeking information about a 'Primitive man'.

Whereas there were some who were misled by missionaries, who had very little understanding of African indigenous cultures, and based their assessment on Western theories and standards which are alien to African art, there are some

critics who do, however, advance the notion of the existence of some seeds of indigenous drama during the precolonial period. As Götrick (1984:11) points out:

During the first half of the 60s, almost all the critics were Westerners ... [who] contributed immensely to further knowledge of the dramas. They applied purely literary and content analysis, though. Initially the African critics used the same type of critique, but in no time opposition to the Western classification and valuations arose. In their dissertations, Joel A. Adedeji and Oyin Ogunba analyse as drama, performing arts not earlier considered as theatre.

And Edebiri (1983:139) observes: "it is pertinent to recall that drama featured prominently in the cultural life of preliterate African society. Even today it remains a favourite artistic activity among people where literacy is not yet universal."

Comments such as the last two quoted have led to the recognition that some African societies, other than South African societies, do have traditional drama. Scholars of drama in South Africa, however, are still grappling with the missionary influence which retards rather than develops. It is worth noting that traditional drama in Africa was to a very large extent destroyed by missionaries who never attempted to find out whether the African had his own type of theatre. They indoctrinated the African so that he denied his own tradition and adopted theatre in the Western sense. This indoctrination affected many Africans, including preachers and the elite class. These groups of Africans have come to imitate the culture of others and to reject their own cultural tradition. They have been assimilated by Western culture: "Missionaries' attitudes, moreover, have in many areas been adopted by the Africans

themselves ... Native preachers have been even more violent enemies of their people's arts than the Europeans" (Graham-White 1974:10).

It seems, therefore, that certain scholars of drama have expressed the belief that African traditional drama did exist before white settlement in Africa.

PROBLEMS OF CONCEPTS AND TERMINOLOGY

The question arises as to why certain scholars still maintain that African traditional drama never existed in South Africa. To answer this question the problems surrounding certain concepts and terminology, such as universalism, theatre or drama, and art, should be addressed. I shall focus on Xhosa traditional drama.

According to Götrick (1984:9) "Every culture develops its own system and terminology that are used as a basis for the analysis of specific experiences". Let us first consider the concept "universalism". European literary criticism employs concepts and terminologies that claim to be of universal applicability, but when they are used with reference to cultures other than the European they may have different connotations or meanings. European experiences should be described and appreciated in the European sense and African experiences in the African sense, so as to avoid isolating the experiences from their cultural contexts. What is regarded as art in Europe may not be regarded as art in Africa, since art is conceived differently in different cultures because of their different cultural practices and beliefs. The need to understand these cultural differences should not be overlooked. The European concept of drama, as adopted by colonial critics, has been used destructively to undermine

African drama. Xhosa drama, in particular, does not have all the features of drama as demanded by a strictly European definition of drama.

According to Achebe (Amuta 1989:20) the word "universal" is synonymous with the narrow, self-serving parochialism of Europe. Definitions of concepts should emerge from the local culture; they should not be imposed or imported. Africans should explore the origins of their cultural practices and should embark on self-discovery as people of cultural origins different from those of the people of Europe. They should not be instructed about their culture by Europeans operating from their own cultural platform. Responding to this vision of African self-discovery Mutloatse says:

We are involved in and consumed by an exciting experimental art form that I can only call, to coin a phrase, 'proemdra': Prose, Poem and Drama in one! ... We are going to pee, spit and shit on literary convention before we are through, we are going to experiment and probe and not give a damn what critics have to say. Because we are in search of our true selves - undergoing self-discovery as a people. We are not going to be told how to re-live our feelings, pains and aspirations by anybody who speaks from the platform of his own rickety culture... (Mutloatse 1981:5)

Having discussed some of the problems surrounding the term "universalism", and before I proceed to discuss two other concepts, namely, drama or theatre, and art, I shall quickly try to establish the meaning of the term "traditional". It is used to denote a phenomenon which has been able to develop uninterruptedly at its own pace and which has remained unaffected by elements incompatible with its own needs and laws. Consequently, being traditional does not imply stagnation. Borrowing from other ethnic groups can

occur, without this resulting in the phenomenon becoming less traditional (see Götrick 1984:12).

This study uses the concepts "drama" and "theatre" interchangeably. As Götrick points out (1984:14), these terms are used almost synonymously. They are usually defined as an action presented through role-playing before an audience. Both terms are characterised by imitation. However, in some African dramas or theatres there is no role-playing, since the performers neither imitate nor represent something or somebody else. They are simply what they are.

Drama is a European concept that was first discussed by Aristotle. Its usage with reference to African literature must be considered within the context of the social and economic formations of Africans. The concept of drama needs to be grafted on African culture by each generation in accordance with the experience and philosophy of life of Africans. It is worth noting that Aristotle based his concept of drama primarily on performances that took place in the Greek society of his time. African dramatists cite him today as if he had meant his observations, deductions, interpretations and definitions to be universally applicable without their being contextualized.

According to Götrick (1984:14) the concept of "drama", to be made applicable to African conditions, does not necessarily need a new definition. What is needed for the correct use of the European definition is that Westerners should become aware of the criteria which African critics are using. These criteria come from the material conditions which inform African culture and

which must be considered when Aristotle's definition of drama is applied to African drama.

It is difficult to define concepts. Boulton (1953:1) argues that "the things that are most interesting and worth having are impossible to define". Jafta (1978:3) has also recently said that "it is difficult to define drama as if it were a concrete object with a definite shape." Nevertheless it has certain distinctive features that identify it as an art and, in a simple definition, she perceives "drama as an art that involves imitation". Though I agree with Jafta, I shall try, by referring to definitions by Götrick, Schipper, Graham-White and Dhlomo, to arrive at a more comprehensive and functional definition of African drama.

Götrick (1984:14) defines drama as: "...a text, a scenario or any other plan, transmitted in writing or otherwise, depicting an action or situation meant to be presented through role-playing to an audience..."

This could be said to be a "popular definition", meaning a definition which covers unwritten drama which was part of culture in the past, as well as unwritten and written drama in modern life. In other words, Götrick's definition refers to oral drama as well as literary drama written by an author. Götrick states categorically that her definition of drama does not differ in any essential way from definitions common in the West (Götrick 1984:14).

Schipper (1982:11-12) describes traditional African drama as a total event in which all those present take part whether by narrating or making music, by clapping in rhythm or by dancing or singing refrains. Throughout the performance there are favourable or unfavourable reactions, the spectators

functioning as immediate critics. Every one is closely involved in the performance. The narrator is usually poet, singer, narrator, and actor at the same time. He is an actor because he interprets the different roles with voice and gesture. Then there is the active role that the public plays. The dancing, music, song have a communal character and consist of a dialogue between two groups or between individuals and a group. Graham-White (1974:2) defines traditional African drama as that which was being performed before the colonial era, and which in many cases still is being performed. It is of course in the vernacular, is not written down, and is typically based upon the social organizations of the village (usually performed by a special society or age-group, often at a festival of some kind). Dhlomo (1977:3-6) writes about traditional African drama as what he calls "African tribal drama". Tribal drama was accompanied by dancing and by song. The dances were rhythmic and expressive; the songs emotional and devotional. This was drama in its simple, not classical or literary form. In African tribal drama the actor was "author", "producer" and "performer" at one and the same time. Drama is a social art. Drama is the reconstruction, recreation and reproduction of the great experiences of people.

These definitions shed light on traditional African drama. There are several points about which they agree: traditional drama was being performed and is being performed; it is based on social organization; the actor may interpret the different roles with voice and gesture; it is based on the great experiences of people. There are elements common to African and Western drama, and the differences between the two should not cause scholars to denigrate either. To sum up, African traditional drama is a combination of narratives, tales,

songs, dances, poetry, rituals, and so on, which are performed before a gathering.

Another question which must be answered in this study is whether traditional drama is "art". The question is important because some scholars argue that some forms of ritual are not traditional drama, because they are not art. Traditional drama is regarded as art because it requires a great deal of skill in its telling, reciting, singing, performing, and so on. In the African context traditional drama draws on all aspects of life for its raw material (De Graft 1976:3).

It is important to point out that terms such as drama do not cover every form of social expression - such as singing, dancing, all ceremonial behaviour, child naming, circumcision rites, or hunting - which encompasses movement and gesture. For example, a performance by one person for himself is not classified as dramatic performance (Jafta 1978:11).

However, scholars who oppose the domination of African culture by Western theories do not differentiate rigidly between drama and life as Africans live it from day to day. The opinions of such scholars are shaped by the dynamism of traditional drama and the richness of African tradition (De Graft 1976:3).

Having discussed some of the problems of concepts and terminology with regard to traditional drama the question which now emerges is, what is the difference between ritual and drama?

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RITUAL AND DRAMA

It is difficult to conclude that ritual and traditional drama are the same. However, it is not easy to divorce drama from ritual. Accordingly, any conclusion concerning the dichotomy between ritual and drama is influenced by the perceptions of African scholars of drama regarding this dichotomy. Götrick (1984:14), writing about different African notions concerning the relationship between ritual and drama or theatre, says:

Playwrights as well as scholars usually feel that an absolute separation between a ritual and theatre cannot be made. Some maintain that ritual and theatre are certainly not the same thing, but they exist in a continuum and can therefore overlap. They are thus not mutually exclusive. Others speak of rite, ritual and even of mythical events as drama or theatre and make no distinction between them.

Graham-White (1974:16-17) argues as follows:

One cannot draw up a list of objective criteria by which one could judge whether a performance is ritual or drama The most basic distinction between ritual and drama lies in the belief that a ritual will have consequences beyond itself. A ritual is functional: it is expected to produce results in the future. In dramatic performance, on the other hand, expectations stop when it ends. In drama, cause and effect are linked only within the performance; in ritual the performance is the cause of an effect to take place outside it. Indeed, the ritual is performed to bring about the effect, and if performances begin to be appreciated more for themselves than for their future effects then one is moving from ritual towards drama.

I tend to agree that, as Graham-White suggests, ritual and drama are not separate entities. Although he differentiates ritual from drama, his argument is weakened by the fact that he admits that one cannot draw up a list of objective criteria by which one can judge whether a performance is ritual or

drama. It may be argued that Graham-White's view of ritual and drama is biased towards Western theories, for he points out that the major elements of drama are impersonation, dialogue, conflict and plot (1974:16). These elements are European-defined elements which should be applied with caution to African traditional drama, for not all traditional dramas are characterised by these elements. Traditional drama is not, as Graham-White suggests, married to these elements. Consider, for example, Götrick's comments (1984:40), to which reference has already been made on p. 16 of this study, concerning the idea of impersonation or role-playing.

Furthermore, as Nketia and Leshoai quoted by Owomoyela (1985:28-29) and Jafta (1978:12-25) argue, rituals form what they call traditional drama. The stance of many African scholars is therefore that ritual and drama are not clearly separable (Götrick 1984:129).

I repeat that it is difficult to state categorically when a ritual begins to become drama and when it stops doing so. It is also hard to say when a certain drama starts to become ritual and when it ceases to be drama, that is, where and when does drama begin and what are its parameters? Therefore I conclude that there is no clear-cut boundary between ritual and drama.

It is a Eurocentric tendency in literary criticism to treat ritual as distinct from drama. Götrick points out that Westerners considered ritual and theatre to be two quite separate entities, and many Western scholars still try to separate theatre from ritual (Götrick 1984:14). Schipper (1989:83) argues that it is dangerous, in discussing oral literature, to impose a division of genres. The existing European-oriented distinction is, as far as African material is

concerned, both inadequate and inaccurate. Indeed, the political system of divide and rule that originated in Europe and was directed against the colonised, has also affected African literature.

FROM RITUAL TO DRAMA

Scholars of drama do not agree on the question of the sequential stages in Africa of development from ritual to drama.

Dhlomo (1977:30) states:

Mysteries, miracles and moralities - Greek tragedy - had their origin in religious ritual ... But through the passage of time, as religious thought deepens, ritual takes the form of art. The tribal African was no exception to this rule. Tribal life abounds in elaborate religious ceremonies - the feast of the harvest, the feast of first fruits, initiation ceremonies, death festivals ...

Dhlomo's view that Greek tragedy had its origin in religious ritual and that African theatre was no exception to this rule may be regarded as Eurocentric thinking compartmentalizing African literature. This is an evolutionistic theory which is still held by many Western scholars, as Götrick suggests (1984:14).

Graham-White (1974:17), on the contrary, finds it difficult to agree that drama has developed from ritual:

Although it has been generally assumed that drama has developed from ritual, absolutely convincing evidence is hard to find ... In Africa one cannot find a clear chain of sequential stages of development from ritual to drama ...

As Ngugi (1987:36-37) points out:

Drama has origins in human struggles with nature and with others. Out of death life sprouted, and this through the mediation of the human hand and the tools it held. So there were rites to bless the magic power of tools ... So [there were] fertility rites and ceremonies to celebrate life oozing from the earth ... there were rituals and ceremonies to celebrate and mark birth, circumcision or initiation into different stages of growth and responsibility, marriages and the burial of the dead.

Though Ngugi is referring to Kenya, his comment is applicable to other African societies which held some of the traditional practices in common. He goes on to state that "drama in pre-colonial Kenya was not, then, an isolated event: it was part and parcel of the rhythm of daily and seasonal life of the community. It was also entertainment in the sense of involved enjoyment; it was moral instruction; and it was also a strict matter of life and death and communal survival."

De Graft (1976:3-4) sheds more light on this issue when he points out that drama certainly derives from everyday life. One must never forget the threats posed by forces that lie deep within our souls, forces like pride and anger, greed and lust, jealousy and fear. It was the awareness of these threats that led 'primitive' man to those rituals (of apprehension, propitiation, purification and exorcism) of which impersonation was often such a cardinal feature.

Finally, it seems to me obvious that it is erroneous and myopic to think or suggest that drama developed from ritual. African drama is indeed in the blood of an African and it remains there; that is, African drama is as old as the birth of an African, for he is born into and nurtured by drama. I subscribe to

Ngugi's assertion and suggest that we have to understand African drama in accordance with his views.

PROBLEMS OF PERSPECTIVES

When white people first came into contact with black people in Africa, and in South Africa in particular, some did not regard the black person as a human being: "He was no different from the beasts of the forest which had no spiritual life. He was a pagan, heathen and kaffir who indulged in war, cannibalism, song, dance and dark despicable ceremonies and rituals" (Bob Leshoai 1981:241). White people thought that Africans did not possess the cardinal characteristics of human beings, in the European sense, and gave Africans various names that implied animal characteristics.

These judgements on the black people of South Africa came from people who were ignorant and who were not aware of the African cultures which were the pride of the black people. They did not know the value of the myths, legends, folktales, rhymes, heroic poems, proverbs, riddles, and so on, that were loaded with the morality, religion and wisdom of the day. The white people's ignorance and misinterpretation of the indigenous cultures of South Africa is noted by Götrick: " ... they never became familiar with the inhabitants, their customs and language. Thus their encounter with indigenous cultures was strewn with misunderstanding and misinterpretation" (1984:10).

The missionaries and administrators contributed very greatly towards erasing African culture by, for example, introducing Western religion:

The basic aim of the missionaries was to convert the heathen Natives to Christianity. In pursuing this policy they sought also to discover a new system of morals and general behaviour conforming to Christian ideals ... On the other hand, in their zeal to introduce Christianity along European lines they wished to do away with everything savouring of heathenism. They accordingly forbade converts to practice polygamy, inheritance of widows, lobola, initiation, and other heathen ceremonies, whether or not opposed to the teaching of the Gospel The administration was generally able to impose its wishes upon the people through physical force, in the form of punishment for revolt or disobedience (Schapera:1946:360).

In a similar vein Kelly (1931:110) remarks on the missionaries' refusal to understand Xhosa culture:

They were concerned with the fact that Christianizing of the natives seemed to mean removal of much of their natural arts, which were used as an expression of lowest instincts rather than of any ideal and they felt that something should be suggested to take their place.

It may, in fact, be argued that missionaries and administrators did more harm than good to African culture. Their ignorance made them ignore or remove African practices which they equated with heathenism. There was a chance for them to understand indigenous drama as it was, but this chance was ignored and lost. Kelly (1931:11, 112) maintained that Africans could have been given opportunities to develop the traditional drama that was their own:

But there are many lonely places such as Holy Cross where there are opportunities to get along without "civilization", and hope that there are people to be found who, with a real knowledge of the drama, ... may help the African to a rhythmical drama that will belong to his own mind.

It is interesting to note that Margaret Cropper wrote a play, based on an animal folktale, that was acted successfully at Holy Cross mission in the Transkei. It is

recounted that when Miss Cropper was at Holly Cross the girls in the boarding school acted folktales for her without any help from the white staff. These plays were never developed along the lines of traditional drama. After these attempts plays that were written and acted were plays on the European model (see Kelly 1931:112).

The tragic harm that was being done to indigenous drama continued for years as South African scholars were indoctrinated by missionaries and masters who colonised their minds. After having obtained Western education, because they wished to be recognised and rewarded by their masters, such scholars started to denounce their own culture. They were not aware that they were emulating people who had no interest in the indigenous drama, and who also wanted African literature to be appreciated in the European manner.

Kamlongera (1986:14) writes about missionaries, teachers and administrators who misled African scholars into not attempting to find out whether the African had his own type of theatre but, instead, into finding ways of teaching the African to appreciate theatre in the Western sense.

South Africans will probably take some time to grow out of this colonisation of the mind. It is not easy to decolonise the mind, especially in our South African situation, where traditional drama was ignored by European settlement, and also where the disruption of traditional culture was more extreme than in any other country in Africa. Graham-White (1974:5) points out that European settlement of South Africa was earlier and heavier than elsewhere in Africa and the disruption of traditional South African culture was correspondingly greater.

Many African scholars, such as those mentioned above, are still determined to eradicate indigenous drama in South Africa. They collaborate with government agencies, such as the publishers, language boards, examination boards, etc. These agencies have, to a very large extent, restricted African drama, forcing African culture to succumb to demands like those of the old missionaries and administrators who aimed at eliminating indigenous culture. These agencies have adopted policies that are in line with the Publications and Entertainment Act (1963) which prohibits any book which was and is offensive to the doctrines and policies of missionaries and the government. The publication of Jordan's Ingqumbo Yeminyanya (1940) was delayed because the agencies of the Union government were demanding that Western innovations must gain ascendancy over the African culture, rather than the opposite. In the days of colonial self-assurance, the process of cultural imperialism often entailed a ban on traditional productions and performances of dances and songs on the grounds that they were pagan pollutions of the Christian colonial theocracies. In South Africa, Thomas Mofolo's first novel was refused publication by Morija Press until he changed to themes reflecting the Manicheism of colonial society. That is, only works in which Mofolo created characters whose moments of insight and maturity coincided with recognition of the "superiority" of Christian ethic, were published (Onoge in Gugelburger 1985:50 & Sirayi 1989b:12).

Because African culture has been ignored for centuries various teachers and members of the African community are encouraged by the government to imitate other peoples' cultures and despise their own. As a result African

culture is generally despised. This contempt has greatly affected attitudes to indigenous drama.

Furthermore, it is unfortunate that the government agencies mentioned above employ scholars or "traditional intellectuals" who are members of the intellectual arm of the establishment. Western education has caused them to be radically opposed to their own culture. In terms of class affiliation they are petty bourgeois who have become exploiters and haters of their own culture (Amuta 1989:17).

Antonio Gramsci describes "traditional intellectuals" as those intellectuals who associate themselves with the hegemony which the dominant group exercises over society. They promote the functioning of social hegemony and political government. Gramsci points out that the error of traditional intellectuals is to believe that one can know without understanding the object of one's knowledge; that is to say, to believe that the intellectual can be an intellectual without being part of the community, without feeling the elementary passions of the people, and understanding them. Such an intellectual is without a sentimental connection with the "people-nation." Gramsci tells us that, in the absence of such a connection, the relations between intellectuals and the people-nation are of a purely bureaucratic and formal order, as the intellectuals become a caste, or priesthood (so-called organic centralism) (Gramsci 1986:418).

In South Africa, therefore, traditional intellectuals are, because of the mental conditioning, born of colonial education, that is wittingly or unwittingly inculcated in the African intellectual's mind, characterized by the conviction

that true knowledge originates in the West. Such intellectuals believe that Africans must purge themselves of indigenous (and therefore false) knowledge in order to assimilate true knowledge and thus qualify for incorporation into the world community (Owomoyela 1985:21).

Western education to a very large extent divided African society; hence today we have African traditional intellectuals who dispute the value of their own culture. This is not surprising, since this was the purpose of the colonisers. Katengo and Mwale (1986:460), quoting Moumouni, describe the objective of Western education as outlined by a colonial Frenchman in West Africa: "the essential object of primary education is to draw the greatest possible number of indigenous people closer to us and to familiarise them with our language, our institutions and our methods ...".

Ngugi (1987:56-57) describes the education that he encountered in schools and colleges as

... part of the general bourgeois education system which practises education as a process of weakening people, of making them feel they cannot do this or that - oh, it must take such brains! In other words education as a means of mystifying knowledge and hence reality. Education, far from giving people the confidence in their ability and capacities to overcome obstacles ... tends to make them feel their inadequacies They become more and more alienated from themselves and from their natural and social environment.

I conclude, therefore that indigenous theatre in South Africa has been radically underdeveloped. "Traditional intellectuals" have caused it to succumb to the dominant cultures of the world. Fanon consider that African drama has been the victim of cultural alienation (1967:xiii). The term "alienation" in its

popular usage means to lose that which was formerly one's own. One can alienate property by selling it, one can alienate a friend by quarrelling with him or her. Marx took over the concept from Hegel and gave it a particular connotation. For Marx alienation described a situation in which the people's powers and activities escaped, in one way or another, from the people's control, and became alien or hostile influences in the lives of the people (Lever 1982:15). Being culturally alienated, therefore, means to be isolated from one's culture. I suggest that African culture, and traditional drama in particular, has for centuries been alienated in South Africa.

The Western concept of time and space determined the drive towards colonialism, which resulted in the South African frontier wars, and the system of apartheid in South Africa, as well as affecting South African traditional drama and culture. It is for this reason that African drama, and Xhosa drama in particular, has been affected by Western concepts of time and space, so that today black South Africans are regarded as a people without a culture, and therefore without a drama.³

In addition, the missionaries and teachers, determined to "tame" the African, devoted much effort to eradicating the natural art, for example, indigenous drama, from Xhosa society. They introduced such things as English folk dancing, and religious plays and dramas based on the Old Testament. This resulted in cultural damage and took place, for example, at Holy Cross mission in the Transkei. The attempts by the Holy Cross missionaries to remove traditional drama were made in the name of Christianity and civilization.

³ See E. Kczilahabi, *African Philosophy and Problem of Interpretation*, 1985:120.

Finally, the Western concepts of time and space have resulted in Xhosa modern drama being regarded, to a very large extent, as an offshoot of European drama. Even African scholars, associating themselves with European thinking, have come to regard modern Xhosa drama as a branch of European drama. Although mission-school traditions, such as religious, moralistic and educational doctrines, dominate in modern drama, the influence of traditional drama cannot be overlooked.

Since I have been discussing whether or not traditional drama existed during the precolonial period in Africa, it is necessary to conclude this chapter by pointing out that the existence and recognition of traditional drama in African societies such as Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, and Nigeria is no longer in dispute. That indigenous drama is recognised in such societies is the consequence of the fact that some African scholars called for the emancipation of the African drama that had been suppressed by cultural imperialism. This chapter is devoted to emphasising that in South Africa, however, scholars are still engaged in disputing whether traditional drama exists or not.

Various misconceptions that have led to the denial of the existence of traditional drama in South Africa have been discussed. The description of concepts such as art, drama, etc. has resulted in the claim being made that South Africa had indeed its own type of drama. It has been argued that there is no clear boundary between ritual and drama, and that it would be myopic to conclude that drama developed from ritual. Finally, this chapter has emphatically pointed out that missionaries, teachers administrators and traditional intellectuals were responsible for the obliteration of African

traditional drama in South Africa, and of Xhosa traditional drama in particular.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS AND SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF XHOSA TRADITIONAL DRAMA

In this chapter I shall discuss some of the Xhosa traditional dramas, such as hunting, the circumcision ceremony and the folktale, that reflect African philosophy. I would like to emphasize that these dramas are peculiar to African societies, Xhosa society in particular. The social functions of traditional drama will also be discussed. As I proceed with my discussion I shall be bearing in mind the definitions given in Chapter 2 of this study.

HUNTING

Hunting was a traditional drama that was performed in South Africa by men and boys, though women were also involved to a limited extent. When a particular animal was to be hunted, men and boys from different families would, first, gather with their dogs and kieres. Secondly, the hunters would excitedly surround and watch the bush where the drama was to begin. Thirdly, when the animal appeared, they would start the chase. Fourthly, the dead animal would be divided among them according to the contribution of each to the hunt. Fifthly, they would start to describe and review what had happened during that day. Sixthly, in the evening, the performance of men, boys, and dogs would be discussed to the accompaniment of amusement and laughter. Seventhly, the women would cook the meat and corn. After the meal, the men would play, sing and dance until midnight (Holden 1866:276-278).

Let me demonstrate these proceedings by quoting an account of a long dramatic performance whose action reflects various elements of African traditional theatre. The account of these proceedings is taken from Holden (1866:278), but the arrangement of the scenes is mine. It goes as follows:

Scene 1: Assemblage

1. The men and boys from different families gather.
2. They bring their dogs and kieres along with them.
3. The hunters are mustered and organised for the occasion.

Scene 2: Guard

1. The hunters surround the bush where the animal is.
2. They guard all the avenues that can be used by the animal to escape.
3. The dogs are sent in to start the game.
4. The hunters are alert, waiting for the animal.
5. The dogs are praised as they search for the animal.

Scene 3: Appearance

1. The animal appears.
2. The hunters chase it.
3. They compete to be the first to spear the animal.
4. When it is caught the animal is thrust to its heart until it dies.

Scene 4: Division

1. The carcass is divided "according to law".
2. The man who first speared the animal takes the carcass, excepting a hind leg and a fore quarter.
3. The person who delivered the second thrust takes the hind leg.
4. The person who delivered the third thrust takes the fore quarter.

Scene 5: Return

1. The hunters return home to enjoy the fruits of their toil in the evening.
2. Enthusiastically they describe their skill and their piercing whistles, the simultaneous echoing shout, glee and fervency of the chase, the deafening clamour of the hounds, and the dying agonies of the animal.

Scene 6: Assemblage

1. The hunters gather around the evening fire, discussing or reviewing every circumstance of the day from the first scene to the last.
2. The achievements of men, dogs, assegais and kieries are fully discussed, the foolish, weak, or ludicrous is pointed out and subjected to cutting sarcasm, calling forth roars of laughter.
3. The exploits of the successful are recounted, the fleetness of his running, and the dexterity of his throw, with the action of the prey from its first starting, every turn and manoeuvre to escape its pursuers, until, run down and speared, it expired.

Scene 7: Performance

1. The men eat and drink to the full the meat and corn that have been cooked by the women.
2. They start to play, sing, dance and tell stories until midnight.

Hunting: critical analysis

The foregoing dramatic representation is one of the forms of drama that was misunderstood, misinterpreted and misrecognised by Europeans when they settled in South Africa. Hunting was a form of communal drama. Some acts were staged without audiences, that is, privately. Jafta (1978:9) writes that "the communal aspect of drama, therefore, takes into account a group of people who are brought together in a common place for a common purpose."

In Scene 1 characters or actors are presented. These actors are men and boys with their dogs and kieres. The hunters are organised for the occasion.

In Scene 2 the actors start the next part of the dramatic action, that is, they surround the bush where the animal is. The dogs are despatched to start the game while the hunters block all escape avenues that may be exploited by the animal being hunted. The talented poets among the hunters are encouraging the dogs by singing **izibongo** related to them. They are alert, waiting for the animal.

In Scene 3 and 4 the animal appears and is chased. Once it is caught, it will be killed and divided among the hunters according to tradition. When the hunters and dogs run after the prey, shouting, the whole village or community participates by shouting also, to motivate the dogs and confuse the animal. It may be noted that the first two scenes are without audience and scenes 3 and 4 have an audience. These last two scenes are mobile, a kind of travelling theatre.

In Scene 5 the idea of return, which is characteristic of traditional literature, is projected. On their way home the hunters enthusiastically review the performance of the day. In Scene 6 they gather around the evening fire, discussing everything related to their achievements of the day. Scenes 5 and 6 are linked by repetition, for they review each circumstance of the day.

Scene 7 is the exciting part of the dramatic action. It is the scene which expresses the hunter's joy and jubilation. This is the part which conveys most educative information in that, after eating and drinking the meat and corn that have been cooked by the women, the hunters start to play, dance, tell stories,

and sing. The stories are about the past history of the people as well as their culture.

The entire hunting performance is interspersed with the song, dance and narratives which are the elements of traditional drama. Ngugi (1987:45) states that "songs and dance are not just decorations; they are an integral part of that conversation, that drinking session, that ritual, that ceremony ... the song arises from what has gone before and leads to what follows. The song and the dance become a continuation of the conversation and of the action." It can be seen that my analysis of the foregoing form of a drama harmonises with Ngugi's assertion.

It may therefore be concluded that hunting, as a type of African amusement, was a kind of drama. In terms of the definitions given in my discussion above, hunting may be classified as drama, for it is characterised by narratives, songs, dances, poetry, actors and dialogue. The strong point in our claim is that, in some parts, the actors were not representing something or somebody in a kind of role-playing. They were what they all appeared to be, this being one of the features of African drama. However, in some parts, such as Scene 7, role-playing is highly possible.

THE CIRCUMCISION CEREMONY

This ceremony had a profound significance among African communities, and among Xhosa in particular. This was an occasion which provided entertainment, pleasure and education. I shall confine myself to the circumcision performance as a whole in attempting to illustrate my points. There were three issues that had to be settled before the circumcision ceremony could begin:

1. the principal host - **umnini-sisusa**
2. the building of the **abakhwetha's** hut - **ithonto**
3. the guardian - **ikhankatha**.

After these preliminary issues were settled a sacrifice, which was regarded as a propitiatory sacrifice to the ancestral spirits, would be made. The principal host would address the boys. They would be handed over to the specialist (**ingcibi**) who was to perform the surgical operation. The boys would eat only cold food during the first eight days. After eight days the host would slaughter an animal. An exhibition of the boys' dancing capabilities would take place. The women and boys would continue to dance after the departure of **abakhwetha**. Another gathering would be organised by the host, with the **abakhwetha** being invited to join the community on this occasion. The clay would be washed off and fat would be smeared on the boys. Finally, the feast speeches would be made. The **imbongi** would **bonga** the boys one by one and new names would be given (Soga 1931:249-250, supported by Hobongwana, Helesi and Ndungane - interviewed on the 8/7/1992, 13/7/1992 and 15/7/1992 respectively).

This performance may be divided into the following "scenes".

Scene 1: Preliminary stage

1. The principal host is decided upon.
2. The **abakhwetha's** hut is constructed.
3. The boys' guardian for the occasion is appointed.
4. The boys are gathered at the kraal of the principal host.

Scene 2: Sacrifice

1. When the boys are gathered at the principal host's kraal an animal is slaughtered.
2. A request for blessing for the time of their entrance upon manhood and throughout their lives is made.
3. All the boys eat some of the sacrificial meat.
4. Old garments are discarded.
5. New garments are given.
6. The principal host addresses the boys once more on how they should conduct themselves during the time of their initiation, and on the difference between childhood and adulthood.

Scene 3: Operation

1. The boys are handed over to the **ingcibi**.
2. The **ingcibi** leads them to a river where they are cleansed.
3. The operation is performed after the ritual cleansing.
4. The excised prepuce is buried in an ant hill.
5. The boys go to the seclusion hut - **isuthu** or **ithonto**.

Scene 4: Instruction

1. The **ikhankatha** teaches the **abakhwetha** what he thinks they should learn for their future lives.
2. He cleans the wounds of the boys.
3. The boys eat only old pit mealies as long the wounds remain unhealed.

Scene 5: Beast Slaughtered

1. After eight days an animal is slaughtered by the host to indicate that the boys are healed.
2. The boys eat some of this meat.
3. Other people eat some of this meat after the boys have finished their portion.

4. In addition the boys are given a piece of coarse bread made of **intanyongo**. (Note that scene 5 is conducted by a traditional doctor).

Scene 6: Performance by Abakhwetha

1. The **abakhwetha** are organized to go out to certain kraals in order to demonstrate their dancing capabilities.
2. The boys are lined up outside, in front of the gate, before a large gathering of people.

Scene 7: Performance by the Women and the Boys

1. After the exhibition by the **abakhwetha**, they return to the **thonto** or **suthu**.
2. The women sing a song called **uNomdlisayo**.
3. The boys start to dance in front of the gathering.

Scene 8: Drinking Beer

1. Beer is made at the home of the principal host.
2. The community comes together.
3. The **abakhwetha** are invited to come to share in the festivities.

Scene 9: Cleansing

1. The boys are shaved.
2. They are sent to the river to wash off the white clay.
3. They race each other to the river.
4. The first to jump into the water is accorded the honours of the day.
5. They return to the lodge and smear their bodies with fat.

Scene 10: Conclusion

1. Speeches are made by responsible people who tell the young men how to conduct themselves as adults.

2. The **imbongi** is given a chance to **bonga**.
3. He praises them one by one.
4. They are given new names.

The circumcision ceremony: critical analysis

The circumcision ceremony was common throughout Africa, but the manner of performance and duration varied from community to community, and there was thus a kind of heterogeneity: "Rites and ceremonies are common throughout the continent of Africa and of course they vary from place to place because of factors such as geography, climate and religion" (Leshoai 1981:250).

According to Katengo and Mwale (1986:464) in some societies in Zambia boys are secluded for periods ranging from six to nine months. Soga (1931:257) says that the time boys would spend as **abakhwetha** varies between three and six months among the Xhosa. Soga's view is supported by Hobongwana and Ndungane as interviewed on the 8/7/1992 and 15/7/1992 respectively.

Circumcision in some communities was a community issue, but some acts were staged privately without any audience. Among the Xhosa the rite of circumcision was a community issue. Although the day of circumcision was appointed by the relatives of the boys, they would attempt to make it coincide with the day on which the young heir to a chieftainship was to be circumcised. Until a boy had been circumcised he would always be regarded as a boy by the whole community and it would be difficult for him to become involved in communal activities with men.

The circumcision performance may be perceived as social and religious art. The scene divisions presented above support the notion that the performance was art. The progression of the scenes in this ceremony may be regarded as a

manifestation of cyclical reality: the ceremony starts at home with Scene 1, the preliminary stage, and proceeds to the secluded place where some of the performance takes place; this cyclical movement becomes evident when the ceremony ends back in the kraal, where it started. This is regarded as the structure of the event.

Poems, speeches, songs, dance, etc. were presented on this occasion. These are the elements of traditional drama. They therefore suggest that the circumcision ceremony is a form of drama or art.

Costumes and masks are also characteristic of the circumcision ceremony as a kind of drama. The dancing costume of the circumcised is made of palm leaves and is composed of two main parts: the kilt and the headdress. The kilt is called **umhlambi** and the headdress **ixonxo** (see Soga 1931:255). The word "mask" implies the wearer's identity is hidden. Masks were worn to attract the spirit to grace the performance with his presence, even to possess the wearer of the mask (see Graham-White 1974:38). The boys' faces were smeared with white clay which would be renewed repeatedly. Fat was also used for masks (see Scene 9). The traditional doctor also wore masks or costumes. "The spirits and gods were of course invisible but they could be represented by masks worn by humans" (Ngugi 1987:36).

Graham-White's comment above is relevant to our discussion because circumcision invokes the dead, that is, the ancestors, to bless and protect the boys throughout the ceremony. Furthermore, in any culture costumes may be highly symbolic. For purposes of our discussion it may be concluded that the old garments symbolized the old person and the new garments, that is, a new blanket or sheep skin kaross, symbolized the new person. The dancing dress of the **abakhwetha** was a uniform and decoration, as well as being a mask. One

of the crucial elements of traditional drama is the participation of the audience. From Scene 6 to Scene 10 the audience participates in the ceremony in a kind of group participation.

Finally, there are sufficient elements in the circumcision ceremony to suggest that circumcision was a form of drama, because language, dance, poetry, music, mime, improvisation and various forms of story-telling are beautifully and richly integrated in it. My analysis of the various stages of the circumcision ceremony clearly establishes that dance movement, mime, improvisation, music and poetry were combined in the ceremony.

FOLKTALES

Marivate (1973:22) maintains that in Africa folktales should be regarded as drama. The story-teller acts out the parts of the characters. To illustrate this statement let us take the example of the tale of the bird that made milk. The folktale proceeds as follows: It was long ago! With pleasure! There was a poor man who lived in a certain village with his wife and three children. The woman was cultivating a garden. When she left the garden, a bird would come to the garden and sing, and the weeds would grow. At last this was discovered and the bird was caught. It was discovered that the bird could make milk. It was taken home. The bird used to make milk. One day the man and woman left the bird with the children. The bird flew away. When the man came back the children were punished. They escaped. They lived in a cave and got food by hunting. The boy made friends with a crocodile and the crocodile gave him ten cows and ten baskets of millet. The crocodile gave one of his daughters to be the wife of the boy. The girl became the wife of the crocodile. There was a great famine and the children's parents went to the village in which the boy was living to get food. The boy gave them food, but did not tell them who he

was, and they went home. The father returned once more to the boy's village and this time the boy told his father who he was and what he had done. The father was astonished. The crocodile gave the parents three baskets of corn, and told them to go and build a house in the mountains. The father did so and died in the mountains (Theal 1888:29-38).

Folktale: critical analysis

For centuries the African folktale in South Africa has been regarded as a prose narrative. While I agree with that notion, I advance the idea that the folktale is also a form of traditional drama.

Bob Leshoai (1981:243 & 244) claims that the folktale, as told by the grandmothers, was regarded as the drama of the day. The narrator would represent various characters through gesture, voice and facial expression. This is the uniqueness of African drama. Leshoai's claim is confirmed by Herskovits, cited by Marivate (1973:22), who writes:

In Africa tales are essentially modes of dramatic expression ... The presentation of a tale is a bit of acting in itself ... So cleverly can the story-teller act out the parts of the characters that the only way fully to convey how these stories are told would be to have a talking motion picture, which would capture the total setting of teller and audience ... and this would not be very dissimilar from drama as we see it on the stage.

Marivate adds that "to witness an experienced story-teller in the right context at her best is a joy. She 'lives' in her story."

Mofokeng, as cited by Marivate (1973:22), states that to have the story-teller before your eyes is like seeing the story projected on the screen in a theatre. Marivate goes on to say that the story-teller's voice, facial expression, movements of body and hands carry her audience with her. Marivate seems to

be convinced that the folktale is the best form of traditional drama. He maintains that he lacks the verbal facility to describe the beauty of African drama in the form of the folktale, and resorts to quoting Nunn: "You have never known real, earthly satisfying drama, the kind that gets into the blood and stays there, until you have been to a part of these story-telling marathons" (Marivate 1973:23).

In a similar vein Schipper (1989:82) says:

Oral literature always contains elements of drama: the story-telling performance is a total happening, a total art form, in several ways. The narrator is often, at once, a poet, a singer, a musician and an actor The performance is total theatre in another sense, too, involving as it does the active participation of the audience.

Having thus discussed folktale as a form of drama, let me now suggest that folktale is one of the best forms of traditional drama, for it comprises the elements of traditional drama as listed by Soyinka, Dhlomo, Ngugi, Leshoai and other African scholars. These elements are songs, dances, mime, dialogue or language, poetry, etc. However, these elements vary from folktale to folktale because of factors such as content and form. Incidentally, a performance by one person for himself is not classified as dramatic performance. I would call such a performance a form of "social expression" which may encompass movement, songs, dance, etc.

Some of the dramatic devices or elements discussed in Chapter 2 are reflected in the folktale. First, the narration takes place in front of an audience and so conforms to the criterion of group participation. Secondly, the narrator always opens with the following dramatic statement: It was long ago! An audience responds in unison: "With pleasure!" This may be regarded as dramatic dialogue. This dialogue catches the attention of the audience. Thirdly, the

narrator changes from character to character in gesture, voice, and facial expression, that is, he or she engages in imitation. In this way the narrator imitates all the characters taking part in the tale. Fourthly, it may be argued that song is used to develop the plot and to enhance the aesthetic of the dramatic performance. Finally, the performance is also characterised by action, which is the element of drama. However, it is important to note that the African perception of action does not necessarily involve moving from one place to another; gesture, facial expression, clapping, etc. are regarded as action in the African sense (see Nketia, as cited by Owomoyela 1985:29).

Although I have not presented a very detailed discussion I repeat that the folktale is one of the best forms of traditional drama. Having considered the folktale one notices that it contains song, dance, mime, dialogue, spectacle, characters, action, plot and role-playing, which are all dramatic devices.

THE SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF XHOSA DRAMA

South African traditional drama played a crucial role in society since it was regarded as a lived experience and was of a more functional nature than any other cultural aspect. It had certain social and psychological goals that were very important for any African society:

As a distinct form, however, drama begins to body forth, to precipitate from everyday life, only when man introduces into life's normal pursuits the element of impersonation or role-playing, as a means of achieving certain ends. On the surface these ends are many and varied; but at the deepest psychological level they are closely related to man's compulsive need, and therefore search, for sanity and security in a world that threatens from all directions (De Graft 1976:3).

Bob Leshoai (1981:242-243) comments on the way in which listening to stories fosters the imagination:

Haven't many of us on a moonlight night sat at the feet of our grandmothers to be educated and entertained in the finest and most intimate children's theatre? Haven't we loved to hear and see, in one short hour, the story-teller transform and change from character to character in gesture, voice and facial expression ... It is through these children's stories that we create our kings, queens, princes, princesses, heroes, heroines, the rich and poor folks and their hopes, fear, aspirations and loyalties.

It may therefore be argued that South African drama was a mobile school performing various functions of national significance. The community's sense of unity was fostered through drama. Indigenous drama was one of the national media that was used by the nation for entertainment and pleasure. The norms of the society were transmitted from generation to generation through drama. Tradition, custom, history, code of conduct, communal commitment, socio-political life and so on, were transmitted through traditional drama. It is clear that the social functions of theatre were religious, aesthetic, didactic and therapeutic. The crucial functions of African drama are summarized by Ngugi: "It was also entertainment in the sense of involved enjoyments; it was moral instruction, and it was also a strict matter of life and death and community survival" (1987:37). These functions can equally well be discerned in the African drama of South Africa.

The examination of the above forms of traditional drama is my attempt to establish that traditional drama was indeed performed during the pre-colonial period in South Africa, and to foster recognition of the existence of traditional African drama in South Africa. It has become obvious that Eurocentric criteria should be applied with caution when considering the concept "drama" in the context of African drama in South Africa. Various functions of traditional drama, such as the religious, aesthetic, didactic and therapeutic, have been highlighted.

Though our discussion focuses on Xhosa traditional drama, we have also mentioned African drama, because the South African experiences - the Xhosa in particular - match those of the rest of Africa. The argument that has been advanced in this study holds true for all indigenous African drama in South Africa. Little material on African drama in South Africa, whether on its traditional forms or in the form of literary studies or literary criticisms, has been published.

CHAPTER 4

XHOSA MODERN DRAMA IN CONTEXT

This chapter aims to place Xhosa modern drama in its broad context, various aspects of which, such as social, geographical and historical features, have to be taken into account when examining literature.

Amuta (1989:84) points out that the context of a literary work involves the totality of its historical ambience. He goes on to say that it includes such factors as the level or development of productive forces, which in turn determine the mode of literary production, and the amount of leisure available to members of a society for the creation and consumption of literature. Furthermore, it involves such elements as the philosophical and aesthetic traditions within which the work is created, as well as its paradigmatic relationship with other works in the same tradition or in preceding traditions.

Amuta's argument suggests the absolute necessity for the critic to examine a literature in relation to its cultural background, that is, the social, historical and geographical contexts should not be neglected by the critic, as these influence the style of literature. I agree with Hawthorn (1988:64) that

to understand works of art we have to understand their conditions of birth, how and why they were created, responding to what personal and social pressures in the teeth of which constraints and oppositional forces,

It should be noted that if its cultural context is not considered when evaluating literature, it is possible for the critic to mislead the readers. Literature cannot be properly understood if its cultural context is disregarded: "It is, for instance, potentially misleading to separate literary context from 'socio-historical context' as the former is actually an aspect of the latter and inseparable from it" (Hawthorn 1988:8).

It is clear that the critic should consider the following aspects when embarking on explication, interpretation and analysis of any creative work: the author, the text, the reader or the critic, cultural influences and context, that is, the social, geographical and historical backgrounds, to the work. These aspects may be regarded as the dynamic socio-geographic-historical features that influence the artist. Context does not only provide the geographical, historical and social background to a creative work but also helps the critic to be relevant when analysing a text. Context should be taken into account when literary conventions, such as plot, language and theme, are analysed. There are, for instance, some conditions in which characteristic modes of behaviour may be uncovered by considering the geographical location, time, and socio-historical context of the creative work:

To isolate the literature wholly from its cultural milieu and to insist on a strictly synchronic analysis of a work, as the formalist "autonomistic theory" demands, would rob the literature of its vitality (Iyasere 1975:108-109).

I shall now discuss the social, geographical and historical context of Xhosa modern drama.

SOCIAL CONTEXT

Msimang (1986:88) suggests that the social context has to do with the "the society's way of life at the time and place in which the story takes place. It embraces the society's customs and traditions as well as its beliefs". Social context also has to do with the inhumanities occurring in the society. It includes the spirited voice of protest against injustice, and attempts to denounce the inhumanity.

The literary texts to be studied were written under particular social circumstances. In Tamsanqa's *BUZANI KUBAWO*, the traditional and modern conditions that relate to the characters are presented in the preface by the writer himself, and in the scene changes. This drama is governed by a neutral social context. The playwright introduces and establishes Gugulethu, a central character, in both traditional and modern settings. The way of life at Gugulethu's home is depicted in detail, with descriptions of, for example, the use of a grass mat, the chaff which is used as food for pigs, and the old custom of choosing a wife for the son. Zwi lakhe, Gugulethu's father, and his followers are custodians of tradition while Gugulethu is influenced by the modern philosophy of life. Gugulethu's modern ideas are evident in his attainment of a matriculation certificate and his employment with the Umtata police. These social circumstances are reflected in the social activities that are performed by the characters as the plot unfolds. It is important to note that, although Gugulethu is a relatively inactive character, he does not succumb to his father's ideas. His behaviour, which dominates the text, is appropriate to, and suitable for, the social context from which he emerges. He moves from one set of social conditions to another as he is taken from Zazulwana and placed in

Umtata. He remains constant in his attitude to his father, for it is contrary to his cultural background to exchange strong words with his parents. Conversely, Zwilakhe, the custodian of traditional values, is not prepared to sacrifice his traditional beliefs.

The social context has been aesthetically presented in Qangule's AMAZA, as it has in Tamsanqa's BUZANI KUBAWO. Both plays are dominated by both traditional and modern social circumstances. The different social conditions from which the characters emerge imply a conflict, which may be ascribed to the clash of traditional and modern ideas. The major characters are moved from one social and geographical context to another. It is not expedient to dwell much on Qangule's play's resemblance to Tamsanqa's play. It is enough to say that social context in both plays contributes to the development of characters, plot and other literal aspects of the text.

Ngani's UMKHONTO KATSHIWO is a historical play whose theme is witchcraft, and involves the destruction of witches by Tshiwo, a Xhosa king of the eighteenth century. As Qangule has commented, "The incessant brutal killing creates an atmosphere of horror" (see Gérard, 1971:98). It is worth noting that a historical event has been employed in fiction in order to reveal the social circumstances of the Xhosa in the eighteenth century. Ngani describes the Xhosa philosophy of life, that is, the African socio-political beliefs of the Xhosa prior to the adoption of some of the European socio-political beliefs. The social conditions that surround the characters convey a pure traditional atmosphere.

Tshiwo, a paramount chief, is disturbed by the sudden illness of Nonkosi, which illness is attributed to witchcraft. The whole community and the councillors are affected, because those who are regarded as responsible for the illness are destroyed by the king. This traditional act of killing those people who are said to be witches recoils on the king when he is attacked by the Khoi and is unable to repel the attack, for the Khoi outnumber his warriors. Traditional social activities, possessions and practices are presented in Act 1. The scene informs through the use of typically dramatic elements, such as the traditional fireplace, the African palace, the king, councillors, African doctors, the use of medicinal herbs to heal Nonkosi, and the African sprinkling of medicinal herbs as protection against evil spirits. The manner in which Nonkosi is treated by Mpondombini establishes a traditional social context. Dubulegeqa's method of exposing those who have been accused of witchcraft is in accordance with the traditional practice of the Xhosa. Act 2 is saturated with horror, which is also a consequence of the traditional society. Ngani's social context is neatly coupled with the development of the dramatic structure.

The social context is also evident in Ntloko's *UNGODONGWANA*, another historical drama. The intention of this dissertation is not to assess Ntloko's capability in re-telling the historical event but rather is to assess his conversion of the historical subject into fiction and his aesthetic organizing ability to highlight new facets of the historical events.

The major characters in this play emerge from an African traditional social context, which is coupled with the historical incidents that precede the coming into power of Dingiswayo (Ngodongwana). The strategies of Tana and Ngodongwana to depose their father, Jobe, are described. The assassins hired

by Jobe to kill his sons reflect the patterns of traditional society. Ngodongwana is shifted from one traditional social terrain to another, where he is trained in the use of horse and gun in war. In this new environment he is exposed to a modern social environment. He eventually returns victorious to his home. Modern social conditions have prepared him to administer and to lead his people. Ntloko aesthetically utilizes the social context to contrive a plot by combining historical facts and fiction.

Mbulawa's MAMFENE has only a partially modern social context since it also includes elements of a traditional social context. The society is in a state of transition, which enables some of the major characters to exploit the ignorance of the others. It should be noted that modern social circumstances predominate in this play. The dialogue among the family members in Act 1 scene 1 suggests that Kheswa and family have emerged from a modern social context. A spiritual atmosphere, coupled with debates over leadership in the church, dominates from scene to scene. Jezula's behaviour contradicts Christian culture, norms and values, while Kheswa's behaviour embodies Christian norms and values.

The social situation from which Kheswa emerges enables him to withstand opposition when he is placed in another social context. The holding of revival and church meetings establishes that the major characters derive from a modern social context, although some details reflect a traditional way of life, such as the thatched houses, the beer-drinking in the church, the herding of a flock by boys. The manner in which Jezula attempts to burn down the pastor's house reflects the elements of traditionalism which are still found in this region. Jezula acts with the intention of toppling the church leadership.

From the foregoing discussion it is clear that African tradition and modern ideas permeate Xhosa plays. Although we have not discussed Bongela's *INGALO*, Mtywaku's *UFEZIWE OKANYE INKOHHLAKALO* and Mtingane's *INENE NASI ISIBHOZO*, traditional and modern values and beliefs frequently surface in these plays as well. This is demonstrated in the description of cultural activities, customs, and traditional and modern technologies peculiar to African society.

GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Geographical context encompasses the geographical boundaries of the dramatic work, its place of performance and its characters. It incorporates an imaginative world both overtly and covertly, that is, in vivid and vague geographical contexts.

In drama, location is of great importance because it facilitates unity, which is a feature of plot or dramatic structure. Playwrights are free to employ more than one location or to change location. It is also worth noting that geographical context should be used only when it is expedient for purposes of the play and the playwright. Geographical context is not a necessity. It is for this reason that a distinction is drawn between overt geographical context and covert geographical context (Smiley, 1971:62).

The manner in which Mtywaku in *UFEZIWE OKANYE INKOHHLAKALO* presents location is overt and desirable. Dramatic action occurs in the Nkqonkqweni village. The district is not mentioned in the first four acts but is

referred to in the fifth act, the final act. This demonstrates the prerogative of the playwright to establish the location at any point in the text. Feziwe is then shifted to another geographical context, namely, Berlin, near East London. Pietermaritzburg is yet another locale mentioned in this play.

In his play *INGALO* Bongela describes the milieu in detail. The township, Soweto, and the city, Johannesburg, are locations for the scenes. This context is introduced together with the characters. As the dramatic structure unfolds the Dube zone is detailed in the dialogue between the characters.

In Ngani's *UMKHONTO KATSHIWO* the geographical background is only covertly presented. For a locale to be established explicitly, or vividly, the text must refer to a specific village or town or city. The mere naming of vague locations, such as rivers and mountains, is not necessarily regarded as a vivid geographical background unless such naming enables the reader to locate the area on a map. Although Ngani mentions areas like Dontsa, Mngaza forest, Ntili yoSizi (Valley of Sympathy), Dontsa river and Ntabosizi, he never names a town. From Tshiwo's description of the geographical context of his play the reader could assume that the dramatic action takes place in the Cape Province, since Tshiwo ruled this area as a Xhosa king in the eighteenth century, or the reader could assume that the locale for this play is in the Transkei region, because the river, forest and mountains are situated in the Transkei. It is difficult, if not impossible, to situate the play precisely, as some of these geographical features are also located in the Ciskei region. One may conclude from this that the geographical context in Ngani's play is vague.

Ngani's vagueness in this area would only be regarded as a weakness were the text to be isolated from its cultural milieu. The social reality of Africans should be taken into account and that would prevent readers from divorcing Xhosa literature from Xhosa African society:

Unless we are prepared to take into consideration the whole imaginative tradition in Africa, we who set out to interpret the writings of new authors are going to miss the finer modulations which give to the best in modern African literature interest and values... (Irele quoted by Swanepoel 1990:50).

As Glicksberg (1972:140) remarks: "the literature of a country must be situated in its cultural and historical context; it does not come into being and flourish in a vacuum".

Critics should remember that, as Glicksberg points out, literature does not operate in a vacuum. It mirrors the philosophy of life held by the people. It must be regarded as a social act and also as a social product. As far as possible every aspect of a society should be taken into consideration when evaluating literature. Ngani is therefore in harmony with African tradition or culture when he does not mention a village or town in his play, because these are alien to African tradition. He is justified, particularly when the play is considered as a combination of fact and fiction. It is based on events in the eighteenth century, when the Xhosa people had not yet even been introduced to an urban way of life.

The same holds true for Qangule's AMAZA. Qangule projects work without any reference to geographical context. A letter written by Zodwa Zazile to Sidima implies that the characters are in the same locale. This locale is not

explicitly named in the letter. However, the reader is misled since he cannot identify the area from which the letter was written, since neither post office nor town are mentioned. The shift of characters to another social context provides some information concerning geographical context, because Soweto township and the city of Johannesburg are then identified. This mention of Soweto and Johannesburg contributes to the vividness of the geographical context but, for the most part, the play occurs in a rural setting that is not specifically located. Because of the emergence of major characters in the rural milieu the reader expects the identification of this rural setting through the mention of either town or village. However, he is kept ignorant of the geographical context. This element of vagueness is also found in Ntloko's UNGODONGWANA. The locale is given as Mfolozi river without any reference to town or village, although the social conditions are described in detail. The mention of Mfolozi is not sufficient geographical reference as there are many rivers of the same name in South Africa: to which Mfolozi river is the writer referring? It could be argued that this play takes place in the Natal region, since the characters Jobe, the king of AbaThethwa, and his son Ngodongwana are historically linked to Natal.

All the other plays which are being studied embody an overt geographical context.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

A play reflects history in various ways, by referring primarily to period or time. A dramatic action occurs at some location and at a relatively specific point in time. Location in time can also be affected by the "when" of production, that

is, the performance date or the director's interpretation. Historical context involves the time of day, the date, month and year in which the event took place. It is important that the drama of a country is located in its historical context. A play may be set in the past, the present, the future, or all three, or may be set at an unspecified time or even in no time (Glicksberg 1972:140, Sirayi, 1989:75, & Smiley 1971:64).

Ntloko and Ngani do not provide the performance date or the time at which the plays were written. They do not refer to the time of the day, the date, month or year. The play takes place at an unspecified time. As historical drama it is clear that events which took place in the remote past are shifted to the present for re-enactment before an audience. The playwrights employ dialogue to denote a sense of present time.

Mtywaku provides the reader with the play's date of production, but is vague with regard to other times. Directors, as a rule, stage this play as if it is occurring on a Saturday in April, either in the morning or during the evening. The year is not specified. Directors of Qangule's play, on the other hand, have been able to deduce from Zodwa's letter that events occur in the morning and at ten at night. Other aspects of time, such as month and year, are not mentioned. However, Mtingane establishes only the time of the day, setting his play in the afternoon. With the exception of Qangule's play, the historical context is not determined by the dialogue but by the director's interpretation. Mbulawa includes elements of time locus, that is, date, month and year: the president writes a letter, dated 18 January 1958, to the steward of the church. The playwright takes the director into consideration in his depiction of the time aspect:

(KuloKheswa endlwini yokuhlala ngongcwalazi. Kungena uDidi, Kheswa, Dora, Nobantu ephethe umntwana.)

(MAMFENE 1962:13).

(In the sitting room, at Kheswa's home, in the evening. Didi, Kheswa, Dora and Nobantu with her child come in.)

Tamsanqa pinpoints the dates during which events occur as 18 December 1947 and 2 March 1948. These dates are deduced from the correspondence between NomaMpondomise Langeni and Gugulethu. The director's interpretation of time is apparent throughout the play. The date 27 June 1970 is given in Bongela's play as the time aspect, as is the case with Tamsanqa's play.

Some Xhosa dramas do not incorporate all the aspects of time as discussed above. However, it is important to note that all plays that I am discussing contain the time of day, such as morning and evening, as well as the director's interpretation of time. Although time is mentioned in some plays, the precise date of performance or production is not given. Readers are only given clues to the production date. The absence of dates may be attributed to the cultural and historical context of the Africans, based on the relationship between literature and African society. Some literary aspects are alien to African literature although we cannot deny western influence on African literature.

To conclude, in this chapter Xhosa plays have been placed in context. It has been emphasized that African literature does not operate in a vacuum. For this reason social context, geographical context and historical context should be considered in the interpretation or evaluation of African literature. A contextual approach assumes that the playwrights promoted or espoused

African values. The relationship between literature and society has been examined in broad detail. Western influence and African influence on Xhosa drama have been acknowledged.

CHAPTER 5

CHARACTERISATION IN XHOSA MODERN DRAMA

There is general agreement among critics that fictional characters are people in a dramatic or narrative work. Though fictitious, they are endowed with moral, dispositional and emotional qualities, that is, human attributes. They are designed to be understood by the society to which the fiction is addressed. Fictional characters are the paramount images of human nature that are used by the writer in exploring the relationship between art, artist and society. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the various kinds of characters, the relationship of characters and society, as well as modes of character delineation.

KINDS OF CHARACTERS

There are about six important qualities that are essential to the delineation of fictional characters: volition, stature, interrelation, attractiveness, credibility and clarity. These qualities are apparent in the roles played by the characters. However, this does not mean that every character must possess all six of these qualities, although most major characters do possess each quality to some degree. It is important to note that, in this section, characters are classified according to their roles in the dramatic text (Smiley 1971:92 & Msimang 1986:103).

The Protagonist

Smiley (1971:96) points out that the protagonist is a focal character. He continues by saying that some critics prefer to call the protagonist the central character, the focal character, or even the leading role. He argues, however, that the central character is relatively inactive, that the focal character is a victim, and that the leading role requires a dramatic performance. According to Smiley the protagonist is involved in a struggle. He receives the most attention from the playwright, the other characters and the audience. He is endowed with the greatest volition and he is the one who makes events happen and propels the action. Sirayi (1989a:172) claims that the protagonist is the principal character, who influences and precipitates the action or plot. Hubenka and Garcia (1973:10) maintain that the protagonist is always the focal point of the action that the story is most obviously about.

It is important, however, to note that some critics contend that there is a difference between the protagonist and the hero. Dietrich and Sundell (1974:75) remark:

... the protagonist is also the hero, defined as an admirable character who embodies certain human ideals... But the protagonist is not always admirable, and therefore not always heroic. The reader may identify with the protagonist for no other reason than that he is undergoing a difficult experience that wins the reader's sympathy...

and Smiley (1971:96) also observes this difference between the protagonist and the hero:

The protagonist need not be a hero or even heroic . There need be nothing admirable about him, since our concern is with the object of attention not its morality.

Undoubtedly, however, both the protagonist and the hero are main or principal characters and are endowed with various qualities. The protagonist is identified as the character undergoing a difficult experience that elicits the attention and sympathy of the reader. Protagonistic attributes are determined by the afflictions encountered in life. Heroic attributes are related to certain ideals and morality. The reader or audience relates to the admirable qualities of the hero.

My concern in this chapter is the role of the protagonist and/or hero, rather than the differences between these characters. I propose, therefore, to use an open approach in evaluating these characters, since there are no universally-accepted definitions which differentiate hero from protagonist. These terms will be used interchangeably in this study.

The principal character directs the plot and instigates action. Where he is not personally involved in the action his influence nevertheless is felt by other characters. It should be noted that a protagonist is usually one individual, but there may be more than one protagonist, in which case we refer to the protagonist camp or group of protagonists. As Smiley (1971:96) says: "Ordinarily, a protagonist is one individual, but groups of protagonists are possible and sometimes necessary."

I shall discuss the character of the protagonist with reference to four plays: BUZANI KUBAWO by Tamsanqa, UMKHONTO KATSHIWO by Ngani, INGALO by Bongela, and AMAZA by Qangule.

There is much controversy among the students of literature regarding the principal or chief character in Tamsanqa's BUZANI KUBAWO. Jafta (1978:119) argues that in BUZANI KUBAWO Zwilakhe is the main character. Mkonto (1984:63) supports Jafta and also contends that Zwilakhe is the main character.

Sobukhwe, cited by Gérard (1971:97), disagrees with these critics and says that it is not Zwilakhe that is the protagonist, but Gugulethu . Gérard (1971:96) agrees that Gugulethu is the chief character. From what has already been said about the principal character I must agree with Gérard and Sobukhwe that Gugulethu is the hero, for the following reasons: he receives most attention from the writer, the other characters and the audience; he is endowed with the qualities, such as volition, interrelation and attractiveness, that are essential for most principal characters, and furthermore, he is a focal character.

Gugulethu's heroic qualities are evident when MaGaba and Nozipho discuss him in Act 1 scene 2:5-7. Two central issues are emphasized by these two last characters: they are concerned, first, about Gugulethu's marriage and, secondly, about Nozipho's dream of Gugulethu's court case and death sentence. In Act 2 scene 1:19-22 Zwilakhe and MaGaba examine the issue of Gugulethu's marriage:

Zwilakhe: *Ukutsho ke uthi makazeke?*

MaGaba: *Bezilapho ezam iingcinga Radebe, andazi ke wena nokuba ubunolunye uluvo olwahlukileyo kolwam kusini na?*

Zwilakhe: *Hayi eneneni akukho nto ndingayichasayo nam kule nto, kuba ngenene mdala uGugulethu, yintanga yokuba anganaye umfazi.*

MaGaba: *Ke ucinga ukuba makaxelelwe nini, kuba sendibona ukuba masingabi salibazisa, masibethe komofu ngoku sesithe sayicinga loo nto.*

(BUZANI KUBAWO 1958:20)

Zwilakhe: Do you suggest that he should get married?

MaGaba: That is what I have been thinking, Radebe. Do you have a different opinion?

Zwilakhe: In fact, I am not opposed to this idea, because it is true that Gugulethu is old enough to be married. He has reached the stage where he needs a wife.

MaGaba: When do you think he should be informed? We should not delay. Let us attend to this matter immediately.

This discussion indicates that Gugulethu's parents are worried about him. Gugulethu has those qualities which are traditionally possessed by the protagonist. The dialogue expresses Zwilakhe and MaGaba's concern and parental love.

Despite their being his parents, it is possible that Gugulethu will not accept their advice. The reason for this is that his parents want him to marry Thobeka, an uneducated woman whom he does not love, whereas Gugulethu is a college student. Zwilakhe and MaGaba are insensitive to their son's real needs.

MaGaba: *Mna zinkosi andikhathali nokuba umntu uchasa ade alale ngomqolo phantsi, ndifuna intombi kaMcothama ize kuruqa amaJalimani kule nkundla nokuba sekumnyam' entla.*

Zwilakhe: ... *yena umfana uza kuzeka intombi kaMcothama. Loo nto ndiza kuyimela, andikhathali nokuba umntu selesithini. Ukuba ndithe uza kuzeka intombi ethandwa ndim, uza kwenza loo nto ke.*

(BUZANI KUBAWO 1958:21)

MaGaba: Personally I do not care what anyone says. Regardless of opposition I want Mcothama's daughter to wear the bride's attire in this family, raining or not.

Zwilakhe: ... he is going to marry Mcothama's daughter. I am going to insist on that. I do not care what anyone says . I have said that he is going to marry the girl of my choice and he is going to do so.

The readers anticipate Gugulethu being forced by his parents to marry a woman who is not of his own choice. Their interest is caught by his reaction to the proposed marriage. The actions in the play are propelled by Gugulethu.

The meeting held by amaHlubi in Act 2 scene 4:29-38 may be regarded as deriving from Gugulethu's antagonistic qualities. The meeting is convened by Zwilakhe to discuss Gugulethu's marriage. Zwilakhe draws attention to Gugulethu in the line: "*Nto nje ndingathi kuni niyambona umfana lo phakathi kwenu. Ukuba ke beringamboni ndingathanda ukuba amehlo enu ndiwatsalele kuye*" (I must say that the young man is among us, for he is in your midst. If you have not seen him I would like to draw your attention to him") (p.30). Zwilakhe's action in holding the meeting, as well as his introductory remarks, may probably be ascribed to his assumption of the African cultural belief that the man is the head of the family, and that the man's word is final. The meeting is a technique employed by the playwright to silence Gugulethu and destroy his future. It should be noted that after this meeting Gugulethu is

frustrated and vows to remain silent about his marriage. His response to all questions is "Ask my father".

Other aspects of Gugulethu's heroic quality is given in Act 3, scenes 3, 4, 5 and 6:51-62. The reason for NomaMpondomise's action is not difficult to establish. NomaMpondomise is being courted by Mcunukelwa when she suddenly terminates her engagement to him. Her action of breaking the engagement is ascribed to her love affair with Gugulethu and Gugulethu's promise to marry her. Although Gugulethu has never been to Ngcolosi, his influence liberates NomaMpondomise, who had been forced by her parents to accept Mcunukelwa, whom she did not love.

What transpires in Act 4 scene 1:63-66 provides evidence that Gugulethu is receiving the greatest attention from the playwright, Tamsanqa, other characters such as the pastor who officiates at the marriage ceremony, ZwiLakhe, and consequently the readers or audience. The enforced marriage takes place. Gugulethu, as the protagonist, makes a statement protesting against taking the marriage vows. He regards this wedding ceremony as a farce. His public refusal to respond positively to the officiating pastor is a sign of bravery, as is his resistance to signing the marriage register. He is maintaining that his life is important, even if only for himself.

Tamsanqa's artistic discretion is apparent in Act 5:74-82, which conveys the news that Gugulethu is married. The subtle manipulation by the playwright of Mzamo's death is an artistically discreet way of announcing to Gugulethu's beloved, NomaMpondomise, that Gugulethu has married another woman. NomaMpondomise reads the news in **Imvo zabaNtsundu**. What Gugulethu has

done, that is, break faith with NomaMpondomise, results in NomaMpondomise's heart-break. Gugulethu is sued by NomaMpondomise. This incident can be interpreted in different ways. First, the revelation that, in NomaMpondomise's opinion, Gugulethu has never been sincere is made in the newspaper announcement, which may be seen as a tragic discovery. Secondly, this tragic discovery is the cause of NomaMpondomise's misery, which is referred to as tragic frustration. This misery, leads to her suicide and MaNyawuza's death, which has taken place in both "unexpected and striking circumstances." This death may be classified as tragic "in ordinary usage":

A tragedy in ordinary usage always implies disaster, usually resulting in death. When death occurs in the natural course of things it cannot fairly be called disastrous as it is hardly a tragedy. To qualify as one it must take place in unexpected and striking circumstances. It must, at least, be in some way remarkable. Death is not an essential. One speaks of the tragic history of the family (implying perhaps insanity or inherited disease), of a tragic end to their hopes not invariably by death, of tragic frustration (a waste of living rather than an end of life), a tragic discovery normally of a dead body, but this phrase is also acceptable to qualify a betrayal, or sudden realisation of misfortune... (Brereton 1968:6).

It is important to note that the point at issue is not who causes these incidents, but a question of focus: who makes things happen, who spurs the dramatic plot forward and who attracts the attention of the playwright? Gugulethu directs the events in this play. The tragic frustrations, tragic discovery and disaster should, to a large extent, be attributed to Gugulethu, as he is responsible for all the actions of the other characters.

It is noted that Gugulethu's protagonistic characteristics feature very markedly in Act 6 scene 4-6:83-103. This is a climax of our long-standing concern about Gugulethu's fate, as well as of the suspense that dominates the play. Both the

characters and the readers are caused to focus their attention on the act of murder committed by Gugulethu, and its consequences.

Gugulethu's absence from home is a traumatic experience for some of the characters. This is why Nyaniso and Mthetho arrive at Umtata intending to take Gugulethu back home. However, he refuses to go home. Mthetho and Gugulethu capture the situation in the following lines:

Mthetho: *Njengabathunywa ke Radebe sofika sithini kuyihlo? Kolunga usinike ilizwi esofika silithethe kuye.*

Gugulethu: *Maze nimxelele ukuba andisoze ndilubeke olwam unyawo apho ndisaphila, ndoza sendingumkhuhlane.*
(BUZANI KUBAWO 1958:85)

Mthetho: As the messengers, Radebe, what are we going to say to your father? You must give us a reply to give to your father.

Gugulethu: Tell him I will never return home alive. I will only return in death.

Gugulethu is not prepared to submit to his father. It is evident that Gugulethu is determined to frustrate his father, despite the fact that his father is supporting two families, his own family and that of Gugulethu's enforced marriage. Gugulethu should be seen as a character who is not hostile to the idea of society itself, but only to those elements of society that are unjust, decadent, repressive and inimical to life. His being adamant is appreciated because it is a technique employed by the playwright to propel the story forward. Subsequently Zwi lakhe is miserable and uncomfortable because it is difficult for him to cope with the dual family problems. His frustration and misery is evident in the lines:

*Kodwa yintoni le ndiyenziwa nguGugulethu? Uthini ngomfazi lo wakhe?...
Ndidiniwe kukondla usapho lwenye indoda yona ingakhathali; ngoko ke
ndinyanzelekile ukuba ndiluthumele.*

(BUZANI KUBAWO 1958:87)

But why does Gugulethu act in this manner? What does he say about his wife?...

I am tired of supporting the family of another man because he does not care, and am therefore forced to send them to him.

Although twelve years have lapsed since Gugulethu had left home to work in Umtata, his influence or spirit haunts his father. For this reason Gugulethu's father then sends Thobeka and the children to be with Gugulethu in Umtata. This action contributes to our sense of Gugulethu's heroic qualities, as it holds the attention of other characters.

Two major incidents which occur in Umtata reinforce Gugulethu's heroic role. Gugulethu murders Thobeka and the children, and is sentenced to death. Tragic frustration has made Gugulethu destroy some of the characters he regards as indirectly responsible that frustration. It should be noted that the playwright, characters and audience focus to a large extent on this section of the play, which may be regarded as the catastrophic end.

The protagonist in Ngani's UMKHONTO KATSHIWO is identified as Tshiwo who possesses protagonistic characteristics in accordance with the requirements for a protagonist as postulated by different literary critics. What is required at this juncture is to assess Ngani's presentation of his protagonist.

To a very large extent, Tshiwo is portrayed as a protagonist. Most importantly, in Act 1 Tshiwo is described as being perturbed by the illness of his daughter,

Nonkosi. Tshiwo's distress affects those around him, that is, members of his family and his councillors, who are portrayed as being sympathetic towards him. The anxiety shown by Tshiwo and his councillors results in the invitation to Dubulegeqa to identify the witches in the community. Tshiwo's motive is revealed in the following lines:

*Zendijonge kulo mbathalala, zekuvele yimbi inebatha! Mntundini,
ndinosizi lwakho, kuba woz' ufele kul' inyala!*

(UMKHONTO KATSHIWO 1964:2)

Should I focus on this fever, and or is there something else! I sympathize with you, the person responsible, because you will die a disgraceful death!

This quotation suggests that Tshiwo is determined to take drastic action against those who have bewitched his daughter. It is for this reason that those convicted in Act 2 are sentenced to be executed. In this way Ngani manipulates his protagonist to direct the dramatic action.

Tshiwo's tyrannical rule begins to turn against him in various ways, as can be seen in Act 3 and Act 4:51-81. First, the execution of the warriors leads to Tshiwo's nation being vulnerable because of the shortage of men. He is victimised by the Khoi, who confiscate his cattle. Secondly, Tshiwo's action causes Khwane to respond to the emotional appeal made to him by those who had been condemned as witches, and who subsequently install Khwane clandestinely as their chief.

Act 5:82-89 is the culmination of Tshiwo's disquietude, to the point where he faces the moment of truth and realizes the faulty action he has embarked on, that is, the extermination of innocent people. He laments: "Kambe ukuzenza

akufani nokwenziwa!" ("Well, I cannot blame anybody but myself!") p.83. Although Tshiwo has been aberrant, in the end reconciliation does take place between him and his followers.

It is apparent from the above discussion that Tshiwo is a protagonist since he conforms to the definition of the protagonist as outlined in this study. The delineation of Tshiwo as a protagonist is skillful and commendable.

In Bongela's *INGALO*, Sidima is portrayed as a central character. It should be noted, however, that Sidima is not a volitional character who instigates incidents. A protagonist who is central without being volitional is referred to as a central character, since he/she is a relatively inactive individual and is also a victim. It is apparent that Sidima, the main character, is victimized by the opposing characters or forces. Sidima, as the president of a film organization, is a good character. The plot in which he is involved moves from placidity to threat and from conflict to victory. The situations are not desirable, but are fearful and distasteful. As a victim of fate Sidima is attacked by evil characters.

As a businessman Sidima is portrayed as having no anxiety or serious problems. He experiences fear, however, when he is accused of murder and is sentenced to seven years imprisonment. These apprehensions are later relieved as evil characters are exposed and punished. Sidima is content at the conclusion of the play (cf: the various situations in which he is involved).

Some literary critics maintain that Lizo is the leading character or protagonist in Qangule's *AMAZA*. This is misleading, as the play has a double protagonist, Lizo and Namhla. This argument is supported by Smiley's contention, already

quoted, p.64 of this study, that a protagonist is one individual, but group protagonists are possible and sometimes necessary.

Mabley (1972:8, 9) maintains that:

The chief characteristic of the protagonist is a desire, usually intense, to achieve a certain goal, and it is the interest of the audience in watching him move toward that objective that constitutes absorption in the play. It is the protagonist's pursuit of his objective that we follow during the course of the play.

It is in these terms that Lizo and Namhla should be regarded as protagonists. Their objective is to be married. This is evident early in the first act:

Lizo: *Sitshayeleva umtshato wethu ke ngoku.*
Namhla: *Ibuhlungu le nto uyithethayo.*
Lizo: *Sitshayeleva sagqiba,*
Ngoku siza kutshata.
Namhla: *Uphi umfundisi?*
Lizo: *Umfundisi luthando lwethu.*

(AMAZA 1974:5)

Lizo: We are preparing for our marriage.
Namhla: What you are saying is very sad.
Lizo: We have completed the preparations, and are now going to get married.
Namhla: Where is the pastor?
Lizo: Love is our pastor.

Setting this dialogue in context, with the view of assessing the objective of the double protagonist, it may be argued that the double protagonist aims at achieving the fundamentals of cordial marital relations, such as love, mutual respect, peace and harmony. It is apparent early in the play that both Lizo and Namhla are determined to accomplish their goal.

Several obstacles, however, obstruct their plans for marriage. First, there are the cultural constraints imposed on them by their parents. Lizo and Namhla hold European values which are in opposition to African values. The more traditional African values hold that marriage should be arranged by the community. Both Lizo and Namhla, as followers of European values, consider this African practice an obstacle to the attainment of their objective. Lizo says:

*Bendingazi ukuba
Singathintelwa zizidenge zamaqaba kwiinjongo zethu.*

(AMAZA 1974:6)

I did not know that we could be kept from our objectives by those ignorant fools.

The double protagonist is here clearly suggesting that the practice of a parent's choosing one's marriage partner is not acceptable. This cultural practice propels the story very far dramatically, as there is active opposition to Lizo and Namhla's marriage. The views of the African community support Sidima and Zodwa's attempts to restrain the double protagonist. Several meetings are held by the community to thwart the objective of the protagonist group. In one of the meetings, for instance, Danile, Namhla's father, comments, with regard to Lizo:

*Ndithi mandinazise maBhele ukuba
Ndifike ingqeke kaVaxa ijoja uNamhla
Xa bendivela kuzonwabela etywaleni.*

(AMAZA 1974:7)

I felt I should summon you, men of the Bhele clan. I found Vaxa's dog smelling Namhla on my return from drinking beer.

Secondly, the conflicts between Sidima and Namhla and between Lizo and Zodwa arise from the first obstacle, that is, the enforced marriage. It may be argued that Lizo and Namhla's brutal behaviour is directed at their enforced partners because of their belief that these partners are the means used by the community to prevent them from achieving their objective. Lizo and Namhla are determined to free themselves from their proposed partners. Act 2 scenes 1 and 2 are concerned with the confrontation between these characters. Namhla insults Sidima:

*Ucikoza oku kanye kukaSathana!
Ndiyeke! suka kum! Nja! Nja!*

(Amaza 1974:21)

You speak just like Satan! Let me alone. Get away from me! Dog! Dog!

Lizo insults Zodwa:

*Ulixelegu elidla umongo wemihlathi...
Ndikucebisa ukuba ndithi ndibuya
Ube sowuthuthile namanyala akho
Kulo mzi kabawo. Uyandiva?*

(AMAZA 1974:22-23)

You are as slovenly as if you eat the marrow of the jaws... My advice is that by the time I return you should have left my father's household with all your lewdness . Do you hear me?

Lizo and Namhla succeed in achieving their secondary objective in that they rid themselves of Sidima and Zodwa. However, their first goal has still not been reached at the time when Sidima and Zodwa are thought to be dead.

The third factor to hinder Lizo and Namhla's marriage develops when the Bhele and Cirha camps agree unanimously that an African custom (**isiko lokungena**) should be imposed on Namhla. This custom relates to a practice observed by several African societies. According to romanticist Africans there can be no compromise concerning this custom. Thus, the Cirha and Bhele clans state:

*Namhla Bhelekazi, sikubizela into eqhelekileyo.
AmaCirha anqwenela ukuvusa umyeni wakho ngomnye woonyana...
Isiko lisiko akuthandiswa wena.*

(AMAZA 1974:61)

Namhla Bhelekazi, we have summoned you for a common practice. The Cirha wish to resurrect your husband by marrying you to one of their sons... This is a custom, and may not be opposed.

This presents a problem for the protagonist camp. It is not possible for Lizo to offer himself to the Cirha and Bhele camps as a husband for Namhla, as he does not belong to the house of Cirha, and is therefore considered a foreigner. It is thus impossible for Lizo to exploit this opportunity from the Cirha and Bhele camps.

The fourth conflict arises as Lizo and Namhla attempt to secure their marriage. They are advised by Silumko to go to Sidima's tomb and bury the snake which is the obstacle to their attaining their objective. When they arrive at Sidima's grave they are surprised to meet Sidima and Zodwa, who were said to be dead, there. Both couples are placed under arrest by Silumko.

It is apparent from the above discussion that the protagonist camp does not achieve its goal. This is not a failure on the part of the playwright, for the

attainment of this goal by the protagonist camp would mean that African culture is no longer relevant. Qangule should be applauded for the skilful and commendable way in which his play explores the relationship between literature and society and, in particular, examines aspects of contemporary African experience.

THE ANTAGONIST

Sirayi (1989a:173) defines the antagonist as the character who acts in opposition to the protagonist. He or she is bent on thwarting the efforts and purposes of the protagonist. Sirayi also maintains that the antagonist is the second principal character. Smiley (1971:97) agrees that the second most important character in most plays is the antagonist. The primary function of an antagonist is to oppose the protagonist.

The discussion of the plays being studied will be in line with the foregoing opinions. It should be noted that at times the antagonist is called the villain, but in this study these two concepts are used interchangeably. More significantly, many antagonists are as important as their opposing protagonists. Furthermore, there can be a double antagonist, or characters constituting the antagonist camp who can be termed a group of antagonists (Smiley 1971:97 and Sirayi 1989:173).

BUZANI KUBAWO has double antagonists. ZwiLakhe and MaGaba are the obstacles to Gugulethu's achievement of his objective or goal. They oppose the protagonist. Since the idea of Gugulethu's marriage is introduced to

Zwilakhe by MaGaba, it may be argued that she plays a more prominent role than Zwilakhe. Mark MaGaba's remarks:

Mna zinkosi andikhathali nokuba umntu uchasa ade alale ngomqolo phantsi, ndifuna intombi kaMcothama ize kuruqa amaJalimani kule nkundla nokuba sekumnyam'entla.

(BUZANI KUBAWO 1974:21)

Personally I do not care what anyone says. Regardless of opposition I want Mcothama's daughter to wear the bride's attire in this family, raining or not.

Zwilakhe first informs Gugulethu that he should get married. Secondly, he informs the Radebe clan that Gugulethu cannot marry a girl of his own choice. Zwilakhe's action can be attributed to the fact that he has asserted to his wife, MaGaba, that Gugulethu may not be allowed to marry a girl of his own choice. In fact all his actions throughout the play should be attributed to what he has said to his wife.

Ngani in his *UMKHONTO KATSHIWO* introduces superstitions or mysterious powers or supernatural forces to wrestle with the protagonist, Tshiwo. Mabley (1972:6) states that "drama is the representation of the will of man in conflict with the mysterious power or natural forces which limit or belittle us."

It becomes very clear that Tshiwo is opposed to the supernatural power, death, which, according to Tshiwo, is caused by witchcraft. Throughout the early acts of this play Ngani uses mysterious powers to provoke Tshiwo into action. Death is employed by the author as an obstacle to prevent Tshiwo from

establishing a serene nation. Some characters become victims. It needs to be emphasized that this is a logical consequence of superstition.

Bongela in *INGALO* portrays Themba as the villain. Themba is totally evil. Smiley (1971:97) remarks that "most antagonists in melodrama are totally evil, they are properly called villains, and they deserve the punishment they usually receive."

Themba opposes Sidima, protagonist or hero. Before his arrest Sidima asks questions to heighten interest, expectations and concern about Joweli's death. Soon thereafter he is arrested because he is accused of being responsible for Joweli's death. It is important to realize that Joweli is killed by Themba because of jealousy, for both Sidima and Joweli have been prospering in their business. Themba is exposed as a real criminal before the end of the play. He is charged with three things: Joweli's death, Sidima's arrest and Nondzondelelo's death. The law punishes him.

In Qangule's *AMAZA* Sidima and Zodwa constitute the antagonist camp. This will be discussed in detail in the second paragraph of the following subsection.

In concluding this subsection, it should be pointed out that other kinds of characters, such as the tritagonist, the foil, and the messenger, have not been discussed, because the two kinds discussed above are sufficient to convey some idea of the part played by the characters in a dramatic text.

CHARACTER AND SOCIETY

While characters in a drama are fictitious, as I have discussed in the above subsection, they can be more or less recognisable as historical or actual human beings. They are representations of people apprehended in the actual world. They illustrate various moral or philosophical standpoints. The writer is engaged in an act of communication, conducting a dialogue between himself and society through his characters. His work as a writer is a product of a number of interrelated influences, economic, social, political, religious, and so on. As a member of a society he uses characters to depict the beliefs, the morals, the laws, the customs and any other mores acquired by man as a member of society (Glicksberg 1972:140-141, Mbughuni 1978:249 and Greenblatt 1990:225-226). This subsection aims to examine the characters as true representatives of their time.

In Qangule's AMAZA, Sidima and Zodwa constitute the antagonist camp. They represent the section of the African community that holds traditional values. They attempt to expose and denounce European values by opposing the marriage of Lizo and Namhla, who represent the modern community. In all drama characters represent the life of society; in my examples, they represent African society in particular. Hence Sidima and Zodwa are regarded as representing the life of the traditional Xhosa society.

It is obvious that the traditionalists are an obstacle to the protagonist camp. This is evident when Lizo comments:

*Bendingazi ukuba
Singathintelwa zizidenge zamaqaba kwiinjongo zethu.*

(AMAZA 1974:6)

I did not know that we could be kept from our objectives by those ignorant fools.

Lizo and Namhla first harass their spouses, that is, Sidima and Zodwa. Secondly, Lizo kills Sidima (Duma) and Zodwa (Port Elizabeth) to make possible his marriage to Namhla. The traditionalists produce yet another obstacle (**ukungena custom**), and Namhla is forced to marry either Duma or Lunga. The playwright uses Silumko to suggest that both the traditionalists and modernists should go to the graveyard. To Lizo and Namhla's surprise Sidima and Zodwa are still alive.

Qangule, in AMAZA, is actually reconciling the African culture with modern values. No culture should be imposed on another culture. No culture should be mystified or romanticized. Hence neither camps succeed.

It has been noticed in Tamsanqa's BUZANI KUBAWO that Zwilakhe and MaGaba represent an African community that supports the custom that a marriage is agreed upon by the parents without the consent of the prospective husband or wife. This is evident when Zwilakhe says:

Lisiko enakha naliva phi elo apha emaHlubini, eli lokuba umfana azibonele umfazi oyise bekho bengafanga?... Uza kuxelelwa ndim intombi ama keze nayo kulo wakowethu umzi, intombi eza kundondla.

(BUZANI KUBAWO 1956:32).

Did you ever hear about a custom here among the Hlubis where the young man chooses the wife himself while his father is still alive?... I am going to tell him which girl he must bring to this household, the girl who is going to support me.

Despite the foregoing assertion, however, it is apparent that Zwilakhe is romanticizing and distorting African culture, for the custom to which he refers above was never enforced. Being traditional does not mean being static. From time immemorial African marriage has been based on negotiation. Soga (1931:227) recognizes the negotiations accompanying an African marriage as a dynamic relationship between the parents and their children, for he says that it was customary in early times for the father of a marriageable daughter to look around for a suitable husband for her. If they found one they would send him an assegai. This was regarded as a proposal of marriage. If the young man was not interested, he would return the assegai; if he were interested he kept the assegai. There are other forms of the initial moves in the marriage negotiations. Marriage was always negotiated, except in the case of **ukuthwala**.

Zwilakhe's vigorous re-mythification of the custom shows his inconsistency because the issue of Gugulethu's marriage is supposed to be discussed, next to the cattle-kraal, by the fathers of the prospective bride and groom, but in this case Zwilakhe and his brothers are in the hut. Furthermore, the marriage ceremony is conducted in the church in a European manner. More importantly, other characters remind Zwilakhe that customs change.

The characteristics of Zwilakhe and MaGaba imply that they represent the part of the community that resists change and romanticizes precolonial values. Gugulethu, to a very large extent, symbolises the African community which feels that colonialism, with its new values and cultural institutions, introduced modern culture, and that there was nothing wrong in borrowing from other cultures so as to promote cultural dynamism.

With regard to Ngani's *UMKHONTO KATSHIWO* it is obvious that Tshiwo demonstrates how tyrannical the African kings could be. This is evident when Tshiwo orders Khwane, the appointed executioner, to execute the victims of superstition. Tshiwo represents the African traditional community, with its savage methods of punishment without proof that someone is guilty. It is clear that the king's decision cannot be questioned by the councillors. Therefore, some African leaders were dictators.

In Bongela's *INGALO* the playwright depicts the complications which are introduced by the European economy, based on capitalism, into the African communalism '*ubuntu*'. The conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist may be attributed to the selfishness, greed and cruelty which are caused by the spirit of capitalism.

In concluding this subsection I should like to point out that the characters discussed in this study are representations of common men in the actual world. However, it has been noticed that they do not reflect everything that surrounds them; they do not reflect political issues. The issues that are reflected are the social, the economic, and the religious. The writer's characters do not address political issues, such as the suffering, under oppressive and exploitative measures, that Africans endure from the government. However, the lack of attention to political issues can be attributed to the government and its agents, such as the publishers and the language boards, who stifle any publication that identifies the political abnormalities of the government. Sirayi (1989b:13) states:

The said powers enact censorship laws, which restrict the circulation of sensitive literature; the publishers make sure that such laws are observed

through the use of, inter alia, publishing advisers, language boards' members, who possess the expertise to identify, among other things, the so-called "political tendencies", which are the very tendencies that assert themselves in the popular African literatures written in European languages.

MODES OF CHARACTER DELINEATION

Characters may be delineated in various ways, chiefly by means of their appearance, dialogue, the characters' actions, declarations by other characters, and naming.

APPEARANCE

By appearance, we mean descriptions of the physical appearance of the character, or of qualities that may suggest the character's personality. Kernan (1969:9) claims that physical features are usually expressions of motives.

It cannot be doubted that physical qualities capture the attention of the reader. The character's mode of attire helps the reader to understand the character. The character's physical appearance is established by the playwright, for example, mark Mbulawa's presentation of Bheka's physical features:

... Umfo ononcumo osilevu sitsolo kuthi mjonge kodwa ujikwe ngamehlo akhe ahlabaya.

(MAMFENE 1962:81)

... the man with a smile, his chin is long, you are tempted to look at him but his sharp eyes scare you.

Bheka's physical appearance, as described above, tallies with his role as presented in the dramatic text. He is a threat to Jezula, who is evil. Qangule's description of Namhla's physical appearance is significant: "... *umlomo uwuqabe bomvu krwe, uthwele iwiki, iinwele uziphothile*". ("... her mouth is painted red, her head is covered by a wig, her hair is plaited") (p. 1). The conflict and death that emerge in the pages that follow the above quotation are foreshadowed in Qangule's description, for a mouth painted red and plaited hair indicate danger and mourning. The reader is not surprised when conflict occurs, because it has been foreshadowed by these words.

DIALOGUE

There are various types of dialogue, such as song, monologue and duologue, the term dialogue being used as a blanket term to cover all such concepts. According to Mabley, (1972:29), dialogue performs various functions: it depicts the speaker and the person spoken to; it reflects the relationship of the speaker to other characters; it reflects the speaker's mood, conveys his emotion; it foreshadows what is to come for the characters.

Dialogue is therefore one of the tools employed by the playwright to delineate his characters. The reader is able to assess the nature of the character through the dialogue. In *INENE NASI ISIBHOZO* Mtingane establishes MaSukude's cruel personality through the dialogue that takes place between her and MaDlamini:

MaDlamini: *Ungumntu na wena MaSukude, esi sikhohlakali?*

MaSukude: *Ningabantu nina ezi zinto?*

MaDlamini: *Uphi uThemba sikhohlakalindini?*

MaSukude: *UThemba ntoni, ntondini?*
MaDlamini: *UThemba wemkiswa yile nkohlakalo yakho*

(INENE NASI ISIBHOZO 1965:2)

MaDlamini: Are you human, MaSukude, you cruel person?
MaSukude: Are you a human being, you rubbish?
MaDlamini: Where is Themba, you cruel person?
MaSukude: What about Themba, you rubbish?
MaDlamini: Your cruelty is responsible for Themba's leaving.

From this dialogue, that is, dramatic speech which involves an interchange between two people, I conclude that MaSukude is very cruel and cannot relate to other characters. Her cruelty has caused Themba to leave, which we gather from this flashback.

Ntloko in UNGODONGWANA presents Dingiswayo as a brave young man:

Dingiswayo: *Inkosi mayixole, ndizise eli thole lengonyama endilibambe emadlelweni.*
Bhungane: *Awu, mfana, wenze njani?*
Dingiswayo: *Ndifike lilele, unina engekho, kucaca ukuba usaye kufuna into etyiwayo, ndalithabatha.*
Bhungane: *Ingonyamakazi iyinto enengcwangu nje, ayililandelanga? Uthi ayilalisanga ekhondweni ngoku?*
Dingiswayo: *Nkosi andinaloyiko kuba ndixhobe ndaphelela Andililo igwala.*

(UNGODONGWANA 1976:21).

Dingiswayo: King, peace be with you. I have brought what I have caught in the grazing-lands.
Bhungane: Alas! young man, how did you do that?
Dingiswayo: It was asleep. The lioness was away. It was clear that she had gone out for food and then I took it.
Bhungane: The lioness did not follow? The lioness is very vicious. Don't you think she is following you now?
Dingiswayo: King, I am not afraid because I am well armed. I am not a coward.

This dialogue establishes Dingiswayo as a brave young man, for not everybody is brave enough to face a lion. It is not surprising to see Dingiswayo becoming king of abaThethwa nation. One expects something like that from the heroic features reflected in this dialogue.

In UMKHONTO KATSHIWO Magwaza, one of the executioners, points out that Tshiwo, the king of the Xhosa, and his councillors are without mercy. Magwaza's monologue reflects Tshiwo's relationship with his nation. He is portrayed as a tyrant that executes innocent people (see pp. 32-33). This soliloquy indicates that Magwaza is dismayed and heart-broken because of the killing of the innocent people. As Tennyson (1966:35) remarks concerning the convention of the soliloquy: "... characters usually utter soliloquies in moments of great distress. Such speeches are not mumbled, but delivered clearly and for full effect to the audience."

Regarding song as a form of dialogue, Esslin (1987:88) points out that song is a vehicle to express the state of mind of the character; it provides a powerful "subtext" by indicating the moods, the hidden thoughts, and emotions of the characters.

A song is sung by Nozipho, Gugulethu's sister in Tamsamqa's BUZANI KUBAWO, at the beginning of the play:

*Dili-i-ka Thando,
Dilika Thando lwam,
Dili-i-ka Thando lwam
Dili-i-i-ka Thando, lwam!*

(BUZANI KUBAWO 1958:1)

Fall Love,
Fall my Love,
Fall my Love,
Fall my Love!

Before I comment on the song, it should be noted that Nozipho is a chorus or background character who is used to delineate the social context surrounding the character who is emerging as the major character (see Sirayi 1989:174). Though Nozipho is oblivious of the meaning or message of the song, it can be interpreted as foreshadowing the destruction of the love between Gugulethu and NomaMpondomise. The use of the capital letter "L" for love and the exclamation mark indicates that this is not an ordinary love, and further buttresses the contention that the song refers to the collapse of the future love between Gugulethu and NomaMpondomise. Nozipho is not in love and she does not anticipate being in love. It is Gugulethu who is going to be in love with NomaMpondomise. Taking into account that Nozipho is a chorus character, it could be argued, therefore, that this song is related to Gugulethu's dubious matrimonial future. It needs to be emphasized that this song does not refer to Nozipho's mood, thoughts and emotions, but to her brother's situation.

Gugulethu is drinking beer. Suddenly he sings:

I want to be ready
I want to be ready
I want to be ready
To walk in Jerusalem
Just like John.

(BUZANI KUBAWO 1958:12)

Gugulethu does not realize the implication of this song. As Katengo and Mwale (1986:476) state, people enjoy whatever they may be doing without

realising its implications when they join in beautiful rhyming songs or choruses. In this song Gugulethu seems to be curious and excited. As reader I conclude that Gugulethu's days are numbered.

In Ngani's **UMKHONTO KATSHIWO** the traditional songs are sung on certain occasions. As Katengo and Mwale (1986:476) state:

Traditional lyrics are developed from certain occurrences to express aesthetically deep personal feelings. They are used to praise great people or any situation. This particular language aspect has strong aesthetic appeal.

In Ngani's **UMKHONTO KATSHIWO** Dubulegeqa, a diviner, is trying to find the witch who is responsible for Nonkosi's illness. His work is accompanied by incantation. The song is initiated by the diviner and the clients respond as follows:

*Emva phay' abantwana bayalila
Yaphel'imizi leli gqira liyanuka
Tyhini yaphela ligqira liyanuka.
Yhu ndahletywa ngulo mntu ndihamba naye.
Yhu ndahletywa ngulo mntu ndihamba naye ...*

(UMKHONTO KATSHIWO 1974: 14 -15)

At the home the children are crying
Our homes are finished by this smelling out diviner.
Oh, they are finished by a diviner, he is smelling out.
Alas, I am scandalised by this person with whom I walk
Alas, I am scandalised by this person with whom I walk ...

This song has double significance. First, it is meant to heighten the diviner's emotion. Secondly, the clients are expressing their deep personal experience.

They know that anyone can be the culprit, for the whole ritual is connected with suspicion and superstition. Both significances have consequences: the diviner becomes emotionally involved, and innocent people are smelt out. On pp. 54 and 84 other songs are sung by the victims of superstition. These songs are sung to praise Khwane for the plan of salvation he has suggested to the people.

In INENE NASI ISIBHOZO Mtingane portrays Themba expressing his love for his girl friend Vuyiswa. In a song:

Kukho intwazan'endiyithandayo,
Izulisa umoya wam.
Andikhathali nokuba kutheni,
Ukhona uVuyi wam.
Vuyi sobabini mntwana kamama,
Sokwahlulwa kukufa.

(INENE NASI ISIBHOZO 1965: 38)

There is a young woman that I love,
She moves my spirit.
I do not care what happens,
My Vuyi is available.
Vuyi my sister, both of us,
It is only death that will part us

This song suggests an atmosphere of peace, hope and happiness. This song also indicates an anticipated state of affairs, that is, the marriage between Themba and Vuyiswa.

THE CHARACTERS' ACTIONS

Hatlen (1975:18) points out that a character's actions give us clues to his motives. He goes on to say that sometimes the playwright may choose to create an initial impression that is misleading or ambiguous, and then gradually reveal the truth as the play unfolds.

In *MAMFENE* Jezula is presented as a villainous character and an obstacle to Kheswa's pastoral work. By the end of the play he is completely changed. This also applies to Tamsanqa's play, for at its end Zwilakhe abandons his initial belief. Ntloko, in *UNGODONGWANA*, offers a good illustration of Hatlen's statement, because Ngodongwana in the early acts of the play is presented as an ordinary boy, in the middle of the play his name is changed to Dingiswayo, and at the end becomes the king of abaThethwa nation. Tshiwo, in the early acts of the play, *UMKHONTO KATSHIWO*, is a dictator, killing innocent people, but at the end of the play he relates well to his subjects.

DECLARATIONS BY OTHER CHARACTERS

What the other characters say about a character, and the way in which they react to him or her, allows us to form an opinion about a character sometimes even before he or she appears in the play (see Hatlen 1975:19).

Mtywaku, in *UFEZIWE OKANYE INKOHHLAKALO*, offers a good example of what Hatlen says, because MamCirha depicts Nowikhithi as a rude and crude character with a strong personality:

Hini le! Uza kufundela kum ukubetha umfazi? Njengokuba uNowikhedi [Nowikhithi] ethetha kugqibele ngaye nje wakha wayicinga khona kwa-into yokumlingisa?

(UFEZIWE OKANYE INKOHHLAKALO 1982:2-3)

What! are you going to start with me as far as beating wives is concerned? Is Nowikhithi too strong for you that you have never thought of threatening her?

Nowikhithi is very domineering when she talks to her husband, Kwedinana. MamCirha's opinion of Nowikhithi is confirmed later in the play, for she is shown as very crude when speaking to Kwedinana. Nomhle, in Mbulawa's UMAMFENE, is explicit in portraying Jezula's character. We as readers begin to realize that he does not honour his father and this has led to his expulsion. He is proud, egocentric and a disgrace to the family (see p.28-29). In Qangule's AMAZA Lizo, in a very straightforward manner, establishes that Zodwa is lazy, and is very untidy and disorderly. This judgement is conveyed in various ways through the use of metaphors and symbolism. He mentions pigs, chicken, lice, cockroaches, dogs, children, and flies in connection with Zodwa's untidiness (see p.21). He also declares: "*Ulixelegu elidla umongo wemihlathi*". ("You are a sloven who eats the marrow of jaws") (p. 22).

NAMING

In literature naming is one of the crucial modes of character delineation, and most particularly in African literature. Names sometimes identify a character's attributes. Naming as a literary technique is the oldest which is culture bound in the African context. In various cultures the proper name suggests the formation of personality, and such names sometimes indicate character types.

Simply put, naming is a creative act performed at birth, and at christening ceremonies. It is important to note that, at a later stage, if the person does not conform to his natal name, the community from which he emerges, after having read his character more correctly, may give him a new name. Naming is often as creative in the socio-cultural context as it is in the literary. It is based on historical events, and the taste and wishes of the parents. A person's physical appearance and psychological make-up and traits are taken into consideration when names are given. Various critics argue that titles, epithets, and role descriptions are more commonly exploited in African literature than are other traditional forms of naming (see Izevbaye, 1981:168-170, Sirayi, 1989:83).

The foregoing exposition implies that a name sometimes predetermines a character's or person's whole future. This is what some critics call "the African belief in the magic power of the word". It should also be pointed out that the naming technique is not peculiar to names of characters only, but is also used with respect to events. The names of characters, titles and events can be synthesized in order to portray some character in a story.

I do not subscribe to the notion of the African belief in the magic power of the word being peculiarly African, for naming is as old as the creation of man. It can be argued that in biblical times a name was more than a mere title or means of identification. It was associated with reputation or character. It could suggest what the character was, what he was like, what he had done and what he might become (see Genesis 16:11; 17:5, 15; 32:28). The Hebrews, like other ancient near-Eastern peoples, attached great significance to personal names. Their names had a literal meaning, sometimes symbolic of the

character and personality of the people they designated, and sometimes reflecting moods or feelings. Because of cross cultural similarities naming is not limited to African communities. However, our emphasis is on the African practice which surfaces in African literature, and in Xhosa literature in particular.

In the title, UFEZIWE OKANYE INKOHHLAKALO, Mtywaku names the theatre of cruelty from which his characters emerge. The attributes of some of the major characters in the play are suggested in its title, where "Inkohlakalo" means "cruelty". This makes one expect evil characters. The whole socio-geographical context from which the characters emerge is basically evil. The geographical context is identified as Nkqonkweni village. Feziwe, the central character, is a daughter of affluent parents, although her father is dead. After the death of MamCirha Feziwe is left with her cruel relatives, Kwedinana and Nowikithi. They abuse Feziwe. Therefore Kwedinana and Nowikithi perform exactly as is implied by "Inkohlakalo". Izevbaye (1981:168) writes:

Even if a man starts off with an arbitrarily chosen, meaningless name today, at his death he would leave a name behind whose significance is positive or negative according to how he has conducted himself in the world.

No doubt Kwedinana and Nowikithi would have been meaningless names but at their death these characters leave behind names whose significance is negative. It is enough to say they are evil characters. We arrive at this term "evil" after having observed their characters and their psychological traits that are summarized at the end of the play (see: 76; 80; 81). Kwedinana confesses that he is cruel after having recognized the evil of his actions. At his death he says:

Fezi-we-ndi-yi-ha-mbi-le indle-la. Ndifi-ki-le esi- phe- -lwe -ni. Inko-hla-ka-lo indi-fu-me-ne ndi-fa-ndi-yi-nkwa-mba.

(UFEZIWE OKONYE INKOHAKALO 1982:76)

Feziwe, I have travelled this way. I have arrived at the destination. Cruelty has recoiled on me. I am dying being useless.

What is contained in the title of this play forecasts the action of some of the characters.

In the above discussion it has been mentioned that if a character does not conform to his natal name, the community from which he emerges may give him or her a new name. Ntloko in UNGODONGWANA uses this technique. For example, Ngodongwana, a central character, is given a natal name. This name is meaningless and is arbitrarily chosen. Ngodongwana changes his name "Ngodongwana" to Dingiswayo, meaning "to be sent away from his country or home". Ngodongwana gives himself this name after having understood his socio-political handicaps. His first name, Ngodongwana, has no significance and "its meaning is lost". The name, Dingiswayo, is pregnant with meaning, as Dingiswayo establishes:

Qonda ke Mbangambi ukuba eli gama lam linguDingiswayo lelona gama losetyenziswa. ElikaNgodongwana lafa kunye nokumka kwam kweli lizwe ndisaba ingqumbo kaBawo uJobe.

(UNGODONGWANA 1976:28)

Note, Mbangambi, that my name Dingiswayo is the actual name to be used. The name Ngodongwana died when I fled this country, running away from the wrath of my father, Jobe.

The naming in this play is also based on historical events, that is, the conflict in the house of Jobe and the manner in which Dingiswayo becomes king of the abaThethwa nation. Dingiswayo therefore is a name connected to the known historical crisis in the history of the abaThethwa nation. The name Dingiswayo is in accord with what Izevbaye (1981:168) calls "the undying importance of the archetypal context of names."

Mtingane, in his *INENE NASI ISIBHOZO*, uses the naming technique to help portray some of his major characters. MaSukude's natal name is unknown because it is not given. MaSukude is a clan name. A clan name is given to all married women according to their clans, houses and next of kin. This practice is usually determined by region. In some regions the prefix "ma" is used and some regions "no" is used. This is very common among the amaXhosa. Soga (1931:241) claims:

When a woman marries she is given a new name... The choice of a name for a married woman is comparatively a simple matter as there is a wide field and limitless subjects from which to make selection. Among the amaXhosa the names of animate and inanimate objects and mere words coined for their sounds are taken advantage of.

The foregoing discussion establishes that MaSukude is not the character's original name. It is a name which indicates that she is in a school from which she will never graduate, that is, a school of marriage.

Having closely observed MaSukude's character, I conclude, after having seen what she does to other characters, such as MaDlamini and Themba, that she is very cruel and treacherous. MaDlamini calls MaSukude a cruel woman (see p.2). Themba flees to Cape Town because he is harassed by MaSukude. She

kills Themba with poison. She also kills Vuma, but by mistake, for the poison that kills Vuma was intended for Lolo. Eventually MaSukude hangs herself.

Although the name "MaSukude" is socio-culturally important, it does not help us to identify her character or reputation. However, her cruel and treacherous actions enable me to conclude correctly that MaSukude is a messenger of darkness.

Izevbaye (1981:170) writes:

The other characters are mainly role performers or title holders... In works that are mainly role oriented, the emphasis is on the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of roles.

This is evident in Ngani's UMKHONTO KATSHIWO. Tshiwo was a king of the Xhosa in the early eighteenth century. He is given two names that suggest his role or socio-political position. His community calls him as "Mhlekazi", "meaning most beautiful one", and his salutation is "A! Gwebityala!". Both names symbolise Tshiwo's role. The second name "Gwebityala" suggests an atmosphere of horror or cruelty in which witches are destroyed. At the end of the play, an atmosphere of horror is replaced by a state of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Khwane, one of the councillors, is an executioner appointed to execute all those who have been smelt out by the traditional doctors. Initially Khwane carries out the orders as the appointed executioner. Khwane experiences a drastic personality change and this change is symbolised by his being appointed to be the king of the Gqunukhwebes. This change is also symbolized by a

renaming or salutation "A! Sobantu!!" This salutation defines Khwane's role as well as his attributes or reputation.

Both Tshiwo and Khwane fulfill their roles as kings. They are reconciled to each other and their names are changed to suit their positions. Izevbaye (1981:169 and 170) says:

This form of names (that is, titles, epithets, and role descriptions) seems more commonly exploited in African literature than other traditional forms... the characters in African literature are often named as role performers and there are characters who lose their natal names on their initiation into office.

In conclusion, it should be mentioned that the plays being studied all are good examples of naming technique, although I have not discussed all of them. Naming helps to identify characters. Names also are socially significant in various ways. Characterisation to a very large extent is based on the naming process. The roles and features of characters are identified through the naming technique. Names are related to development of theme, plot and other literary aspect of the plays.

In this chapter I have arrived at the following conclusions. First, the characters have been portrayed according to their roles in the dramatic text. While I have acknowledged the fact that a protagonist is one individual, however, I have advanced an opinion that a dramatic text may have more than one protagonist, that is, there may be a protagonist camp, such as Lizo and Namhla in Qangule's AMAZA. This argument is also applicable to the antagonist, for it has been argued that characters who constitute the antagonist camp are said to be a group such as ZwiLakhe and MaGaba in Tamsanqa's BUZANI

KUBAWO. Secondly, the characters employed by the various dramatists are not mere puppets meant to decorate the development of the dramatic narrative. They are not just free-floating individuals. The playwrights have very successfully portrayed them in such a manner that they divulge different social beliefs of the African communities. Some characters propagate modernism and some reflect traditionalism. Ngani, in *UMKHONTO KATSHIWO*, has, through his characters, successfully communicated the African's philosophy of life during the precolonial period. Thirdly, it has been discovered that the characters employed are intended to divulge a morality, that is, they show how good triumphs over evil and the clash of cultural values, and these dominating themes are based on economic, social, and religious issues. The political misery, frustrations and insecurity of the Africans are not reflected. Fourthly, various modes of characters portrayal have been used to examine the plays. It has been noted that the playwrights utilize these modes. I have contextualized my examination of the characters. I emphasize that my analysis is made in context, for otherwise much great harm, that will take centuries to correct, can be done to African literature in South Africa. It is not easy to correct damage of any kind done to literature.

In attempting to examine how characters have been delineated African culture has been taken into consideration. It has been impossible to neglect the influence of European culture, because Xhosa drama, like any other drama, has borrowed from European culture.

CHAPTER 6

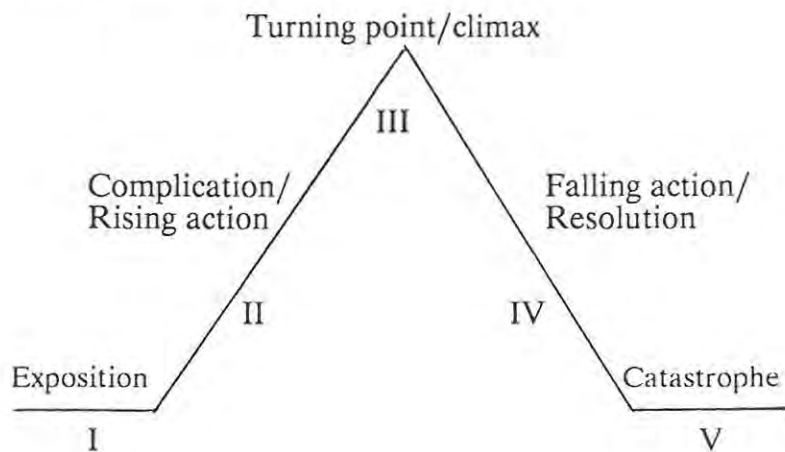
THE STRUCTURAL DYNAMICS OF XHOSA MODERN DRAMA

This chapter examines the dramatic structure of Xhosa modern drama. In the Eurocentric tradition, based to a large extent on Freytag's pyramid, structural terms such as exposition, rising action, climax or turning point, falling action or resolution and catastrophe are used to discuss drama. However, my examination of Xhosa modern drama will resist stereotypes and will focus on the uniqueness of each play.

DRAMATIC STRUCTURE DEFINED

European traditional critics define dramatic structure or plot as the arrangement of events and actions in a story to convey a theme, the arrangement requiring a causal connection. Dietrick and Sundell (1974:115) state that "traditionally, plot required a causal connection between events in fiction, as well as a thematic connection; but recent developments in fiction have made it advisable to loosen the definition to require only a thematic connection." Alternbernd and Lewis (1966:16) maintain that: "the playwright orders and connects the events in a story to form a plot, a causal or motivated sequence of actions which introduce a conflict into the lives of a group of characters...". Hubenka and Garcia (1973:11) consider that the plot "consists of an arranged story whose parts are linked by a cause and effect relationship", and Peck and Coyle (1989:11) consider that plot "takes account of the nature of characters, the way in which events are related to each other and their dramatic effect."

These three definitions all reflect a theory propounded by Freytag as cited by Hubenka and Garcia (1973:14). This theory is rigid and exclusive. We should remember that Freytag was a German critic, and his argument or theory was based on Elizabethan tragedies. He diagrammed a pyramidal structure of the sequence of actions in a drama:



This pattern may be applied to African drama if it seems appropriate, but if it does not seem appropriate African playwrights should not be discredited; they have not failed Freytag's test, but Freytag's theory has failed when tested against African drama. As Hubenka and Garcia point out: "This pattern can be applied with some success to many dramas, especially tragedies, but it cannot be given universal application" (1973:14).

Since the time when Freytag propounded his theory many critics have tried to arrive at new theories that would accommodate all forms of drama, such as comedy, melodrama, and so on, but they also all produced a formula of a rising and falling action of some kind. In other words, they merely modify Freytag's model. Levitt (1971:13) criticizes Freytag's model:

To define structure as the pattern of rising and falling action in a play and to undertake an analysis using this definition, can only lead to the

general conclusion that there are moments of emotional crisis and moments of lull in a play, and that they can be described and located. But such a reading does not determine a play's structure. It tells us only that a play entertains by inciting emotions to a varying degree.

Levitt, in opposing Freytag's theory, points out that there is nothing like a universal formula, that is, a universal plot, that can accommodate and satisfy all critics and be relevant to all dramas. In this study I advance the argument that Western-oriented theories of literature must not be imposed on African literature because this has the effect of destroying and subverting African literature. Conversely, I also feel that, although Freytag's theory is exclusive, we should nevertheless appreciate his contribution because, traditional as it is, it serves as a basis for modern theories.

STRUCTURAL TECHNIQUES

TIME AND SPACE

In this chapter I shall attempt to employ Kunene's theory of literature as modified by Kezilahabi. I shall refer to other African critics should the need arise.

Kezilahabi argues that Kunene's theory of time and space is cyclical. It should be noted, however, that Kezilahabi is working within the African concept of time and space. In this study time and space are regarded as part of dramatic structure for there would be no time and space without structure, just as there would be no structure without time and space. Mbiti, cited by Kezilahabi, (1985:117) reckons time in the following way:

6 a.m. -	milking time
12 noon	- cattle and people rest in pasture
1 p.m. -	time for drawing water before cattle pollute it
2 p.m. -	time for cattle to drink
	etc.

Kezilahabi emphasizes that "the day closes at 7 p.m. which is milking time again. This completes the circle which is the basic characteristic of the African concept of time." These statements disclose the African concept of time, but do not nullify the idea of structure.

In African societies the months of the year are named according to crucial events, or weather, as follows:

January	-	<i>EyoMqungu</i> (The rising of the tall grass called Tambooki)
February	-	<i>EyomDumba</i> (When pod-bearing trees are carrying pods)
March	-	<i>EyoKwindla</i> (Harvest month)
April	-	<i>Utshaz'iimpuzi</i> (When the pumpkins are frost bitten)
May	-	<i>UCanzibe</i> (When the star called Saturn makes its appearance)
June	-	<i>Isilimela</i> (The Pleiades: the beginning of the Xhosa year)
July	-	<i>EyeNtlaba</i> (When the aloe bursts into flower)
August	-	<i>EyeThupha</i> (When the trees begin to bud)
September	-	<i>EyoMsintsi</i> (When the African tree blossoms)
October	-	<i>EyeDwarha</i> (When the ragwort, small variety, is in blossom)
November	-	<i>EyeNkanga</i> (When the ragwort, large variety, is in bloom)
December	-	<i>EyoMnga</i> (When the acacia is in full bloom)

The illustration given above is an example of African structure, based on the twelve months in the Xhosa year. This shows that, among the Africans, life is cyclical and existential, but I do not suggest that this is not the case in other cultures. Soyinka (1990-10) emphasizes that:

Traditional thought operates not on a linear conception of time but a cyclic reality. One does not suggest for a moment that this is peculiar to the Yoruba or to the African world-view.

It is against this background that I suggest that in African literature time and space and structure are synonymous. As Carlos Rowe (1990:23) points out, virtually every twentieth century theorist using "structure" as a key term recognizes the interrelation of time and space as fundamental to the concept of structurality. In practice, however, many of these same theorists tend to subordinate time to space. This tendency to treat time as governed by space may be said to be characteristic of most important modern uses of the term "structure."

JOURNEY MOTIFS

According to Kezilahabi (1985:138) Kunene considers the journey motif on three levels: physical movement, psychological movement which leads to intellectual movement, and narrative movement which moves along with the plot. Intellectual movement occurs in the minds of the main characters. Key occurrences affect their minds. In turn these key occurrences trigger the actions, which are followed by reactions. These movements to a very large extent contribute to dramatic structure.

In addition to these movements the idea of the return of the hero is propounded by Kunene, cited by Kezilahabi (1985:139). Four sub-categories are presented: a false return; no intention of return; a thwarted return; and an implied return.

Kunene suggests that a good example of a "false return" is the story of "Masilo and Masilonyane", when Masilo returns home without Masilonyane. When the hero decides to leave as a kind of self-exile, this is what is called "no intention

to return". Exile which is imposed usually implies an intent to return. When the main character is killed on his journey back home, this is a "thwarted return." Sometimes the story ends in the fields, but the reader knows that people will not stay in the fields forever; they will return home. This is regarded as an "implied return" (see Kunene quoted by Kezilahabi, 1985:139-140).

RELATION BETWEEN THE LIVING AND THE ANCESTORS

Structure in the context of African literature is a result of the relationship between the ancestors and the living. In other words the relation between the living and the dead is the basic relationship in African culture. Ntsukunyane (1980:20) writes:

In African society, misfortune derives from the ancestors. It is logical to conclude that those who meet misfortune have the wrath of the spirits descend upon them.

Kezilahabi (1985:242) supports the above comment:

In African culture "to live is to be known" and a person ceases to exist if there are no people to name their children after him.

Since there is a strong relationship between the ancestors and the living, when the norms and values of society are violated punishment is meted out by the ancestors, in order to effect character change or transformation in the living.

ANALYSIS OF XHOSA MODERN PLAYS

It has already been stated that this study follows Kunene's model for African literature as modified by Kezilahabi and other African critics, who opt for a cyclic dramatic structure, that is, one which is circular. As one of such critics, I

mention Ntsukunyane (1980:18), who names a first stage in all literary structures. He prefers to call the first stage the state of quiescence or equilibrium. Ntsukunyane notes further that in this stage there is harmony in the setting and no conflicts between the parties, that is, there is no physical movement or psychological movement. At this stage the protagonist is at peace with himself and others. This stage is followed by a second stage, that approximates the Freytag's rising action stage, but which I prefer to call disequilibrium.

In Mtingane's *INENE NASI ISIBHOZO* Act 1 Scene 1 reflects a state of disequilibrium. The major characters and their relationships are presented. Chief among the characters is Themba, the hero and MaSukude, the villain, who is also Themba's stepmother. A flashback informs us that MaSukude is responsible for Themba's having left home. The society is, therefore, already in a state of disequilibrium: MaSukude is in conflict with the other characters.

The playwright, by means of the flashback, presents the state of quiescence or equilibrium as preceding the first act, that is, he provides an account of incidents that took place before the action begins. The flashback tells us that there had been harmony in Njinge's household; there had been no conflict apart from the uneasiness surrounding Themba's leaving. Mfolo says:

Kusekho uNjinge, besiyichitha imini sonwabile ekhay' apha, simke kungabangakho kukrwentisa- krwentsana; kodwa ngoku sibetha emva kwezindlu ngenxa yesimilo sakho osiphethe ngezandla.

(*INENE NASI ISIBHOZO* 1965:7)

While Njinge was alive, we used to enjoy ourselves the whole day in this family. We lived without conflict between us, but today we distance ourselves from you because of your behaviour.

The rising action stage in this play is permeated with disturbance or disequilibrium and disharmony. The first disturbance is initiated by MaSukude, when she beats Nolizwe. This action leads to the conflict that erupts between MaSukude, on the one side, and MaDlamini and MaZalu, on the other. This conflict also involves MaSukude's son, Vuma.

Although Themba has left his home MaSukude knows that he might come back, for, in the African context, a person's name (in this case, Themba = hope) predetermines the main character and the development of plot. This knowledge drives her to persuade Vuma to get married before Themba returns. This also may be regarded as another violation of harmony.

MaSukude is very angry when Themba returns home, and she vows that Themba will not get married before Vuma does. As a result the harmony of the group is further disturbed.

The meeting of the Khwalo clan indicates a particular complication which can again be attributed to MaSukude, who is responsible for the initial disturbance. The Khwalo camp debates MaSukude's contention that Vuma must get married before Themba, his elder brother. Her suggestion is rejected by the Khwalo camp because such a course is alien to African culture. MaSukude is told that it is taboo for her to be involved when the community is deliberating on matrimonial issues. The next incident is the death of Themba, poisoned by MaSukude.

The most dominant stage of Mtingane's play is what I shall call the punitive stage. This is the phase within the cyclic structure of the play which calls for the intervention of the ancestors in order to punish the guilty character(s). As punishment, misfortune befalls the wrong-doer(s). Usually this misfortune is

ascribed to the violation of society's law or the breach of tradition or custom. Hodgson (1985:11) claims that anything which disturbs the harmony has a cause and has to be accounted for.

MaSukude is struggling to escape her punishment which the people of the village assume to be sent by the ancestors. In her attempt to escape the punishment she kills her son, Vuma, by mistake. She also axes Lolo. Vuyiswa also dies. These calamities are linked to her wrong-doing. The wrath of the ancestors had caused MaSukude to reap the consequences of her actions. Her death by suicide is also part of her punishment. Although punishment is essential, it does not mean that the ancestors derive pleasure from inflicting it. It is meant to transform the character of the wrong doer or to effect change. Its effect, therefore, is both reformatory and rehabilitative. Ntsukunyane (1980:19) says:

It must be understood that the punitive phase of the plot is not a sadistic orgy where spirits derive pleasure from meting out punishment. Perhaps something traumatic, such as severe punishment, is essential to effect character change or transformation.

According to the Africans, death does not mean extinction. The dead continue to live in a world into which death or oblivion does not enter. However, there is no direct communication between the dead and the living. The dead never forget the living. Although MaSukude has violated the laws of the supreme being and nation, her death or punishment is interpreted, in the African context, as a cleansing. Her undesirable traits have been cleansed by death in order that she may be accepted into the world of the gods. Furthermore, after death, MaSukude is returned home to her kith and kin, and she receives proper burial, that is, in Christian terms. This proper burial should be

attributed to the influence of European culture. Reconciliation takes place. Reformation and rehabilitation take place after death.

In Ngani's *UMKHONTO KATSHIWO* a state of disequilibrium or disharmony is presented in Act 1 Scene 1. Tshiwo, the protagonist, is having problems with Nonkosi's ill health. Nonkosi's sickness is never ascribed to natural causes, but to human instrumentality, that is, to some person who has bewitched Nonkosi or to a person who is a source of evil. Tshiwo announces:

Ongumnini-bubi makaziwe; safa kukuxokiselwa ngesi sifo singekhoyo!

(*UMKHONTO KATSHIWO* 1964:3)

The source of evil must be known. We are tired of being told about a non-existent sickness!

Tshiwo is obliged by his superstition to call an African doctor, Dubulegeqa, to smell out the malevolent being who is causing the trouble or disharmony. The doctor's procedure is conducted as follows:

Dubulegeqa: Vumani!

Abantu: Siyavuma!

(*UMKHONTO KATSHIWO* 1964:15)

Dubulegeqa: Agree with me!

People: We agree!

This interchange between the doctor and the people is designed to discover the witch. The procedure is accompanied by singing and clapping of hands, and the pattern of question and answer is maintained until it reaches a climax. At this stage the culprits are pointed out. Dubulegeqa exclaims:

Ngulo, nalo, nalowa!

Kunye nabafazi babo!

(*UMKHONTO KATSHIWO* 1964:22)

This one, and this one!
and that one! And their wives!

After the witches have been discovered as the cause of the sickness they are drastically punished. Khwane and Magwaza, the appointed executioners of the people smelt out by the doctor, execute the unfortunates. It should be pointed out that the punishment of the unfortunate victims is not a punitive stage involving the ancestors. They could not be involved with the punishment because the doctor is not authentic: he is exploiting the superstition of the people. There is no absolute proof that they, the "witches," did cause the sickness. Therefore the ancestors cannot be held responsible for their punishment.

That we are now in the punitive stage of this play is illustrated by Tshiwo's tottering kingdom. The number of Tshiwo's warriors has dwindled because of his superstitious beliefs which led to the execution of innocent people. His warriors cannot withstand his enemies, the Khoi. It must be understood that this situation is meant to harass Tshiwo until he recognizes his folly. His repentance is anticipated at this stage. The voltage of the punishment shocks is increased until he is prepared to make peace with those he has offended. It could be argued that the Khoi are used by the ancestors to bring Tshiwo to his senses. In the end he recognizes his folly:

Nam sendibona kunyembelekile.
kodwa phendulani: Aphi n' amadoda?
Ndibon' abantwana, ndingazi limbi ke.
Kambe ukuzenza akufani nokwenziwa!...

(UMKHONTO KATSHIWO 1964:83)

Even myself I could see that it is difficult.
But you must reply: where are the warriors?
I see the children, there is no other alternative.
I do not blame any, for I am responsible.....

The shocks experienced by Tshiwo are essential to effect changes in his character. The above quotation is a public confession that is elicited by the punishment Tshiwo has received from the ancestors. Reconciliation between the conflicting forces is anticipated. This stage is regarded by Ntsukunyane (1980:19) as purgative in function. The "punishment" purges the rebel, ridding him of his bad behaviour.

The play's stage of purgation and purification is followed by a stage of reconciliation. It is a state of harmony and the characters are free from trouble. Ntsukunyane (1980:19) comments on this stage:

...the phase of reconciliation and return to harmony, is a preparation for death. In other words the character has now been purged of all his undesirable traits and is, as it were, ready to enter into the realm of the gods.

Tshiwo has undergone transformation and is reconciled to the so-called "witches" who are led by Khwane. Khwane has hidden these witches instead of executing them. During a battle between Tshiwo and the Khoi Khwane and his force saves the situation. Tshiwo is glad to get Khwane's support. He rejoices:

Mandivakalise ukukholiseka kwisenzo sakho, nto kaKhwane; Ngokulondoloza, ugcine isizwe esilixabiso kangaka. Namhla ke uyinkosi! Yiba yiyo ke phezu kwaba bantu wabalondolozayo. Yamkela nantsi intshuntshe.

(UMKHONTO KATSHIWO 1964:88)

Let me voice my gratitude for your deed, Khwane's son, by protecting and keeping this precious nation. Today you are a king! You must be a king of these people you saved. Receive this assegai.

The stage of harmony has been attained by the characters. It is clear that Ngani's play conforms to the African idea of the cyclic nature of the plot as

opposed to the Eurocentric linear conception. The relationships have returned to normal between the living and the dead since the characters have forgiven one another.

In Tamsanqa's *BUZANI KUBAWO* the first stage, which approximates the expository stage of Freytag's theories, but which I have called the stage of quiescence or equilibrium, depicts the state of harmony which exists between the protagonist, Gugulethu, and the antagonist camp, ZwiLakhe and MaGaba. The context from which the characters emerge is African though there are some elements of European values. The use of different cultural values is effective because they influence and shape the characters. It should also be noted that characters are at peace with themselves and life is not stressful for them.

The first harmonious stage in Tamsanqa's play is established by means of the wedding ceremony. This wedding ceremony is a valid way of introducing some of the major characters, whose ideological beliefs will be identified as either modern or traditional. Two of the major characters are Gugulethu and NomaMpondomise, the former Bly students. Although they come from a traditional background, they have been shaped by the modern values which they are advocating. Furthermore, it is at the wedding ceremony that MaGaba meets Thobeka. The discussion between MaGaba and Nozipho, her daughter, serves to reveal MaGaba's traditional view that foreign civilization has brought confusion, divorce and conflict between African parents and children. It is important to note that the wedding ceremony symbolizes love and harmony under normal conditions.

When ZwiLakhe, one of the major characters, is introduced later in the play, he is drunk. Beer is regarded by the Africans as food for men. In some African

societies beer-drinking is associated with hospitality and peace or harmony. Zwilakhe's drunken condition is linked to traditionalism.

Although at this stage the protagonist, Gugulethu, is at peace with himself and with the other characters who advocate traditional values, there are hints that the peace may be disturbed, which establishes an underlying sense of suspense. As Smiley (1971:67) comments, concerning suspense: "some characters in a play indicate that something is likely to happen ..."

This way of hinting something might be about to happen could be called a hint-wait pattern. Such a pattern is evident in the speech of Nozipho, Gugulethu's sister:

Suka ndilele njalo ndiphuphe inyaka-nyaka yabantu abani-i-inzi, ngathi kusenkundleni yamatyala, tyalandini lithethwayo andilazi, kodwa elikabhuti Gugulethu. Andazi ke ekuhambeni kwalo, kodwa isiphelo salo liphelele ekubeni ubhuti Gugulethu uza kuxhonywa.

(BUZANI KUBAWO 1958:6)

While I was asleep, I dreamt of many people. It was as if it was in court. I did not even know the case, but my brother, Gugulethu was accused. I do not know how it proceeded, but at the end brother Gugulethu was sentenced to death.

Since characters reflect different values, Nozipho's dream could come true. This dream prepares the reader for the culture clash between Gugulethu, who represents the African community which endorses modern values, and Zwilakhe, who is portrayed as representing the African community which romanticizes pre-colonial culture.

The stage of conflict and disequilibrium in this play is initiated by the disagreement between the protagonist, Gugulethu, and the antagonist camp, Zwilakhe and MaGaba, concerning Gugulethu's marriage. Conflict erupts as

soon as Gugulethu refuses to marry Thobeka Mcothama in accordance with his father's opinions. Opposed to the imposition of his father's will, Gugulethu embarks on a social protest which amounts to a silent protest. Whenever he is required to express his opinion about Thobeka and his marriage, his response is "Buzani Kubawo."

Gugulethu employs emotive language to register his disapproval of the marriage being forced on him. His language blends with the hint-wait pattern. He comments thus:

Akuziboni na ezi ngqimba zingaka zamafu zifukuka eNtshonalanga? Ngenene limathumb' antaka, akuxokwa. Liza kududuma! Liza kududuma! Niza kulibona ngamehlo liduduma! Niza kuliva ngeendlebe liduduma! Mna sendiyaliva, seliman' ukundila! Limathumb' antaka! Limathumb' antaka! Buzani kubawo! Buzani kubawo! Bawo! Bawo! Bawo! Bawo! Bawo! Bawo!

(BUZANI KUBAWO 1964:64, 65)

Don't you see these dark clouds that come from the West? Really it is cloudy, this is not a lie. It is going to thunder! It is going to thunder! You are going to witness thundering! You are going to hear thundering! I am beginning to hear it, it has started thundering! It is going to rain! It has become cloudy! Ask father! Ask father! Father! Father! Father! Father! Father! Father!

An ominous atmosphere is created by such language. We anticipate a serious conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist camp. It is not true to suggest that, as some critics claim, Gugulethu is a naive and innocent character. The metaphoric language of this passage establishes the playwright's imaginative ability to suggest Gugulethu's fixed determination to wrestle with his problem.

Gugulethu's emotional outburst is followed by the death of his best friend, Mzamo. Gugulethu laments his friend's death:

Liqalisile! Liqalisile! Liyaduduma! Liyaduduma! Yahamb'intangam yandulela abaninzi. Hamba ntangam ulungise indawo siyeza.... Ezi ziintlola nezandulela, kusekude phambili. Alikadluli lisaduduma, lisaduduma. Ziyintoni na ezi zinto zenzeka namhla? Kungani na kusihla ezi zinto nje? Nali igazi lentangam litsawula! Bekutheni na kuqala? Yintoni na unobangela? Buzani kubawo! Buzani kubawo! Liyaduduma! Li-iyadu-du-u-u-uma!

(BUZANI KUBAWO 1958:73)

It has started! It has started! It is thundering! It is thundering! My companion has predeceased many people... These are spies and fore-runners. There is still a long way. It is not over, it is still thundering, it is still thundering. What is the implication of these things that take place today? Why are such things happening? This is the blood of my friend that is flowing! What happened in the beginning? What is the cause? Ask my father! Ask my father! It is thundering! It is thundering!

This quotation contains a double implication. First, it conveys Gugulethu's determination to wrestle with his problem and suggests an imminent disaster. The playwright's use of rhetorical questions, exclamation marks and repetition is effective because these techniques emphasize Gugulethu's determination. Second, it implies that the death of Mzamo is regarded as a misfortune. In the African context misfortune is attributed to the wrath of the ancestors. The antagonist camp is beginning to suffer the consequences of its disobedience, re-mythification and romantization of the African marriage custom. One may assume, therefore, that the marriage ceremony has not received the blessings of the ancestors.

The state of imbalance and disharmony leads to the punitive stage. This stage is characterized by misfortunes because a particular character, Zwilakhe, rejects an African custom as practised by a particular community. Zwilakhe's notion of enforcing the marriage should not be viewed as being in line with the customs of the community, which has the right to decide such matters. Gugulethu regards the enforced marriage as a disgrace (see:84). Mthetho

considers Zwilakhe's attitude to be sheer obstinacy (see:84). Zwilakhe and his wife do more harm than good by trying to dominate other characters and by preventing them from exercising their own judgement.

Gugulethu's failure to marry NomaMpondomise results in a court-case, which is followed by the death of NomaMpodomise. These incidents are meant to warn Gugulethu's parents that misfortunes may befall their household. Their obstinacy leads to the death of Thobeka, the wife forced on Gugulethu. Gugulethu brutally kills her and her children. This incident is followed by the death of MaGaba, Zwilakhe's wife, who commits suicide. Gugulethu is sentenced to death. These misfortunes may all be attributed to the wrath of the ancestors, which descends upon Zwilakhe because he defied the opinion of the community, as endorsed by the ancestors, that marriage issues should be negotiated between prospective in-laws.* What is decided by the community is blessed by the ancestors. "The ancestors are considered part of the ongoing cycle of life and are directly concerned with the activities and fertility of the living" Graham-White (1974:43).

The repercussions of disharmony as discussed above should be understood as being tragic in the African context because, in the African mind, what causes human unhappiness or anguish is regarded as tragic, as opposed to the European conception, which regards tragedy as being a major calamity befalling superior people, people of high social status (Brereton 1968:37).

The state of rehabilitation or reconciliation in BUZANI KUBAWO is conveyed by the playwright through a number of revelations. Chief among

* The parents of a girl and a young man, i.e. a marriageable son and daughter, should agree concerning the marriage of their children. This does not refer to "ukuthwala" marriage (see Soga 1931:227-228 Kaula 1968:46 & Broster 1976:51-52).

these is Zwilakhe's request to be hanged in the place of Gugulethu because he, Zwilakhe, is to blame for everything that has happened:

Nasi ke nkosi isicelo sam. Ndiyacela ukuba njengoko indim unobangela wako konke oku makakhululwe lo mfana kuxhonywe mna endaweni yakhe. Ngenene ndiyavuma ndim unobangela; ... Nto zakuthi namhlanje ndiyawakhumbula amazwi enu nindinganda kwesi senzo...

(BUZANI KUBAWO 1958:103)

This is my request, lord. I am requesting you to release this young man. I must be hanged in his stead. Really, I admit I am to blame ... My brothers, today I recall your words, cautioning me about this action...

Zwilakhe recognizes his folly and confesses to the community. The voltage of his punishment has subdued him, and his confession will appease the living and the unseen forces. He realizes that he is responsible for the death of innocent people and Gugulethu's loneliness and alienation which is at the root of the tragedy. Zwilakhe is now purged of his undesirable traits and is accepted by the ancestors. MaGaba's death should be regarded as a purgative; she is cleansed in order meet the unseen forces. It is important to note that she repents before she dies.

Finally, Gugulethu and NomaMpondomise are married, although their marriage takes place in the world of the gods. This is suggested by Gugulethu's last appeal to the judge, on the day of judgement, that he should be buried next to NomaMpondomise's grave:

Kodwa ke inye into endiza kuyicela kuwe mhlekazi yile. Nokuba ngaba kwenzekke ntoni na, nokuba ndiza kuxhonywa ePitoli, nokuba ndiza kuxhonywe phesheya kolwandle, nokuba ndiza kuxhonywa phi na, maze undincede ngale nto mhlekazi, ukwahlukana komphfumlo nenyama yam niwuthabathe umzimba wam, niwusonge niwuthumele eMthatha uye kungcwatywa khona ekunene kwengcwaba lentombi kaLangeni.

(BUZANI KUBAWO 1958:103)

But I am going to request this from you. Whatever happens, even if I am hanged in Pretoria, even if I am hanged overseas, or anywhere, I request one thing from you, sir. When I die you must wrap my body and send it to Umtata to be buried next to Langeni's daughter.

It is common knowledge that someone's last request before death is one of the laws most honoured in African society. Without doubt, Gugulethu's last request is heard by the living and will be honoured.

Mtywaku's UFEZIWE OKANYE INKOHHLAKALO supports Kunene's cyclical theory which is based on African oral narratives. The play presents three levels of the journey motif: physical movement, psychological movement leading to intellectual movement, and narrative movement which accompanies the development of the plot.

Some of the main characters are moved from one socio-geographical context to another which is what is meant by physical movement. Feziwe, who is a teacher in her home village, Nkqonkqweni, has by a **ukuthwala** marriage, been moved to one of the European-owned farms near Berlin, near East London. Since this marriage is a forced marriage psychological movement is inevitable. Psychological movement is followed by action which would be called physical movement.

It is important to note that Feziwe has been troubled ever since her arrival at Berlin, hence psychological movement is suggested. She says:

... andityi, andilali; kuyasa gede ndijongile. Into endiyibulelayo inye yile yokuba ingqondo yam ayikashenxi kuba ngekukudala ndazibulala.

(UFEZIWE OKANYE INKOHHLAKALO 1982:30)

... I do not eat, I do not sleep, I do not shut my eyes until dawn. I am glad that I am stable because otherwise I would have long ago committed suicide.

Feziwe's psychological movement, or the intellectual process that goes on in her mind, is followed by her physical movement. She escapes from her in-laws and returns home. Feziwe's return can be regarded as a false return. Her return restores tranquillity to her mind and in her family but not to the antagonist camp. The state of equilibrium results from the fact that Fuzile, Feziwe's brother, arrives home from Johannesburg. His arrival means that Feziwe is protected. Fuzile's return dissolves Feziwe's enforced marriage, which is dissolved by **ukukhetha** (to choose out) that is, the return to her in-laws of the cattle given in **lobola** for Feziwe. It seems that a state of balance has been achieved. The permission that Feziwe procures from Fuzile to go to work as a nurse at the Pietermaritzburg hospital is an index of equilibrium. The illusory hopes are sustained by the courtship between Thandile and Feziwe. The **lobola** is paid. The antagonist camp is infuriated by Thandile and Feziwe's union, so Kwedinana and Nowikithi hire Skelem, Ngcwangu and Sikhohlakali to kill Thandile in order to frustrate Feziwe's marriage. Skelem also kills Kwedinana for failing to keep his promises. Feziwe commits suicide and so does Nomathamo. Nowikithi also commits suicide out of frustration.

It is in the light of these events that I conclude that Feziwe's return is a false return. Her return raises hopes that balance has been achieved, but suddenly her prospective husband is killed and she also commits suicide. The death of Kwedinana and Nowikhithi may be regarded as a punishment meted out by the ancestors because of the couple's cruelty.

Ntloko's UNGODONGWANA fits very well into Kunene's cyclical theory. Ntloko focuses his attention on three levels of the journey motif, that is, physical movement of the characters, psychological movement which occurs in the minds of characters, and narrative movement that accompanies the

development of the dramatic structure. The idea of the return of the hero is overtly presented.

Early in the first scene Ngodongwana and Tana, the sons of the old king Jobe, are engaged in discussing their plot to assassinate their father, Jobe. This plot can be taken as the psychological or intellectual movement which is in the minds of these two characters. The plot to assassinate Jobe is reported to him and he gives orders to destroy Ngodongwana and Tana. Ngodongwana escapes and arrives at Bhungane's great place, in a kind of self-imposed exile. Ngodongwana's exile should be regarded as a physical movement. He gives himself a new name: NdinguDingiswayo, "I am the one who has been sent away from home" (p. 19).

It is important to note that his new name implies a physical movement, that is, he has been sent away from his country. On the death of his father, Jobe, Dingiswayo returns home and becomes the king of AbaThethwa. Kunene, cited by Kezilahabi (1985:140), argues that exile which is imposed on someone usually implies an intent to return. Dingiswayo's exile also supposes an intent to return. His subsequent return restores equilibrium.

Kezilahabi (1985:139) argues that the return in Kunene's analysis is not a return to the original status quo. The experiences obtained during exile usually effect character change or transformation. Therefore the protagonist will be regarded as an affected protagonist or, in other words, at the end of the journey the hero is not as he was before he undertook the journey.

The story of Ngodongwana (Dingiswayo) illustrates the foregoing theory. Ngodongwana leaves his home as an ordinary man, who has annoyed his father. He returns home and becomes the king of AbaThethwa. He

introduces military service along the lines of European military systems into his nation:

Ndiza nolwazi endilufumene kumntu omhlophe... Imikhosi iza kuqeqeshwa ngokwemigaqo yasemlungwini ukuze iloyise utshaba oluhlaselayo.

(UNGODONGWANA 1976:31-32)

I am coming with knowledge that I have gained from a white man,...
Armies are going to be trained on the lines of the European military system in order to defeat the attacking enemy.

Ntloko clearly exemplifies Kunene's theory of cyclic reality, which involves physical movement, psychological movement, and narrative movement as well as the idea of return.

Kezilahabi (1985:138) comments on the relationship between physical movement and intellectual movement:

Emphasis is placed on the intellectual process that goes on in the minds of the main characters. As they move along, key happenings influence their minds. This leads to emotions which trigger responses followed by an action. (My emphasis)

Bongela's **INGALO** demonstrates this theory very well, for it depicts key happenings that influence the minds of the characters. The response of the characters is followed by action, a kind of intellectual movement and physical movement.

It is worth noting that Bongela's play involves the economy, criminal conspiracy, mystification, detective work, the hiding of murderers, their discovery and apprehension. It is clear that the inclusion of these issues will require the kind of intellectual process and physical movement as propounded by Kunene.

One of the key happenings in Ngani's play is the death of Joweli, Sidima's partner in business. Joweli's death is concealed because the murderer is unknown. However, other characters are convinced that ultimately the murderer will be discovered. Sidima says:

Nokuba sekusemva kweminyaka elishumi, umntu owenze le nto imbi kangaka uya kuze avele kuba uMdali akaxakwa nto.

(INGALO 1982:23)

Even after ten years, the murderer will be discovered because there is nothing impossible to God.

The detectives, Moreki and Nyaniso, arrest Sidima because his gun has been found in Joweli Modise's office. Sidima has been forsaken by his former girl friend, Nonzondelelo. Eventually Sidima is sentenced to seven years in prison for murder, and this can be taken as a second key event which impacts on the minds of the characters. Other characters are not satisfied with the outcome of the case (pp. 38-40). In Act 3 the detectives reopen the case. Ultimately the real murderer is discovered and apprehended. Finally, Themba, the murderer, is sentenced and Sidima is discharged.

The above events make points which are basically in accord with Kunene's theory. They highlight the intellectual movement and the physical movement that lead to the unravelling of the criminal conspiracy and the discovery and apprehension of Joweli's real murderer. In Bongela's play these events cannot be overlooked because it is a detective play which necessitates the inclusion of detectives.

It can also be surmised that Bongela's main characters confirm Kunene's theory of return. Sidima, the central character, returns home from prison. His

return restores the state of balance. Themba, the villain, does not return, for he has to suffer the consequences of being a murderer.

Qangule's AMAZA can be related to a quasi-theory which is a synthesis between the Western concept of time and that of the African, as propounded by Obiechina. Obiechina, as quoted by Kezilahabi (1985:140), points out that African writers have adopted the formal requirements of the European novel in respect of time and space, while at the same time taking into account the traditional and urban view of time in the African world. It can be argued that Qangule's plays use both traditional and modern practices in his structural schemes. They support Kunene's cyclical theory.

The first meeting between Lizo and Namhla is a reflection of African modern time as adopted from European culture. The manner in which they confide to each other their plans to frustrate the traditional wishes expresses a modern attitude. Lizo tells Namhla:

Lizo: *Sitshayalela umtshato wethu ke ngoku.*
Namhla: *Ibuhlungu le nto uyithethayo.*
Lizo: *Sitshayebele sagqiba,*
Ngoku siza kutshata.
Namhla: *Uphi umfundisi?*
Lizo: *Umfundisi luthando lwethu.*
Siza kumkhupha ubulumko.
Simthwese ngobuyatha uSidima lo.

(AMAZA 1974:5)

Lizo: This is an introduction to our marriage.
Namhla: What are you saying is bad?
Lizo: We have finished with our introduction, We are going to marry now.
Namhla: Where is the pastor?
Lizo: The pastor is our love. We have to frustrate Sidima's wisdom. We are going to crown him with foolishness.

The lovers are therefore advocating a modern practice. It is this action that perhaps leads to the meeting of the amaBhele clan to talk about Namhla's marriage, which is a reflection of traditional practice. Lizo and Namhla are in love and therefore are determined to evade the marriages that have been forced upon them by their parents.

Turning to the meeting of amaBhele, it ought to be said that what is presented at its debate implies the existence of two conflicting camps, that is, the modern one and the traditional one. The modern educated camp argues that Lizo is not rejected by Namhla, but by the male relatives. On the contrary, those who hold traditional beliefs claim that a custom cannot be destroyed by Christians. Sabatha, on behalf of the traditionalists, says that: "*Akukho siko liza kuphanziswa ngamagqobhoka!*" ("There is no custom that will be destroyed by Christians") (p. 11).

What follows is a schism between the modernists and traditionalists; this continues until the end of the play. One of the events that reflects this schism is Namhla's being persuaded by her male relatives to remarry Duma after the death of Sidima. Namhla, being modern, shouts at the traditionalists:

*Nithi mandinikezele
Okwesibini ngomzimba wam endodeni
Nokuba uyala umphefumlo wam?
Nalo inyala elivuyisa ababhuhileyo,
Nango umkhuba oxolisa iminyanya!*

(AMAZA 1974:61)

You say I must offer my body to the man for the second time even if my spirit does not allow it? That is a disgrace that pleases the dead, that is a bad habit which reconciles the ancestors!

This schism is also confirmed by the Cirha camp. Ngxelelo says:

*Oonokrawuzana bathi amaBhele azizibhaxa ezibini:
Izifundiswa zithi makayekwe uMambhele azibonele,
Abengubo bona bathi isiko liyaziwa.*

(AMAZA 1974:67)

Sources are saying that amaBhele are divided into two divisions. The educated ones are of the opinion that MamBhele should be allowed to decide on her own; the traditionalists are saying that the custom is known.

It can be argued that Obiechina's syncretism is largely attained by achieving a kind of reconciliation between the Christians and the traditionalists at the end of the play.

With reference to Kunene's cyclical theory, which focuses on physical movement, psychological movement, and narrative movement which accompany the movement of the plot, it should be pointed out that Qangule's play conforms to Kunene's theory. The major characters move from one geographical location to another, that is from a rural area to Johannesburg, and from Johannesburg to Swaziland (see 24-29). This is a physical movement. This movement leads to the death of Sidima (Duma), which can be regarded as a new event which influences Silumko to embark on the investigation, as a kind of intellectual movement. Silumko's engagement in the intellectual process has resulted in a synthesis of the major conflicting characters and block characters with their cultural beliefs. This synthesis takes place in the graveyard.

Qangule's characters are also in accordance with Kunene's idea of return, in that the story ends in the graveyard, but the readers know that they will not stay in the graveyard forever. They will have to return home. Their return is implied (see 82-85).

To conclude this chapter I would like to make various points. First, African drama is not bound to adopt what may be referred to as the dominant culture of the world, or of world literature. Secondly, the structure of every play under study is unique, that is, it is determined by the play itself. The various aspects used in plot construction are not formulary, for there is nothing like a universal formula that applies to African drama. Thirdly, in my discussion the influence of African culture has been taken into consideration. The role played by the ancestors in the African context has been highlighted. These cultural beliefs have been used to bring out the dichotomy between European drama and African drama, Xhosa drama in particular. It has been concluded that the structural pattern in African drama is cyclic in nature, that is, it begins with a stage of harmony, moves through one of disharmony, into one of punishment, and then back to harmony.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this dissertation has been to examine certain aspects in Xhosa drama in order to prove the existence of traditional African drama in South Africa and of Xhosa drama in particular, and to place Xhosa modern drama in its context. These purposes necessitated the following directions in the study.

In the chapter which discusses the existence of traditional drama or theatre in Africa I indicated how this drama had been obliterated in South Africa. The problems associated with concepts and terminology, such as universalism, drama or theatre, and art, have misled a number of scholars, even black South African scholars, because these concepts were used out of the African context, that is, within the European context. It was the use of these concepts in the European context which caused a cultural obliteration of the African tradition. To guard against such mutilation of African art interpretations and definitions of concepts and terminology must be contextualized when traditional African drama is studied.

As I was discussing the dichotomy between ritual and drama it became clear to me that the political policy of divide and rule, which the Europeans applied in governing the indigenous South Africans, also affected the African cultural heritage. It has been argued that the system of separating ritual and drama is inadequate and inaccurate. With regard to the development of drama from

ritual I have concluded that African drama is not something new to the African but is indeed in the blood of Africans, and as old as Africa itself.

Africans were not regarded as human by most white people who first settled in Africa. They were considered to be no different from the beasts of the field which had no spiritual life. They were pagans, heathens, kaffirs, who indulged in war, cannibalism, songs, dance, and dark and despicable ceremonies and rituals.⁴ They therefore obviously could not have been expected to have had a culture of their own.

I maintain that missionaries, administrators, and teachers have been responsible for the mutilation and obliteration of African culture in South Africa, and of Xhosa traditional drama in particular. I have argued that South African traditional drama, though it differed from community to community, was used for religious, aesthetic, didactic and therapeutic purposes.

History, custom, codes of conduct, the people's problems and socio-political aspirations were transmitted through the medium of African traditional theatre. Mzamane, quoting Pallo Jordan, writes:

The ethos of traditional society was enshrined in an oral, legal, religious and literary tradition through which the community transmitted from generation to generation its customs, values and norms. The poet and the story-teller stood at the centre of this tradition, as the community's chroniclers, entertainers, and collective conscience (1981:7)

Mzamane maintains that the above norms and values were often transmitted through the medium of some folktale (1981:8).

⁴ Bob Leshoi: *The Nature and use of Oral literature* (1981:241).

In discussing the question as to whether or not black South Africans, Xhosa speakers in particular, had traditional drama before white people settled in South Africa, Hobongwana remarks in connection with the circumcision ceremony that it is traditional drama which took six months, like a film or bioscope for the Xhosa-speaking people.⁵ Ndungane points out that the whole circumcision ceremony was a drama which showed how the custom was observed by Africans in pre-colonial South Africa.⁶ I contend that, like any other African community, Xhosa-speaking people had their own drama.

Relating literature and society has been suggested as one of the dynamic approaches that can be employed to evaluate literature in order to assess the vitality of African art. In examining African literature its socio-geographical and historical contexts have been considered to be very important, and therefore I have placed Xhosa plays in their contexts. Contextualizing Xhosa drama helps to dismiss the attitude that students should not be surprised to find very little or nothing to enthuse about in Xhosa drama. Contesting such an attitude encourages research as to why African drama in South Africa, and especially Xhosa modern drama, has not been found to have reached a stage where it can be favourably compared to the dramas of the world.⁷ Such a misconception may be attributed to the critics mistake in assessing Xhosa modern drama by standards that are alien to it; this would automatically cause a mutilation of the art.

⁵ F. Hobongwana interview 8/7/1992.

⁶ T.A. Ndungane interview 15/7/1992.

⁷ Xhosa: Only Study guide for XHS305-B 1991:40, 41. University of South Africa, Pretoria.

In attempting to examine how characters have been delineated in Xhosa modern drama, African culture has also been taken into consideration in order to identify the vitality of the Xhosa literature. I have contended that characters are not free-floating individuals intended merely to decorate a dramatic narrative. I have argued that the characters are representative as well as illustrative. In other words, they have been used to mirror a particular community, in both its modern and its traditional practical beliefs. I repeat, characters cannot be understood independently of the society of which they form a part. In brief, characters are linked to what is happening as practised in their society. I have observed that writers do not address themselves to the political abnormalities of South Africa, and have attributed that lack to the restrictive laws and constitution of the racist government and its agents.

There are, as it has been said, many and various observations associated with the structural dynamics of Xhosa modern drama. The uniqueness of African drama is important; it is not bound to adopt what is assumed by the "cultural imperialists" to be the dominant culture of the world or of world literature. The playwrights which have been studied have been freed from being programmed robots with no creativity or free will. It has been argued that the structure of every play which was studied is unique, and that the techniques used in plot construction are not formulaic or governed by the so-called universal dramatic devices. The influence of indigenous African culture has been taken into account in each case. The characters involved in plot construction are not isolated from ancestral influence. The difference between European drama and African drama, Xhosa drama in particular, is ascribed to the different cultural factors that inform the African dramas.

I have also observed that plot structure in African drama, in Xhosa drama in particular, is cyclic in nature and is also based on the idea of return.

I would like to predict the direction which traditional Xhosa drama and modern Xhosa drama will follow in the future. As South Africa moves from a racist government to a democratic government I would expect scholars of drama to close the gap that was created by the missionaries, traditional intellectuals and racist administrators. I have pointed out in my discussion of traditional drama in South Africa that Xhosa drama, as part of African culture, was dismissed by the colonialists and their agents because it was regarded as primitive, mere rubbish and a waste of time. Therefore, in order to develop African culture and achieve unity in the various regions of South Africa, I would expect a cultural revival that will be promoted by a democratic government together with the scholars. The government will have to lay out a cultural policy intended to revive culture, and strongly encourage South Africans of all walks of life to participate in the cultural revival.

From what I observe happening in South Africa today, it seems to me that there are a number of strategies that may be used regarding the revival of African cultures, traditional drama in particular, in South Africa. First, this revival could be fostered through the various media, such as film, radio, television, and literature. Through these media one will be able to learn what is going on in other communities. The various communities will come to understand what they missed because the cultural performances of their forefathers were erased by the colonial administrations. Secondly, schools, colleges and universities could be used as centres for the revival and promotion of African traditional drama in South Africa. De Graft (1976:23) states:

It seems to me, therefore, that the most promising field for developing live drama and programmes of training, and for inculcating a deep sense of the possibilities of theatre, is in our educational institutions, especially those concerned with teacher education. In a very serious sense our drama teachers and the young people should be our best hope for new and meaningful theatre traditions in Africa.

Thirdly, traditional African drama in South African could be used for commercial purposes, that is, for example, to solve the problem of unemployment. Drama practitioners could get together with the people and create something that would ultimately benefit them, and be regarded as the empowerment of the people. Dhlomo (1977:7) remarks about traditional drama in the commercial field:

Today life is commercial. As the Africans go higher in the ladder of progress, new avenues of employment and of expression are required. Surely drama is one of them. The "evolution" of African opinion, sentiment and ideas will give rise or birth to a great industry and valuable source of careers as drama develops.

The strategies discussed above would have to be embodied in modern knowledge and craftsmanship so that the government and the scholars do not seem to be merely digging up the bones of the past.

In connection with Xhosa modern drama, I have observed that it played no role in the struggle against the racist minority regime. Taking into account the South African situation, one would have expected to see and read Xhosa dramas that were based on the struggle for freedom and social justice in South Africa. In South Africa, as elsewhere in Africa, sons and daughters of the soil have played an important part in the quest for freedom. However, this

participation is not reflected in the Xhosa plays that are in circulation. In other words, there is no South African liberation drama written in Xhosa, for us to analyse and let speak for itself. I do not blame the playwrights, since this deficiency was a consequence of the strict censorship operating in South Africa.

Having noted the reason for the past deficiency in Xhosa drama, I can now go on to predict with confidence that in the future, under a new dispensation in South Africa, the Xhosa dramatists will explore all avenues, especially those which were restricted by censorship. The NEW BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN DRAMA, which, in the 1970s, appeared in oral form to circumvent the censorship laws which had for so long strangled black artistic expression in South Africa, will now be written down. For example, **Imbufuso** was a play that was produced in 1976 by women at the Crossroads camp in Cape Town. This play reflected the misery, frustrations and insecurity of the inhabitants of the Crossroads camp. It was performed in an indigenous language, and contained scathing remarks about apartheid. It was not banned, because the racist minority regime did not understand the language. Further, the agents of the racist government could not obtain access to it because it was not written down and published. In addition, drama, produced by black South Africans in exile, and which traced the history of the liberation movements in South Africa, will appear in South Africa. Indigenous Xhosa dramas, similar to that produced by exiles, will now be circulated because the government will be in the hands of the majority (Edebiri 1983:146, & Sirayi 1989b:12-13). In other words, the dramatists will write what they wish to write, not what the government wants them to write. As all avenues are freely explored by the writers drama will come to be regarded as popular culture in South Africa.

The writers will be free to expose the exploitation and injustice of the ruling party, should the need arise. Mzamane says:

The African writer is still expected to articulate the people's problems, and to project their collective aspirations (1981:7).

I do not suggest that playwrights will harp on tradition and on race questions. Rather I suggest that the dramatists will write about everything, and without fear. Furthermore, I am not advocating a return to the past merely in order to glorify it. Rather I am suggesting that without the past Africans cannot fully understand the present. It is upon the past that Africans can build the future in which the African world view will at last take its rightful place among the other dominant world views.

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