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# 'African discourses' : the old and the new in post-apartheid isiZulu literature and South African black television dramas

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## INTRODUCTION

In the view of many commentators, the picture with regard to isiZulu literature is bleak. To many critics, isiZulu literature both in the present and the past is a failed enterprise. In their view it is a literature dominated by the demands of the school market and it has tended to produce repetitive and childish plots. It is a literature that has failed to respond to the socio-political and historical realities from which it has emerged.[1] Many critics and commentators expected that after 1994, the situation might change. However, for many critics, this promise has not materialized. Instead, much isiZulu literature simply repeats old themes, styles, discourses, plots and strategies of characterization.[2]

This thesis attempts to find new ways to approach these problems. It seeks to engage with existing modes of criticism to ask whether these are the most appropriate and whether they might not be limited understandings of isiZulu literature. It also seeks to utilize a new approach to African language literature. This new approach has been formulated by Barber, whose studies focus on African everyday culture and draw extensively on Bakhtin's (1981) and Lefebvre's (1947) studies of ordinary people and everyday life experiences, a domain to which isiZulu literature addresses itself. Such an approach will allow us to read old themes and texts in new ways while locating the emergence of new post-apartheid themes in isiZulu literature.

The investigation of these two areas, namely old themes read in new ways and the direction of new themes is presented in two sections. The first on old themes focuses on on the use of selected oral forms in selected post-1994 isiZulu novels and the areas to be investigated are the use of proverbs, folktale motifs, and praising and naming. The second, on new themes, comprises three chapters. The first chapter in this section

[1] Chapman, (1996) in his **Southern African Literatures** reiterates the perspectives held by a number of local and international African Languages critics, such as Mphahlele, 1992; Kunene, D. P., 1992 and 1994; Kunene M., 1976 and 1991 etc. that this literature concerns itself with childish themes and is subsequently irrelevant to its context.

[2] Grobbler, (1995) 'Creative African-language writing in South Africa: Writers unshackled after apartheid?', and Mtuze, (1994) 'Tasks and challenges facing the indigenous literatures in South Africa'.

investigates changing inheritance patterns in broadcast media texts. The second examines how selected television series rework and revisit major themes in the isiZulu literary domain to address the contradictions of a post-apartheid South Africa. The third chapter closely studies the theme of crime focusing on the migratory patterns inherent in African narratives.

The reason I engage in a study of this nature is that there are a lot of good isiZulu novels that reflect the reality of contemporary South Africa. However, these texts could easily be dismissed as anomalous if only one set of literary approaches is used. It is my intention to sift through the existing corpus of isiZulu literature and, with the application of a new set of critical paradigms, contribute to a new development of literary approaches that will enhance isiZulu literature and its place in the literatures of the world. A second reason for undertaking this study is that the function and status of isiZulu literature has been reduced by limiting it to the school market. This tendency became accentuated during the apartheid era. During this period the government's control of ideological and cultural sites and the nature of Bantu education made the state a major buyer of vernacular literature books for use in schools. These forms of censorship, together with self-censorship resulted in the production of books that were solely earmarked for school use. On the eve of South Africa's political transformation criticism of this literary output became incessant with a number of critics arguing for a different approach. Members of the Language Boards, perceived as cultural gatekeepers, were accused of corruption and guilty of a conflict of interest, which meant that good literary materials were relegated because their their authors were unknown or non-Board members.[3] Maake (2000:147) points out that "the long established tradition of control through Language Boards maintained the lack of vigorous resistance. The Boards were in charge of prescribing books for schools and setting exams…nepotism was the order of the day as some examiners prescribed their friend's books regularly. There are cases where some titles were prescribed before the book was even written." Such problems clouded the centrality and worth of this literary tradition. It also obscured writers of note, beginning with the

[3] Nhlanhla Maake (2000) alludes to this wrangling between authors who felt that they were deliberately marginalised by the board members of languages. Equally Ntshangase's (1994), in an occasional seminar paper, alluded to corruption charges in the prescription of books by members of language boards.

first generation, for example, Vilakazi, who looked beyond school children for the consumption of their art. It is thus the intention of the research to approach such writers in a different way.

Besides the problems caused by the past government's plans for African languages literatures and the role played by the Language Board members, the fundamental problem in this literary tradition relates to aesthetic issues.[4] Although this literary tradition has drawn from both the Western and African literary forms, the aesthetics that were eventually used for its study did not convey this. Instead a dominant Western approach to literature was adopted. In the first three decades of the last century, the application of Western literary practice was less visible given the dominance of an ethnographic approach, which involved documenting publications that dealt with different aspects of African life.[5] This trend included collection of, and commentary on folklore materials such as folktales, songs, proverbs, rituals and so forth. Largely this approach became the organizing principle through which modern African languages literature was surveyed.

The subsequent dominance of other European literary criticisms magnified the problems of applying Western literary aesthetics to African languages literature and other art forms. In the South African context the rise of European literary criticism coincided with the reign of the apartheid government. The basic tenets of European literary criticism, that played a major role in the African languages literature argued for 'arts for art's sake', an approach that sat well with the past governments' design of reigning in on the potential dangers of literature especially if it were to be used against its segregationist policies.

In the literary scholarship the development of isiZulu literature is traced through three major epochs; the missionary, the apartheid and post-apartheid periods. The missionary

[4] HIE Dhlomo as early as the 1930s emphasized that an African aesthetic be formulated for African art forms.

[5] This view is collaborated by Maake (1992), who points out that the lack of any literary criticism was due to the missionaries' preoccupation with grammar compilations, the surveys and historical reviews by Jabavu and the pseudo-criticism from readers' letters to the newspapers, see, 'A survey of trends in the development of African languages literatures in South Africa: with reference to written to Southern Sotho literature' pp. 157 -188.

period which is generally seen to run from 1847-1947[6], although beset with major discursive shortfalls, still remains the most promising period of African languages literatures. It contrasts with the apartheid period that saw the massive production of different genres for the school market by numerous publication houses. While this literary process appeared to promise a reversal of the monopoly of the missionary printing houses, it bred a different type of monopoly dominated by apartheid nationalist aligned publishing moguls. These publications were received with suspicion or were dismissed as not reflecting a true statement of fact regarding African lives. The post-apartheid period, because of its liberal policies on the freedom of expression is viewed as a period that would usher in newness in African languages literary processes.

The literature review is divided into three main sections. It commences with a consideration of the criticism of isiZulu literature during the missionary, the apartheid or Afrikaner nationalism and the post-1994 periods. After having considered the strengths and weaknesses of literary criticism on isiZulu literature we then turn to examine postcolonial literary models and the extent of their applicability.

### *1. The Missionary Period*

The missionaries, anthropologists and philanthropists collected and observed folklore materials such as folktales, proverbs and riddles, cultural practices and recorded the history that pertained to each society they worked in. These texts formed the bulk of the first materials collected about African oral literature and the traditional world. The works of Berglund (1889), Callaway (1913) and Bryant (1929) are profound; they give a glimpse into the nature of the oral world, the world that was to be lamented or lambasted in the writing of the missionary educated Africans. Jabavu (1921), one of the first missionary educated Africans, set the scene for the survey of literature in isiXhosa. His approach gave an overview of what had been accomplished and it became the organising

[6] See Peterson (1997) periodization for what could be regarded as the beginning of the missionary influence on the Zulu political scene. Based on the arguments around the publication of the Biblical translations, he points out that the earliest writings in isiZulu appeared in 1847 which were translations from the Bible by Newton Adams of the American Board of Missions, p. 7.

approach for other surveys that were conducted for the literatures in different languages. In isiZulu literature, Vilakazi (1945), Scheub (1985), Nyembezi (1961) and Gérard (1971 and 1981) trace the literary production from the earliest publications in 1865 to the point at which they write. The approaches of these literary surveys assumed a similar pattern. They were divided into four subsections of novels, short stories, drama, and poetry.

In each subsection a short synopsis of each title and the year of its publication are given. The entries made are chronological. This pattern is replicated for each language literature where a survey is conducted, for example, Maake (1992) for Sesotho, Serudu (1996) for Sepedi, and Zulu (2000) for isiZulu literatures. These studies are useful for the research. However the basic criticism is that there is not much critical analysis. This criticism also does not look at the different languages literatures as a collective indigenous discourse but stresses its separateness, anticipating the Afrikaner nationalist philosophy of separate development. In spite of this observation the material has been helpful in providing the additional background on the titles that were published even though it lacks the intellectual contexts of the writers and the politics of publishing that influenced a number of options the writers decided upon.

Valuable criticism of missionary sponsored literature (Nyembezi, 1969 and Swanepoel, 1994 and 1999) emerged much later into the last century, and collectively it gave an overall view of both the missionary and apartheid literary production in isiZulu. This scholarship provided a critique of the hegemonic world views presented in the texts which usually comprised an extrapolation of a Western lifestyle and an African traditional lifestyle, and how the latter will either be imposed upon by or undermined in favour of the Western lifestyle. Another critique concerned the lack of the socio-political and economic depiction of the realities of the African population, or its inadequate treatment in the texts so that the sources of such inequities can be exposed. Yet another criticism of isiZulu literature involved the question of stylistics, the emulation and the employment of Western literary techniques and conventions, which had not been adequately mastered.

## *2. The Apartheid Period*

The next category comprises critical materials published during the apartheid period. By and large these materials continued with earlier established trends of literary surveys. Publications by Gérard (1971 and 1981), Swanepoel and Ntuli (1993), and Ngcobo (2002) are useful in this regard but have the shortcomings noted above. But in addition to the surveys, there emerged a corpus of materials that began interrogating the content of fiction, poetry and drama. Modified structural theories like Russian Formalism and Structuralism coupled with New Criticism, not only became the organising structures for literary criticism but also became the operational mode for creative composition. Numerous isiZulu language practitioners and scholars prepared oversimplified translated versions of these theories for the school market and teacher training colleges or for budding or future writers to use as models. Ntuli (1991, 1992, 1993), Msimang (1988), Maphumulo et. al. (1994, 1995) and Gule (1996) prepared numerous study guides for the matriculation students and teachers at training centers, which were periodically reworked without any amelioration of the content. The modified versions of Structuralism and New Criticism eventually became the basic approach of 'African-language' (Mathonsi, 2002) written literatures and have come to form a hegemonic bloc that completely excluded other approaches to African-language written literatures. Murray (2003) also points out that even the syllabus of African language literature instruction at school continues to reflect this trend. No critical analysis of the texts is sought from the students and the authority of the texts is never questioned. The aims and objectives of studying literature do not give students an opportunity to develop a critical approach to texts.

The entrenchment of the Afrikaner Nationalist philosophy in every sphere of life of the South African political economy further complicated the politics of 'African-language' writing. During this period, there was a sharp increase in the production of African languages texts and literatures, but the kind of literature that the state-appointed

gatekeepers, through the Language Boards and the Department of (Black) Education, prescribed, severely hampered the development of African-language literature. Msimang (1994) calls this intrusion by the state into African-language literature a "disservice". In its forty-five years of rule, the National Party instituted a coercive hegemony that was generally detrimental to the socio-economics and political stability of the country and specifically to African-language literature. The contributions by Grobbler (1995), Msimang (1996), Chapman (1996), Mokgamatha (1996), Swanepoel (1996) and Gérard (1989) have been very illuminating in providing a sustained criticism of objectionable aspects in the overall development of isiZulu literature and that of other languages.

Mokgamatha (1996) summarizes the key features of the trends during this phase. He points out that the literature had as immediate obstacles, state censorship and self-censorship, and as a result it concerned itself with escapism, fantasy and mystic primitivism, noted for its typical 'safe' historical themes. The writing tended to recapitulate previously explored safe themes; the depiction of the conflict of cultures, the dramatization of the move from the agrarian societies and cultures into the world of the cities and the attendant overthrow of the system of values and mores that animated the older world. And underlying these themes would be a strong incessant didactic Christian moral outlook. These thematic issues helped create a hegemonic sanctuary through which black South Africans experienced the world, and in a sense it created and fostered common sense explanations of the disparities and inequities black South Africans experienced in their daily lives. And what perhaps is the most distinctive difference between this literature and the earlier one during the missionary period, is the marked decline of the quality of stylistics in terms of theme treatment (politics of representation), characterization, plotting, realism as a mode of narration, focalizations or narrative perspectives, discursive practices and so forth. However scholars like Vladimir et. al (1976:237), who are sympathetic to African-languages literatures predicament, pointed out that

> Recognizing the strictness of the South African racial laws the young Zulu writer tries to say everything in parables. They choose inconspicuous, often escapist

> subject matter and develop it in such a way that the censorship cannot interfere, but the reader can understand the author's slight allusions.

Perhaps the most notable remark in relation to the ambivalent nature of isiZulu literature criticism and that of the other languages comes from Swanepoel (1999:58). He disagrees with the infantilizing view Chapman holds about African-languages writings by pointing out that

> …this is no doubt an uninformed and dangerous opinion. Even though many of the novels which have appeared in the school market-directed apartheid years may appear to fit his opinion, the statement disregards a set of factors for which authors cannot be blamed directly, and that many relevant works saw the light of day despite the oppressive mechanisms the literature had to contend with.

This view is significant for this thesis because it relates to the proposed hypothesis that it is the dominant approaches operative in isiZulu literature criticism that have narrowed paradigms and thus cast it to the margins. Swanepoel's line of thought regarding the status of African-language literature is similarly shared by other scholars like Canonici (1998), Kunene (1989), Msimang (1996) Zulu (1999) and Mathonsi (2002).

### *3. Post-1994 Criticism*

On the dawn of the post-apartheid period, African language scholars and critics debated what should be entailed for written literatures in African languages. Their observations regarding the matter varied greatly. A great proportion still lambast isiZulu literature for its lack of relevance, commitment, realism and its silences about burning political issues (Chapman, 1996). Kunene (1989); Canonici (1998) and Swanepoel (1999) predicted that the literature will engage issues that affected all South Africans. Others point out that so long as there is no significant change in the obstacles of the past issues such as readership, aesthetics, publication processes etc., change will be difficult to attain (Mazisi Kunene 1989; Mtuze 1994 and Zulu, 1999). More significantly some critics point out that

this literature is still entrapped in its old self-definition and that there will not be significant changes at all (Grobbler, 1995: 58). For this school of thought the literature is largely embroiled in colonial and apartheid mediocrity. Another problem that isiZulu literature faces is how to depict the contradictions of post-apartheid South Africa. Speaking on the general trend of South African national literature Vladislavic (cited in Harlow and Attwell, 2002:182) notes that

> It is as if writers are being pushed between two positions, because if you loose sight of apartheid, then people say you've forgotten the past, that you're part of the trend towards amnesia; on the other hand, if you go too deeply into apartheid, then they say you're holding onto the past and it is negative, you should be writing about the future

The debates around which routes post-apartheid African-language literature should take in the South African context are inundated with contradictions as Vladislavic points out. But the greater contradiction lies in the fact that most of the critics have been exposed to post-colonial discursive practices, which generally operate outside the African-language literature domain. These observations raise the question of whether postcolonial literary criticism may be appropriate to isiZulu literature.

### 4. *Post-colonial Criticism*

Postcolonial criticism is now an extensive field of scholarship which in the words of Ashcroft et. al. (1989:2) "covers all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day." The field is now multi-dimensional and covers a variety of topics such as writers in the Diaspora, feminist writing, revisions of the past, the politics of historiography, and aspects of post-colonial crises. However, nevertheless there have been several critiques of post-colonial criticism on the grounds that it is mainly theorized on the basis of Europhone literatures and hence that it overlooks many key features of African-languages literatures. Barber (1994:3), for example, says

> Post-colonial discourses block a properly historical localized understanding of any scene of colonial and post-independence literary production in Africa. Instead it selects and overemphasizes one sliver of literary and cultural production…and this is posed as representative of a whole culture or even a whole global 'colonial experience'.

One feature of African languages literature that is often misrecognized by post-colonial theorists is its apparently apolitical nature. Given this characteristic some critics have dismissed it as socially and politically inconsequential.

However this thesis will challenge this notion by drawing on critics like Amuta (1989) and Mathonsi (2002), who argue for the broadening of the concept of the political to include apparently non-political issues in literature. Amuta (1989:115) points out that

> Commitment in literature is essentially artistic; the commitment in a literary work strikes us through the laws of artistic composition. When artistic commitment appeals according to the laws of mundane social rhetoric, art yields to propaganda.

The manifestations of commitment are varied and African-language writers should be seen as committed to the "expression of culture" a tradition that has evolved with the folk narrative tradition. Apparent lack of political content should not render the text non-committed. Mathonsi (2002:207) points out that

> Given that the problems (cultural, political, religious, etc.) that afflicted the Africans were so vast during the apartheid period, no practitioner of literature should have failed to reflect them and their causes…targeting becomes necessary because if too many ills are presented, the force is dispersed.

This view is also shared by Williams (1977) who observe that what is of fundamental significance is that the author should take a political stand than that he should emerge as a "teacher" and lead the public to self-betterment.

The arguments by Amuta and Mathonsi are useful for this thesis because they help my argument in justifying the use of a different approach to the study of African-languages literature. A redefinition of social commitment will broaden the conceptual use of the term because through the study of dominant trends and discourses in isiZulu literature, a pattern of themes that the writers were committed to raising will emerge. As I hope to indicate, these themes are often obliquely stated and emerge through the considered use of a range of traditional art forms.

**5. Barber's model**

In her work on Yoruba drama, Barber (2000:7) has formulated a series of analytical approaches that are useful for African languages literature. Barber's generative materialism, premised on a sociologically inclined model of literary approach to the arts, explores the economic, social and cultural levels of text production, drawing in the dialectical and interrelated aspects that assist in defining or interpreting the ideological properties of the text. Barber has since developed this to create a set of literary tools to explain African everyday culture, focusing on the inner pulse or what she calls the meristematic tip responsible for the continual evolvement of African popular culture. Speaking of Yoruba popular theatre, she describes it as a living, contemporary collectively improvised and continually emergent form.[7] The observations she raises for Yoruba travelling theatre, the focus of her study, are also applicable to isiZulu literature. Modern isiZulu literature likewise evinces that internal dynamism that readily predisposes it to commentary on topical contemporary occurrences and happenings, drawing from the lived experiences of ordinary people in extremely familiar localities and using appropriate linguistic resources.

[7] See Barber, 2000, **The Generation of Plays: Yoruba Popular Life in Theatre**, 7.

Also significant in Barber's model is her analysis of artistic products that whilst drawing from the popular culture are able to edify their readers through the demonstration of moral messages flavoured by and couched in local interpretation. The fact that local cultural producers share the same world as their target audience assists in reflecting the close affinity that exists between the producer, the audience and the text. This interrelationship in the society that she studies helps produce a living vibrancy in the production and interpretation of the texts. Thus she emphasizes that "in Western Africa, then, people, continually produce new forms in order to come to grips with the massive transformation of modernity."[8] Although international and transnational media images appeared to be at the forefront of social transformation in the Yoruba context, Barber notes "that people's overwhelming preoccupation was with social transformations that were perceived as locally rooted and were actually experienced on the ground […] It was these locally experienced transformations that set the terms in which images of other lives, other cultures were appropriated – in different ways at different historical moments. And it was these transformations which remained the mesmerizing focus of popular commentary, and which all the new popular genres of the twentieth century – the Yoruba novel, drama, neo-traditional poetry, visual art, popular music – were created to grapple with. In Western Nigeria, as elsewhere in Africa and beyond, it was vernacular genres, representing local experiences that held people's attention."[9]

As we discuss later in the thesis this latter aspect of Barber's observation is conspicuously apparent in South African popular black television series. Similar expressive modalities and extensive overlaps between black television dramas and isiZulu literary output seems to be premised on the regeneration and recycling of past themes, plot structures, lessons and styles of characterization in a manner that Barber's concept of generative materialism explains Yoruba theatre. She points out that "real experience is narrativized and circulates in the form of anecdotes while existing stories become the templates by which real experience is apprehended […] In this cycle, written texts may participate on the same footing as the anecdotes of experience. Many plays

[8] Ibid, 5.
[9] Ibid, 5.

seem to have been an amalgam of hearsay, anecdote, folktale, and written fiction."[10] In spite of this Barber points out that with Yoruba theatre there is an inherent quest for innovation, exploring the unknown through representation that permutated the known.[11] This element of forging forward towards the unknown constitutes the growing point that brings in newness. She points out that "no rendition of a play or theme is wholly predictable, for though it will recycle much existing material it will also always exceed it in one way or another."[12] These issues are applicable to much of isiZulu literature and black television dramas. The revisiting of many themes in television dramas, may be seen as recapitulation, but the broadcast media versions, established much later than the print, always introduced something new that speak to the topical, current and sensational in the society.

Barber's approach also considers "critical creative metalinguistic consciousness" such as proverbs and epithets. Hanks (1996:193) views these paralinguistic aspects as at work even in the briefest and most mundane of everyday utterances. Not only are these inherently aesthetic as Croce (1992) points out, the consideration of these linguistic features is central in a manner that Barber sees them as not only the seeds of all the great literary genres but also as their summation. This consideration is fundamental in this study because these verbal formulations are mental archeological sites that have found ways of being repeatedly cited and have found ways of being relevantly applied in modern contemporary textual production. These metalinguistic features are encapsulated in a discourse of the axiom. Barber (2000:267) is of a view that the proverbial sayings in a society constantly act as authoritative moral codes and can always be used to explain similar situations in different contexts. Messages or themes in isiZulu written discourses tend to be encoded in "axiomatic expressions". These proverbial injunctions constitute generations of folk wisdom from the traditional world, which is demonstrated to be still applicable in modern society. Moral dramatizations and narratives did not first appear with missionary evangelical propagation, but they have been the integral fiber of values and mores that defined the traditional world and its episteme.

[10] Ibid, 133.
[11] Ibid, 9.
[12] Ibid, 9.

The axiom in these narratives holds that absolute truths are "derived from their origin of actual events."[13] The recurrent application of these proverbs and sayings in numerous contexts and in different periods entrenches them with more authority.[14] They provide formulaic patterns about life experiences, which Finnegan (1998) calls "templates" of life "by which people structure their own experiences resulting in 'mutual reference' so that the overall narrative lesson is said to be 'true' or it is 'how exactly life is.'

Furthermore the repetition of story lines observable in different types of media and in speech acts have been drawn from daily phenomena in order to forge new perspectives in contemporary life styles. Barber (2000:9-10) points out that

> In the generation of popular Yoruba plays, every moment and every level of production is a site of creative potentiality. Stories are drawn from available repertories but are reshaped; characters are excavated from the repositories of the actors' personal experiences which is incrementally growing; speech emerges from moment to moment, infused with what is currently in the streets, adapted in the light of the audiences reactions, adjusted to the speech of the other characters in the scene, and fed by the actors' own inspiration as well as the manager's continually updated instruction.

Although isiZulu literature is not equivalent to the Yoruba travelling troupe much of what constitutes its contextual production is also applicable to isiZulu literature. Barber indicates that recapitulations in different periods and their transmutation into popular media like radio and television concretize local experiences. Eventually these will assume an authoritative perspective. These experiences hold lessons steeped in recurrent and other related experiences that have generally been read and interpreted in the same manner. Barber's premise in the study of Yoruba popular theatre stems from the observation that the stories that were staged, mostly dealt with concrete, localized and

[13] Bada cited in Barber 2000, 267.

[14] Ibid, 267.

familiar experiences.[15] The experiences presented were not only familiar but were also 'real', in which case, the stories were a collective and interactive improvisation by actors who draw extensively from their own reservoir of experience, personality and competence based on hearsay, daily metaphors and proverbial sayings, contemporary events, anecdotes of experience circulating in popular culture, and so forth.[16] Barber's analysis of the Yoruba popular culture is useful in explaining the recurrent morality lessons in isiZulu literature and television dramas. The rendering of familiar experiences solidifies modes of perception and the conclusion derived for other similar experiences. These observations can usefully be applied to isiZulu literature and television dramas.

This assessment of indigenous expression is further vouched for by Chapman (1996) who points out that an evaluation of South African indigenous literary expression in terms of realistic criteria is misleading. In a realistic reading, the oral 'residue' which manifests itself in strong storylines, episodic plots, and copious repetitions might not be recognized. This trend in thinking about indigenous literary expression is not entirely new. As early as in the 1960's Ramsaran made a case for 'old mythologies' that propagated themselves anew as inevitable signs of continued life and growth of a cultural life which, while it evolves also preserves the vitality of the 'old mythology'. Barber's concretization of the same observation in Yoruba popular plays illustrates this point as does her emphasis on the moral aspects of such plays is that they perform as responses to the demands of modernity. When transferred to other contexts, like the isiZulu literary one, these moral aspects contribute to understanding the role played by orality in responding to the complexities that resulted from modernity. Furthermore perhaps this insistent recurrence of folkloric material in new textual forms points to the sources of the thematic materials as coming from real life experiences and folkloric origin.

Granqvist's (1993:55-58) summation of these characteristics is useful. His discussion regarding the connection between popular culture and orality is illuminating. He points out that, firstly, oral traditions like popular literature aim at enhancing group cohesion

[15] Ibid, 265.
[16] Ibid, 266.

and identity, and that the lessons in both forms of literature contribute to people's endeavour of founding an "authentic culture", thereby instituting cultural control over the individual members of the society. Secondly, social codes of behaviour are easily transmitted through a story, a proverb or any of the traditional performance elements. Thirdly, oral narratives are not "frozen" but are open paradigms that can be "endlessly manipulated, transferred or orchestrated in new artistic creation." This is also substantiated by Bole (cited in Granqvist 1993) who points out that the ability of oral narratives to be recreated, renovated or renewed is also a "re-affirmation of the contiguity with the past, and the dramatization of the present." This latter aspect on the nature of oral narratives will be fundamental in explaining the intertextuality that is common in isiZulu literature. According to Kristeva (cited in Newman (1995), every text builds itself as a mosaic of quotations, every text absorbs and transforms another text. Newman further points out that intertextuality can be described as a repetition of a previously heard story of life predestined by the notions that shape our consciousness. The contributions by other scholars such as Canonici (1993), Boscom (1965) and others will be helpful in solidifying the base from which the aspect of moral lessons and its implication in modern isiZulu literature will be discussed.

Barber's approach, which focuses on everyday culture through the exploration of textual productions that aims to edify audiences through demonstrations of moral lessons, will be used to explain the recurrence of the old themes in new contexts and the emergent of new themes in both print and broadcast media.

Looking at the post-apartheid literary production of African-language literatures, there has been an initial increase, with plus or minus twenty and thirty titles being published in the first three years immediately after the 1994 elections. Mpe and Seeber (2000) note that the government's decree concerning the new curriculum and the budget reduction for school-related material affected the publishing industry. This led to a decline of titles published each year, a process that became apparent between 1998-2003. The themes and messages of the texts tended to be a recapitulation of the previously explored issues like self-willed girls and teenage pregnancy, crime and juvenile delinquency, love triangle,

love enchantments through witchcraft and so forth. These themes are explored again in the narratives like **UNonjabulo Imbali YaseMlizeli** (1998) by Maseko which is modeled after Mngadi's **Imiyalezo** (1979); Sibiya's **Kungasa Ngifile** (2002) after Shabangu's **Imvu Yolahleko** (1977); Xulu's **Udwendwe lukaKoto** (1994) after Mncwango's **Ngenzeni** (1959) and Molefe's **Ngiwafunge Amabomvu** (1993). Perhaps I need to qualify the concept "modeled": it alludes to the fact that the plot structuring is basically the same with changes and twists in certain segments of the narrative.

Although there are some old writers like Mngadi's **Asikho Ndawo Bakithi** (1996) and Dlamini's **Isidleke Samanqe** (1996), there are a few new-comers like the expatriates, Buthelezi's **Buchitheka Bugayiwe** (1997), **Impi Yabomdabu Isethunjini** (1996), **Indebe Yami Iyachichithima** (1998), Kunene's **Amalokotho kaNomkhubulwane** (1996) and **Izigigaba Nezigameko Zomhlaba** (1996), and a bulk of the *Mamela Series* publications by Heinemann like Nxaba's **Isethembiso Esilichoboka** (1998), Bhengu's **Inkunzi Emanqindi** (1999) and **Itshwele Lempangele** (1998), Khumalo and Mfeka's **Azibuye Emasisweni** (1999). These new writers have made significant strides in bringing new elements of style, thematic scope, types of characterization and discourses, and a general refreshing approach to the writing of isiZulu literature. Some of the new discourses found in the post-1994 literary production related to contemporary ANC party political discourses, diasporic issues, feminists issues, rural development discourses, national issues, racial reconciliation, homosexuality, xenophobia, urban culture that forces renewed perceptions about the rural-urban dialectics, health issues particularly the HIV/AIDS pandemic and so forth. Some of these discourses could arguable be said to be taboos. The African society has over time become less conservative therefore, the liberalization of the social space and social codes, allow previously taboo subjects into the indigenous literary scene.

A second category of writers seem to take their inspiration from popular television series. Mngadi's **Ifa Ngukufa** (2001) seems to have been based on the conflicts of heritage that was characteristic of De Kock and Shabangu's television film **Ifa LakwaMthethwa** (1995), while Zulu's **Umfelokazi** (1996) is based on **Hlala Kwabafileyo** (1994), a

Scholtz film, directed by March Whener which was in turn based on a novel by Shabangu **Isithunzi Sikamufi** (1987). The stylistic exchange between isiZulu prose and drama, and television drama continues. Yazbek's **Gaz' Lam I, II, III, IV,** a television series and Mahlatse's **Yizo Yizo I, II** and **III** also a television drama, introduce new discourses into isiZulu literary discourse and there is an intra-exchange between the latter two films in terms of their cinematography and thematic scope, probably owing to some of the writers' involvement in both films. Not only do such films tap into the already established motifs like the rural-urban dialectics, 'crime does not pay' themes, they also usher new perceptions into those age-old characteristics. Probably I need to point out that while the tone of the argument seems to be suggesting newness in television drama, there are television drama series like **Umuzi Wezinsizwa I** and **II**, which although highly popular, are uncritical in their reproduction of stereotypes.

## 6. Black Film Theory

The propensity of black television from the period of its inception in the early 1980s to project representations of "lifelike ordinary individuals into everyday, recognizable space" also allows for extending Barber's application to black television dramas. The provision for an African languages television channel, TV 2 in 1981 and the subsequent introduction of another one, TV 3 in 1982, by the Afrikaner government introduced new sites for further contestation of Africans' responses to continued repression and for topicalising daily experiences in South African townships. Television drama in African languages was to play a significant role in Africans' response to continued economic and socio-political marginalization. Television dramas for black audiences fulfilled a yearning for narratives about contemporary life experiences rather than the fossilized narrative versions of the folktale tradition. In addition, before the introduction of black television, black people were channeled into viewing white films, mostly Hollywood mediocrities that never related to them. Black television drama thus came to fill a void created by the loss of the traditional vibrant oral culture and the emptiness of township life. More significantly, the Afrikaner hegemony, through the introduction of black

television, aimed at redirecting the African focus away from the political climate created towards the end of the 70s.

The thesis will read black television film production in relation to broader theoretical underpinnings of black film criticism, both from Third Cinema and Black Film Theory. The impetus behind drawing these filmic approaches firstly stems from the realization that at the level of the black experience, black people from all over the world share commonalities with regards to racial politics, cultural politics, aesthetics, identity, class politics and so on. And secondly the correlation between Third Cinema and the Black Film is informed by positional similarities. According to Loft (cited in Smith 1997: 6-7),

> What makes Third Cinema (i.e., a viable alternative to Western cinema) is not exclusively the racial makeup of the filmmaker, a film's aesthetic character, or a film's intended audience, but rather a film's political orientation within the hegemonic structures of post colonialism. When a film contributes ideologically to the advancement of black people, within a context of systematic denial, the achievement of this political objective ought to count as a criterion of evaluation on a par with any essentialist criterion.

Smith (1997:93) points out that both Third Cinema and Black Film Theory "challenge, disrupt, and redirect the pervasive influence of Hollywood's master narratives." According to Yearwood (2000**:**69) "Black film aesthetic is the key epistemological activity that is relevant not only as a form of scholarship in itself, but for its central role in articulating and exploring paradigms that offer a more incisive grasp of film in relation to the black expressive tradition." He further points out that theory formulation in black film studies should reflect the socio-historical and political-economic conditions of the black experience. It should provide concepts, tools and strategies for initiating and maintaining a struggle against the way the black world is marginalized and shaped by forces beyond its control.[17] This view is also supported by Harding (1987:8) who notes that theory should explore ways to "win over, defeat, or neutralize those forces arrayed against its emancipation, growth, or development."

[17] Ibid**,** 2-10

In this thesis the Black Film approach is drawn upon to illuminate five fundamental aspects regarding black television dramas in South Africa. The first one is captured in Yearwood's (2000:3) observation that "black cultural dynamism develops intricate systems of signification that invoke significant intertextual elements of the black tradition." This observation concurs with similar findings made on black popular culture by scholars such Barber (1997, 2004); Nuttall and Michael (2000), Wallace (1992) and others who note that the relationship between black traditions and popular culture is not only informed by the migratory tendencies of certain traditional forms but also the intertextuality of these traditions ensures that certain values key to the society and tradition are kept alive from generation to generation.

The second aspect relates to the construction of the black image on film. Black Film Theory provides an opportunity for the exploration of film historiography while at the same time instilling an Afrocentric historical consciousness that reveals the commonality of the construction of the black image as a shared diasporic experience. Yearwood (2000:5) points out that "if blackness is articulated as a symbolic construct of the Western Unconscious, then shared diasporic experiences of blackness can be demonstrated to span geographic and cultural boundaries." Linked to this aspect is Smith's (1997:1) observation regarding 'doctored black images'. She postulates that part of the exploration of politics of representation is "the search for an authentic black subject." The question of the black image in South Africa cinema tradition has permeated to black television and has also affected post-apartheid dramas as well. Black film theory as advanced by Yearwood (2000) is able to simultaneously clarify politics of black representation within a modernist and postmodernist perspective and show the dangers of 'black image cleansing' because that falsifies social reality and betrays a lack of interest in challenging broader political realities.

The third aspect concerns the black diasporic experience as couched in what Donaldson has termed the "TransAfrican aesthetic ideals" (Donaldson cited in Yearwood, 2000:7), which is a pan-Africanist informed aesthetic model in an African work. Donaldson's

concept seems to operate on the grand black experience narrative ideal that interconnects different levels of the black social experience across the diaspora and which can be used to rally black people of the diaspora. This observation is reached after considering three basic discourses of the Black Film Theory and Criticism: the power of black expression, the resilience of the black cultural traditions (Yearwood, 2000) and what Gates (1987:177) calls the black poet's mythopoetic role, which means the prediction of "our future through his or her sensitivity to our past coupled with an acute, almost intuitive awareness of the present." These three core discourses are threads that link up to the internationalisation of the black experience which invite an aesthetic model to take an Afrocentric approach to works of art produced by people of African descent throughout the world.

The fourth aspect of Black Film Theory and Criticism is its total rejection of a social realist depiction of black life. Yearwood (2000:23-24) points out that a realist form of criticism focuses more on the subject matter, the amelioration of black images and black life and the preoccupation with the formal art. Social realism looks at how cultural traditions influence the artist's sensibilities, expressive techniques and how the artefacts are produced. Leading Marxist scholars are critical of critical realism or social realism in literature. Their strongest objection lies in the view that the approach has been based on the bourgeois model which does not explore the nature of cultural relations between the superstructure and the subject people and the cultural reproduction of such relations.[2] Black Film Theory on the contrary is, as pointed out by Yearwood, (2000:24) "interested in the symbol rather than the approximation of reality". It looks at how the black expression incorporates certain forms and survival techniques germane to the black experience.

Lastly, this theory also incorporates discourses from the rural and the working class urban experiences "to exemplify an artistic tradition that looks inward, celebrates historical

[2] See Thomas Cripps 'Race Movies' Voices of the Black Bourgeoisie: 'The Scar of Shame**',** in **Representing Blackness: Issues in Film and Video**, (ed.) by Valerie Smith (1997).

roots, and refuses to engage in self denial for the sake of assimilation."[18] That aspect of instilling a sense of the past and acknowledgment of tradition (Cripps, 1978) is a recurrent discourse, not only within the African American cultural and filmic discourses but also within African cultural renaissance discourses. The shared sensibilities between the African Americans and the Africans, particularly on how the past, or past symbols and traditional systems of knowledge should be revisited in articulating modern experiences as they affect the black people in contemporary settings is a significant aspect in the construction of film.

Yearwood (2000:2) further maintains that the preoccupation with these traditional systems of thought and knowledge foregrounds a cultural framework that localises the black cultural experience so that the reading of films is "located within the black experience as opposed to an overdetermined use of the dominant society's point of view." These traditional systems of thought and knowledge according to Lardner (1972:80) are encapsulated in the Black Film approach as its main emphasis is to highlight "its own autonomous systems of values, behaviour, attitudes, sentiments, and beliefs which positions the black experience as an integral mechanism blacks use to negotiate their day-today activities." In both the African American and the South African contexts, the dominant mainstream culture has been used as a principal frame of reference for the articulation of the black image and black life experiences. However, through this approach, a shift in paradigm is envisaged and will lead to the contestation of the "film language" (Bambara, 1993:127). The relevance of Black Film Theory and Criticism lies is its acknowledgement of the Afrocentric perspective, on how expressive strategies and cultural mechanisms that have been critical to black survival influence black filmmaking, and how the black experience has fundamentally shaped the criteria for evaluating black film.

By extending the conceptual frameworks of these approaches to the South African black cinema experiences, we hope to explore assumptions and understandings of the position

[18]Yearwood, **Black Film as a Signifying Practice: Cinema, Narration and the African-American sthetic Tradition**, 24

of South African black television dramas within the black filmic discourses and the black experience in the Diaspora. The first assumption that the discussion is premised upon is that black filmic experience in South Africa has always been tied up with the state's hegemonic discourses. As a result there is no clear advancement made in terms of developing a national cinema which is independent of the state's control. If we consider the three distinctive eras of black television drama namely, the apartheid era from 1981 – 1993, the reconciliatory period from 1995-1999 and the sedimentation of democracy from 2000 to date, black television dramas emerged as articulating predetermined discourses of the time. The second assumption relates to the nature of South African black television dramas and how they invoke Barber's conceptions of the generation of popular culture, and in significant ways operate like textual productions of the Yoruba travelling theatre especially in their focus on everyday culture, the appropriation of transnational popular culture so that it is interpreted in local terms, the edification of the audience members through a demonstration of moral messages, the generation of themes and mutual intertextual dependence on other textual productions that have preceded it and how new materials are continually woven into productions leading to what Barber terms "repetition with a difference."

**Methodology**

The first part of the thesis will examine how oral genres are used to grasp the contradictions of contemporary lifestyle. The methodology will focus on the way in which oral forms operate in particular texts. Forms to be considered are as follows:

**Proverbs**

The proverbs in the texts play a central and complex role. In instances where proverbs are used as titles of narratives, or aligned with the leading characters driving the moral of the lesson, the reading of the narrative is usually structured in such a way as to refer back to these proverbs at the end of the narrative. The proverbs encapsulate the known absolute truth about life experiences which then ares re-enacted in the narrative producing similar conclusions. By drawing on Barber's model, we do not only understand how the proverb

works aesthetically in the text, we also understand it as an implied reading strategy. This strategy provides the reader with instructions on how the axioms in the text should be applied. The intended texts for study in this category are Radebe's **Aphelile Agambaqa** (1998) and Buthelezi's **Impi YaboMdabu Isethunjini** (1996).

**Folktale motifs**

The next category relates to the narratives that use the folktale motifs as a way of structuring the moral lesson of the story. This observation has also been noted by Msimang (1986) in a group of narratives he has studied. He noted that in certain texts allusions are made either through a word or a set of phrases or character's points of view to known folktales. He concludes that these allusions prove beyond doubt that certain folktales motifs played an important role in the creative processes of these novelists. However, key to this influence is that

> The similar elements must be such that it can be reasonably be inferred that the author of the latter work was consciously or subconsciously under the power of the earlier author – as is the case with emulation or downright adaptations – the influence will be overt and readily identifiable. On the other hand, the influence might be covert, like for instance where the author of the latter work was only subconsciously stimulated by the former work or where he has infused certain elements in the former work with his own ingenuity. In such a case the researcher should not only identify the similarities but should also interpret the work so as to show how – and possibly why – it differs from the former. Similarities often show up in style as well as in technique for plot construction, conveyance of theme and character porteayal. Occassionally, whole motifs may be borrowed from former works.(Msimang, 1986:8).

Ngubo's **Yekanini Ukuzenza** (1996) and Muthwa's **Isifungo** (1996) are representative of a broader class of the novels which rely on the folktale motifs to construct a didactic outcome. The first novel draws its structural motif from the folktale of the piglet called

Maqinase, the self-willed one. In the novel **Yekanini Ukuzenza**, Busisiswe, self-willed leading female character, is drawn into a life of fast living through crime. The second novel is heavily indebted to the structural motif of the folktale *Mamba KaMaquba*. Drawing again on Barber's model, the thesis will analyze such novels to illuminate how such motifs are used to produce a lesson. Emphasis will be placed on how such texts invite the readers to apply these lessons to the world beyond the book.

**Praises and naming**

There are also isiZulu narratives which have been influenced by oral forms like praises and names. According to Masondo (1997) naming has been the most valued practice in the culture of the Zulu people. He points out that there have been different reasons why people chose particular names. With regard to names for people, some names are coined even before they are born, or when they are born or long after they have been born, in their adulthood. Certain messages are sent by the people who coin the name. Given that praises and naming play such a crucial role in the traditions of the Zulu people, the research, drawing on Barber's model, seeks to study the narratives where the creative use of names and praises in the text reflect not only a stylistic form but a moral lesson which a reader knows to be encapsulated in the meaning of the names. In this category the thesis seeks to explore the uses of naming in **Ingwe Nengonyama** (1994) and **Ingalo Yomthetho** (1994), which are detective narratives by Masondo.

Through such textual analysis, the thesis will demonstrate how older or traditional forms are made contemporary through being applicable to the new circumstances. In this way I will seek to show how apparently stale themes can produce novel readings.

The second half of the study will focus on new themes that emerged in television drama series after 1994. The films that will be studied are **Ifa LakwaMthethwa** and **Hlala Kwabafileyo**. The major theme to be investigated in these films is that of inheritance, a relatively neglected topic of change in inheritance patterns. The analysis will exploit issues of inheritance and gender politics, and how traditions are invoked in dealing with these evolving phenomena. In addition the discussion will exploit the representations of

traditional political leadership, inheritance and the impact of Western styled economy in the creation of a neo-traditional economy.

A discussion of the TV series **Gaz' Lam** and **Yizo Yizo** will investigate intertextuality between post-apartheid television series, and isiZulu literature. These films have remarkable affinities with the thematic patterns of isiZulu literature. The focus of the analysis will be on how older narrative tropes are deployed to address emergent areas of social concern. With **Gaz Lam** a set of thematic issues distinctively dominant in isiZulu literature will be analyzed.

The approach to **Yizo Yizo** will focus on a comparative analysis of the depiction of crime between the series and one isiZulu novel. The emphasis will be laid on the issue of crime as a post-apartheid political problem with roots deeply embedded in the apartheid past. More significantly the discussion will show how **Yizo Yizo**'s perspective and treatment of crime influence an isiZulu novel.

**Chapter Outline**

The introduction gives an overview of the existing approaches to isiZulu literature over three identifiable periods of isiZulu literary history. The first subsection deals with the literary criticism of the missionary period, followed by the apartheid and the post-apartheid periods. The second subsection deals with the postcolonial material, the third subsection deals with Barber's model followed by a discussion of Black Film Theory. The thesis will be divided into two major sections. The first section will look at print media and the second at broadcast media.

Section one will examine the renovation of old themes through the use of selected oral forms. This task will be undertaken in three chapters. Chapter one will examine the role of proverbs as sites for instruction. This will be analyzed through a close reading of Buthelezi's **Impi Yabomdabu Isethunjini** (1996) and Radebe's **Aphelile Agambaqa** (1998). Chapter two will look at folktale motifs as reading strategies. The novels that will

be examined are Ngubo's **Yekanini Ukuzenza** (1996) and Muthwa's **Isifungo** (1996). The third chapter will examine narratives that rely upon naming and praises as narrative strategies. The novels to be examined are detective stories, **Ingwe Nengonyama** (1994) and **Ingalo Yomthetho** (1994) by Masondo.

Section two will look at new themes. Chapter four will examine the changing inheritance patterns and new narrative configurations. Two black television dramas will be used for this aspect; **Hlala Kwabafileyo** (1995), and **Ifa Lakwa-Mthethwa** (1996). Chapter five will look at a television film that narrativises the post-apartheid challenges through a consideration of its dominant themes and chapter six will emphasise on the treatment of crime in **Yizo Yizo** and Mzi Mngadi's **Kuyoqhuma Nhlamvana** (2004). The thesis concludes by examining the findings of the study.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Narrativising proverbs: Seeing contemporaineity through archaic gazes in *Aphelile Agambaqa* and *Impi Yabomdabu Isethunjini*.

Thosago (2004:13) points out that progressivist stance to folkloristics has created a discursive terrain that allows for the refocusing of the role of folklore material in contemporary society. These discursive practices proceed from rejecting conventionalized conceptions that propounded 'antediluvian', 'backward', 'illiterate' and 'primitive' associations with folklore, to propagating those that seek to regenerate folklore and show that it could be "effortlessly affected by a heavy reliance on the technospace of postmodernity with its vast array of diversified characteristics such as, among others, hybridity, syncretism and metafictionality." His perspective exemplifies the interrelation between folklore and postmodernity. This perspective allows for the exploitation of the technical space such as the broadcast media for the rejuvenation of folklore, which this thesis will explore in part two. However his views on this matter are not new. Since the inception of isiZulu literature in colonial times, writers have evinced a syncretic admixture of traditional historicity and Western civilization when writing about modernity, an aspect which have since become a practice governing the convention of creative writing in isiZulu literary experience. Therefore at the conceptual level renarrating contemporary experiences entails a need to 'return to this ancient tradition, thus creating a syncretic continuity, complex as it might be, between the pastoral, unattainable past and the self-conscious writings that typify post-modern textuality.'[19]

It is against this background that proverbs and their re-invocation in post-apartheid isiZulu novels are studied. The study of proverbs has led to significant advances in understanding their nature and their function as localized in discourses of orature,

[19] African folklorists since the middle of the 1980s have moved beyond the conventional folklore study that focused more on the cultural contexts for its rendition or performance, to a study of the relationship between orality and literacy. Their views are succinctly captured by Emanuel Obiechina (1972 and 1973). The **Southern African Journal for Folklore Studies**, 2003 13 (1) devoted the whole journal to a treatise of the presence of oral genres in literary genres. In isiZulu literary tradition, Msimang (1986) advanced a theory of the oral influence on the early Zulu narratives. However his treatise creates an impression that seems to project that it is only earlier narratives that manifest oral influenced but with current narratives this influence is still as vibrant and vivid.

literature, and every day speech acts. The uses of proverbs and other oral genres are various and wide, but their significance lies in their ability to explain language, thought and society (Pridmore, 1991, cited in Zounmenou, 2004). Not only the thoughts of the society are presented through proverbs but also the philosophical views of the society are reflected and passed down from one generation to the next (Nyembezi, 1949). In some African societies, the uses of proverbs in daily conversations is the most valued verbal experience because their application brings about the ingenuity that could be viewed as the preparatory linguistic field for the performance of lengthy verbal art forms like folk stories or *izibongo* (praises).

Okpewho (1992) discusses additional examples of the application of proverbs. Of note is his treatise of the role of proverbs in everyday conversation, especially his discussion of the "twists" that are discerned in the proverbs used by individuals to "spice up the talk". Further scholarly views on the matter emphasize their didactic illocutionary function (Monye, 1966; Pelling, 1977; Mokitimi, 1997, Okpewho, 1992). It is this latter aspect of intended didacticism in proverbs that constitutes the focus of this chapter. IsiZulu literature is dominated by didacticism. This didacticism has always been located within a traditional epistemology though accentuated by the advent of Christianity which brought its own moral discourses. The tensions and the conflicts that have existed between these two discourses, traditional and Christianity, with each vying for dominance in literary discourses have characterised isiZulu literature from its inception until today.

The Christian discourses are not the only prominent force that shaped isiZulu literature. A host of other Western stylistic influences shaped its content and form. According to Barber (1999:20) the use of Western stylistic influences firstly excluded the value of verbal art forms as identifiable texts that are "constituted to invite comment, analysis and assessment" and secondly, prevented recognition of the fact that these indigenous forms could have acted as a basis of an indigenous African aesthetics. According to Western literary conventions as applied in isiZulu literature, instances where verbal art forms have been used in novels, short stories and dramas have been confined to the rubric, 'the author's use of language'. In such instances the author is praised for including idioms and

proverbs in his work and is castigated if their quantity is found to be wanting.[20] The contribution provided by Barber (1999, 2000) to the study of proverbs, not only as performance texts but also as identifiable discursive practices that underpin African value systems, has never been explored in relation to isiZulu literature. According to Barber's model, African discourses are constituted by verbal oral art forms such as folk narratives, legends, riddles, proverbs, axioms, quotidian sayings and so forth. These verbal oral art forms perpetuate and reaffirm the authority of the traditional world. They are able to improvise, and they are fluid and flexible, allowing them to incorporate new materials and migrate to other genres. In spite of this apparent flexibility and mobility there are certain valuable aspects within verbal oral art forms that are constituted by unchanging fixed formulations that make it possible for these art forms to be identifiable as independent detached texts. Akinnaso (1985) points out that whenever these forms are performed or uttered, they are experienced as durable formulations that come from outside the current conversation and are thought to transcend that of conversation or other everyday use of language.

Barber (1999:18-19) further points out that, "the reification of the utterance in Yorùbá discourses, is signalled by the intense and pervasive presence of quotation […] There is a whole field of texts that are constituted as quotations: rather than being merely uttered, they are cited." Even though Barber's model focused on verbal oral art forms of the Yorùbá society, the presence of these oral formulations in isiZulu language justifies its application here. The field of texts that Barber refers to is constituted by proverbs, axiomatic expressions, quotations and quotidian sayings. This chapter will investigate the uses of proverbs as an implied reading strategy in isiZulu literature. The two novels selected for the demonstration of this theory are Buthelezi's **Impi YaboMdabu Isethunjini** (1996) and Radebe's **Aphelile Agambaqa** (1998).

[20] Russian Formalism and Structuralism played a significant role in shaping isiZulu literary criticism. The tendency to collapse certain concerns of these two approaches as they relate to the artfulness of the poetic language or the literariness of the poetic diction or that of the language of literature created a perception that the oral verbal art forms which are inherently artful were equal in function and significance.

Proverbs are not only artistic articulations but also critical discourses embedded with moral instructions for social cohesion. The close affinities between proverbs as narratives and plots of **Aphelile Agambaqa** and **Impi YaboMdabu Isethunjini** reveal how proverbs as titles, together with a host of others cited throughout the narratives are dependant on their linguistic-social authority as pre-existing quotations while simultaneously being able to comment and shape perceptions on the evolving trends of contemporary life experiences. In this discussion the emphasis is placed on the 'mutual reflection' at play between proverbs and narratives. The narrative is structured in such a way as to refer back to these proverbs at the end of the novels. What the proverbs encapsulate as the known absolute truth about life experiences is re-enacted in the narrative producing similar conclusions. As a way of bringing out the interplay between proverbs and plotting strategies of the novels, there is an exploration of proverbs as titles of narratives and as propellants of the moral lesson. The latter aspect will draw in another corpus of proverbs that have been quoted from throughout the novels to highlight issues that contribute and add value to the central theme of the narrative. These quotations, when detached from the contexts of these narratives, can be used as 'independent utterances' from which various narratives can be derived. However in these texts they have been contextualised as supporting "truths" that complement or supplement the dominant one reflected in the title of the novels.

**A summary of *Aphelile Agambaqa***

The narrative opens with the main female character, a single parent, Nomvula, discovering that her son, Sibusiso, has been 'abducted' by his biological father, Makhaya, a journalist in a local newspaper in the Eastern Cape. After Makhaya fails to return the child to Nomvula's Daveyton home late that Friday afternoon, she decides to drive to the Eastern Cape, where Makhaya lives in order to get the child from its father. She reassures her mother that she will be back on Saturday afternoon. At this moment in her life, Nomvula is involved with Sipho, a lawyer. Furthermore, over the weekend, talks of her *lobola* negotiations are to be conducted. On Monday she is scheduled to leave the country on a business trip.

On arrival in the Eastern Cape she tries to talk to the father to give back the child but she fails as do her attempts at 'stealing' back the child. Makhaya's reasons for taking the child are firstly to get back at Nomvula because she kept him in the dark regarding the pregnancy and furthermore, he feels he has been denied a chance of exercising his fatherhood responsibilities for the past seven years. Lastly he has hopes that he can convince Nomvula to marry him since he has learnt that Nomvula is about to be married to another man. On arrival at Makhaya's place she discovers that he (Makhaya) is in a relationship that has conditions similar to the ones they had for their relationship which were a basis for her decision not to disclose information about her pregnancy to him. Tensions between herself and Makhaya's lover arise, but Makhaya's lover cannot openly display her hostilities fearing that such actions and attitudes might cost her this relationship because even though there are conditions she is content with the way things are. Thus her support for Nomvula to get Makhaya to give up the child stems from the realization that Nomvula's prolonged stay may cause her to lose her patience and eventually expose her.

Back home in Gauteng province Nomvula's fiancé, Sipho, learns of the circumstances leading to her sudden journey to the Eastern Cape. He follows her and on arrival in the area he lays a charge against Makhaya at the police station. By the time he arrives, however, the relationship between Makhaya and Nomvula has developed, and old flames have been rekindled. However, Nomvula has made a promise to Makhaya's lover, and cannot allow herself to be caught up in Makhaya's ways again. Both Nomvula and Makhaya's lover devise a plot for her to get back her child and escape from the province, but it coincides with Sipho's arrival. Seeing that the presence of Sipho might spoil her plan, Nomvula decides to sneak out unseen and escape with her son. However things turn bad the morning of their departure. Sibusiso goes missing and it is up to Makhaya to search and find the child. By this time her family has come to the Eastern Cape because she has stayed away for more days than she has initially planned. They coincidentally meet at the hotel from which Sibusiso has gone missing. When Makhaya eventually returns with Sibusiso, the family is impressed and urges Nomvula to reconsider her decision against marrying Makhaya. She is speechless as she allows herself to be

prevailed upon by her family to marry Makhaya even though she previously objected to the idea. The narrative ends with the banquet celebrating the re-union and the intended marriage between Nomvula and Makhaya.

**A summary of *Impi YaboMdabu Isethunjini***

The narrative opens with Cele, John's uncle, who comes from rural Eshowe, paying an unscheduled visit to John, who lives in Umlazi. John is well placed at work and he keeps to a tight schedule, and is thus unable to let his uncle see him until such time he has made an appointment. An angry Cele eventually secures an appointment, but John is not happy to hear what Cele has come to talk to him about. Cele has come to ask John, who we learn is an aspiring petit bourgeois, to take over the guardianship of his sister's children (begotten out of wedlock), since she (the mother of the children) has now been married to a different man. John refuses to take on this customary responsibility citing personal and financial reasons. But it emerges later on that the real reason is that he is afraid of his wife, Popi, a nagging and domineering wife, who is a matron in one of the local hospitals. It also emerges that John's family lifestyle is based on Eurocentric norms and values and therefore the addition of two children to their family budget is just out of the question as he will no longer be able to afford the lifestyle he wants to pursue.

Cele decides to keep the children, Uzithelile and Hlanganisani. They grow up in rural Eshowe, helping him with daily chores and at the same time working as domestics with local white employers. By contrast John's children, Euthanasia and Melody, are juvenile delinquents.

Drastic changes occur with Euthanasia, John's son. After getting into trouble at school, he runs away from home to Eshowe to his grandfather's place, where on arrival he receives a royal welcome and a goat is slaughtered in his honour and bile is sprinkled over him. He is given a new name, Vikizitha, as the European one did not have much sense or value for the rural people. Eventually he goes back home as a reborn youth who espouses different values to those practiced at his home. Although this places him at

loggerheads, particularly with his mother, eventually the family accepts him. He gradually transfers these values to his sister, Melody, who is renamed Vukuzithathe by their rural cousins.

John's lifestyle and marriage disintegrate and because he leads a solitary life in Umlazi he is unable to reconnect with his neighbours who would have given him support. After relocating to La Lucia John abandons his family and leads a hedonistic life of overindulgence in women and alcohol. In his absence his wife manages to get herself educated, acquiring a PhD degree. The children are invited by their rural cousins, who by this time had secured scholarships after matriculating, to come and study in America. The narrative ends with a dejected John eventually coming back home to rural Eshowe where his rural relatives re-unite him with his ailing wife.

**Proverbs and axioms as plotting strategies**

Msimang (1984) points out that proverbs are witticisms, truisms and maxims that have been accrued over generations to explain certain phenomena in the life experiences of a people and they are also used not only as artistic utterances but also function as instructive sites. Some of these instructive sites as pointed out by Mikitimi (1997) relate to knowledge, wisdom, philosophy, ethics and morals. This view is substantiated by Pelling (1977) who observes that through the use of these proverbial expressions certain morals and truths are forcefully extolled. According to Nyembezi (1949:300) these storehouses of experiences tend to affect the society's philosophical outlook and regulate its behaviour:

> As a social unit, people have certain definite ways of behaviour or conduct, which are expected of the individuals comprising the social unit. Some modes of conduct are embodied in proverbs, which serve the purpose of instructing the younger generation or serve as reminders to the old, who have been remiss in their observance of the rules of conduct expected in the society.

From the above description of the centrality of proverbs it may appear that the uses of proverbs can hinder progress and encourage linguistic and social stagnation. But a closer look at various oral forms indicates that they preserve some aspects that are recognizably 'archaic' while processing and incorporating new ones. This is observable in evolving tales, proverbs, praises and witticisms. They incorporate modern items, which at times have been inventions or innovations of the time.

Axiomatic expressions as part of the oral art forms display similar structural tendencies. Axioms can be defined as generally accepted propositions or principles sanctioned by experience or universally established principles or laws that are not necessarily the truth. Axioms are patterned formulations which embody moral lessons that the readers work out for themselves after going through a narrative. Examples of axiomatic expressions are '*crime does not pay*', '*true love stands the test of time*' or '*appearances can be deceptive*' and so forth. These axioms achieved a state of absoluteness because they have been constituted by repeated retellings of narratives with plot structures that re-affirmed their truthfulness. Thus Cornwall (1996) says retelling of narratives inevitably creates an impression that they hold a measure of truthfulness about them. However, as Barber (2000:267) points out of Yoruba theatre,

> The audience, to get its full measure of edification, could not walk into the hall in the closing moments and 'pick the lesson' from the summary statement made in the final speech or song. They need to see the axiom produced, as the outcome of a chain of events analogous to the events experienced in their own lives.

Developing this discourse Barber (1999) explains that the structure of axioms reveals that they operate on two temporal trajectories; the "atemporal" past, which always presents the preserved images of the proverbs, that give it "object-like qualities"; and the fluid or flexible quality that allow incorporation of newness and freshness. This flexible quality allows the axiom to interact with the contemporary realities and projections. Proverbs as well are structured like axioms because they are old quotations which are able to make comment on the evolving trends of contemporary life experiences.

The presence of linguistically patterned formulations in the novelistic discourses of the narratives discussed in this chapter, point not only to the heightened artistic effect of the language use, but also to dialogic discourses in heteroglossic terms between the novel's experiences and other experiences that are identifiable as "pre-existing hypotexts."[21] The hypotexts are distinctive secondary textual materials that are embodiments of certain worldviews, orientations embedded in a primary text. In these texts, as Mukarovsky asserts, the foreign elements not only retain, "the aura of otherness" but also give a sense of "the possibility of reverting or opening out into a different text."[22] These texts perpetuate and re-affirm the authority of the traditional world and its episteme. Barber (1999) calls these text(s), "pre-existent texts", namely, those texts such as proverbs, socio-cultural anecdotes, social or political jokes, witticisms or riddles that are not newly fashioned by the author but which s/he can readily access in the linguistic and social repertories. These pre-existent texts in the context of the study are proverbs and other witticisms and observations that are used to propel a traditionalist ideology.

The novels under discussion have proverbs as titles. An orally originated text has migrated to a scriptocentric medium. The proverb is a patterned linguistic formulation that has an independent identity outside any text and which can also be recognized in that manner. In instances where they are embedded in host texts such as narratives, praises, speech acts and so on, the ideas which are encapsulated in the proverbs, are brought down to bear on the events in the narratives moments, songs, praises and so forth as these are viewed as representative of people's life experiences. The titles of the novels then are ideas couched in proverbs to explain certain experiences.

**Aphelile Agambaqa** (they (i.e. words) are finished completely) describes the state of being speechless after all attempts at changing realities have been exhausted and the futility of the words has been proven. **Impi YaboMdabu Isethunjini** (The war of the

[21] Stam (2005) had used the terms to refer to film adaptations but has drawn from Bakhtin and Kristeva's concepts of intertextuality and hybrid construction of the artistic forms. These theories hold that the artistic utterance is always a mingling of one's own word with the other's word. One's word/literary form become a hypertext spun from pre-existing hyportexts which have been transformed by operations of selection, amplification, concretization and actualisation. See R. Stam (2005) **Literature Through Film: Realism, Magic, and the Art of Adaptation**.

[22] Mukarovsky cited in Barber, 1999, 'Quotation in the constitution of Yoruba oral text', 27.

Africans is in the intestine)**,** is an evolving proverb derived from *impi yomndeni isesendeni*, (The war of the family is in the testicle). Both operate on the premise that these proverbs are ideas that have been formulated centuries ago and have been passed down through generations, and in the context of the texts, are accessed to illuminate the actions of the characters that populate and drive the narratives. In the period under study, there are other narratives that have taken their titles from proverbs. These are Wanda's **Izibiba Ziyeqana** (1997) (some medicines are stronger than others), Vilakazi's **Aphume Nobovu** (1998) (they came out with the pus), Msimang's **Igula Lendlebe Aligcwali** (1995) (the gourd of the ear never fills up) and **Walivuma Icala** (1996) (s/he pleads guilty to a charge), which is also a derivative from *icala ngumphikwa* (a charge is denied).

And there is another category of texts, the titles of which have been articulated through idiomatic sayings (*izisho*). These are not necessarily proverbs but are truisms and maxims that command the absolute authority that is characteristic of the proverb, and are used to highlight the actions and realities of the people. Examples are Gininda's **Ukukhanya Kokusa** (1997) (The dawn of the morning), Masondo's **Ingalo Yomthetho** (1994) (The arm of the law) and **Ngaze Ngazenza** (1994) (I myself am to blame), Mbhele's **Izivunguvungu Zempilo** (1995) (The whirlwinds of life), Shabangu's **Kade Sasibona** (We are sages) (1997), Mngadi's **Umbele Wobubele** (1995) (The udder of kindness), Bhengu's **Seziyosengwa Inkehli** (1998) (They will be milked by a spinster), Cele's **Ngiyokhohlwa Ngifile** (1996) (I will forget when I am dead), and Mbhatha's **Amanoni Empilo** (1996) (The fats of life).

Novels that have proverbs as titles have an added advantage because plotting the narratives follows already established routes or story lines. Cornwall (cited in Barber, 1999:268) points out that the experiences embodied in proverbs have been heard before and the axiom deduced from them have been worked out earlier, therefore the application of proverbs and the axioms deduced in new contexts become reaffirmation of already existing perspectives. Thus the proverbs and axioms concretize the experiences and reveal an embodied authoritative perspective in the form of a moral lesson. The narrative

experiences therefore become a template through which moral issues encapsulated in the proverbs are accessed.

**Proverbs as titles of narratives**

The tendencies to incorporate proverbs in various contexts reflect the social thought governing permissible and non-permissible trends. Nyembezi (1949) postulates that in instances where the new trends are resisted and can be completely blocked, that is, the social thought is opposed to the emergent trend, then the application would revert back to the original interpretation. In **Aphelile Agambaqa** new trends depicted to typify contemporary African society relate to the diminishing value of traditional families, where the father-figure has been the unquestionable head, changing gender roles, diminishing socio-cultural values and problems with cultural relevancy. In the context of this narrative, and perhaps generally, these trends which have typified modern African societies since the period of industrialization, urbanization and modernization are disparaged as either causes of or being instrumental in the decline of an African cultural ethos. In the narrative the absence of a father figure in the life of Nomvula and again in the first few years of her son, Sibusiso, can be read as a strategy of illuminating problems with dysfunctional families.

The narrative seems to postulate that the absence of a father-figure in Nomvula's life, a patriarchal authoritative figure who both acts as guardian of cultural practices and leader of a household, allowed for insidious and deviant behaviour on her part, such as her conception of her child outside of wedlock. This observation is raised in the narrative by her sister through a citation of a proverb "***lafa elihle kakhulu****…kazi Khabazela uyazi yini lapho ulele khona ukuthi emzini wakho* ***sekukwamachaca impunz' idle mini***"[23] (Gone are the good old days…I wonder if Khabazela (Nomvula's father) knows wherever he is in the afterlife that his home has been turned into a playground) (Radebe:9). These proverbs are used to highlight the decline of values, and in particular, to emphasize the fact that the absence of a father in his family allows his offsprings to do as they please.

[23] The bold phrases in the passage are proverbs.

The narrative is concerned with a possibility of this occurrence happening to her son as well, therefore the intention of the narrative is to avoid the occurrence of such an event. In an attempt to avoid this occurrence the narrative contains proverbs assigned strategically various characters, so that all their observations regarding dysfunctional families are underlined by the original proverb or variants that have a similar meaning to the one used as the title. This notion is revisited later in the discussion.

In instances where a proverb's timelessness may encounter possible limitations due to emergent trends, the linguistic formulation of the proverbs is extended, as is the case with **Impi YaboMdabu Isethunjini**. This observation relates to what Pfeiffer (cited in Biesele 1993) observed with regard to Ju/'hoan tales. He asserts that the reiteration of oral tales is an indication that certain values are under pressure. His examples of artistic reiteration examine the idea of "egalitarian food sharing" which may not reflect abundance but rather the violation of the policy regarding food sharing.

The same could be said in cases of narratives that guard against violation of social codes. The reiteration of proverbs warns or advises against acceptance of trends that would have a negative impact on the structure of social cohesion as established by older generations. Through the use of the extended proverb *impi yaboMdabu isethunjini* (the war of the Africans is in the intestines) the author indicates that the applicability of the proverb should go beyond close intimate family intrigues as the original form does to include national and social issues that affect black identity, class disparities in the African society, education, politics, employment, social morality and so on. The tensions that play themselves out in the narrative between the rural and the urban family members are projected as being beyond seemingly trivial family conflicts relating to who is responsible for children begotten out of wedlock in order to touch on socio-economic and political issues affecting Africans in a post-apartheid context. The narrative postulates that while change and transformation are essential to progress, certain aspects of this progress are not commensurate with traditional values. Transformational tendencies are therefore carefully sifted through the ordering and structuring of narratives or axioms and their validity evaluated against a pre-existing 'oral archeology'.

**Proverbs and gender relations**

The structure of the narratives so as to refer back to the titles and at the same time explore gender relations is revealed through the characters of Popi in **Impi** and that of Nomvula in **Aphelile**. In both instances, the positioning of Popi's education and Nomvula's business success leave them unfulfilled because these achievements accord them a pseudo-independence that encourage them to 'unrightfully' question their traditional gender roles. Their upwards mobility is projected as the cause of gender struggles. Popi's attainment of a Doctor of Philosophy degree and Nomvula's success in the fashion industry are linked to references existing in the society regarding affluent and elite women. In **Aphelile**, where Nomvula cites a proverb or an axiom, her citations are undercut first by the the irrelevance of her material attainments to the task of raising a child and second, by the expectations placed by society on a mother within a traditionally conceived family. Her citation of the proverb "*ubucwibi obuhle obuhamba ngabubili*" (it is a beautiful sight to see two birds flying together) is subverted by her refusal to acknowledge the role of Makhaya in their lives with Sibusiso which can attest to the truthfulness of the proverb she cited. The contexts of her citations are ironical and tend to question and doubt her convictions. Equally her chosen form of motherhood is questioned as shallow and self-centered through such comments as "*umncishe amalungelo okuba ubaba enganeni yakhe*" (you denied him his rights of being a father to his child). Furthermore her depiction postulates that she is bordering on insanity in her refusal to accept Makhaya in their lives, especially now that he has shown to be penitent and is prepared to marry her (Radebe:19). Equally in **Impi** Popi's observations, citations are subverted by the materialistic values she holds.

In these texts such women are held in contempt. They are seen as domineering, controlling, over ambitious, unrestrained and non-conformist. Therefore the movement of perspectives, configurations and imperatives within the narratives are all curtailed by the 'geo-archeological' boundaries operative in popular culture and traditional epistemologies. In both, the narrativization of gender struggles is processed through the prism of a patriarchal framework, which operates through a biased depiction of

Nomvula's struggles for survival and Popi's assertion of her independence. Both female characters value their independence and the material benefits of being financially self-sufficient. Similarly the conceptualization of the family in the novel **Aphelile**, is constituted as having a father-head and the nurturing mother and that is the operative boundary. In the novel **Impi**, the violation of the customary practice, that is, John's refusal to adopt his sister's children because of his wife's fearful disposition and dislike of her sister's children is the operative framework from which a whole range of other themes are raised. This issue is revisited later in this chapter.

With the former text, the main character Nomvula is compelled by the nature of her romantic relationship with Makhaya to raise a child by herself for seven years. Because of his chauvinistic egocentrism, Makhaya becomes an absent father. The romantic relationship he offered to Nomvula removed all attachments and the anticipation of marriage, prompting her to keep the pregnancy a secret, confining herself to single parenthood, until he re-appears one day to claim his role as a father and a husband. By the time Makhaya re-appears, Nomvula has established herself as a working mother. The nature of the duties performed in turn makes her an absent mother, as she has to travel far and wide, leaving the care of her son to her sister, Ntombi and her mother, MaMhlongo. This indicates that on her own, without the support of her family she would have failed in her responsibility of raising her child. The idea of working mothers is challenged, particularly if the working mother is a single parent like Nomvula.

Makhaya lives with his lover, Thembisile, who is a nursing sister. He has a romantic relationship with her which is similar to the one he had with Nomvula. Thembisile also has a foster child. During her night shifts, the foster child is entrusted to the care of relatives until the shift has ended, making her an absent mother. In both instances children are exposed to bad influences and to atone, the children are spoiled. Makhaya abducts his son on the day Nomvula has planned to take him out on a spending spree because she will be away from home for a month. Overindulging the child is atonement for affection not given to the child. This is shown in many instances when Nomvula fails to reprimand Sibusiso. In the Eastern Cape, Makhaya too is not an innocent party. He

atones for the seven-year period he has been absent by indulging the child, winning his trust through material gifts. For Makhaya, the material gifts are used as a vehicle to fully reconnect with his son, so that he feels the need for a father figure in his life. And it is this need that is exploited by the author to re-unite Makhaya and Nomvula (even though Nomvula initially protests against the idea) and lead them to a bond of matrimony, in which Nomvula is expected to fulfil the traditional role of being a housewife because Makhaya will provide for them.

The proverb that sums up the lesson of ideal parenting is "*ubucwibi obuhle obuhamba ngabubili*" (it is a beautiful sight to see two birds flying together) (Radebe:24) or "*amasongo amahle akhala ngambili*" (this type of bird species normally make similar sounds and they are always together) (Buthelezi:58). These proverbs are carriers of the central moral of the lesson in the narratives. In **Impi** as well, Popi's domineering in affairs related to the children is criticized through the proverb "*amasongo akhala emabili*" (Buthelezi:58). These proverbs lobby for a traditional family. In **Aphelile** this proverb compliments the one used in the title. Whereas with **Impi** the use of the proverb goes beyond surface problems to issues involving commitment of parents in raising their children and the types of values the children receive. For Buthelezi there is a link between social disintegration and the values transferred to children in their families. And together with the axioms deduced from the narratives, that is, *dual parenting is the best form of parenting*; the proverbs concretize the narrative experience so that Nomvula's attempts of shutting out Makhaya from her life and that of her son are expected to fail. And in a similar vein, Popi's dominion over her children eventually destroys her family.

**Proverbs and traditional practice**

Cultural values can also be strategically employed with the intention of directing the reading of the narrative towards edification of the proverb. In **Aphelile** this cultural value relates to the observance of a customary practice of *inhlawulo* (loosely tr. paying for the damages), which may be interpreted as a right to a father who has children out of wedlock legitimacy to claim fatherhood. In the narrative, Makhaya did not show respect

to Nomvula's family by observing this practice, not even after learning of his son's existence, therefore culturally he cannot have a right to the child. With complete disregard for custom (Radebe:65) he unilaterally decides to reclaim his child, 'abducting' him from school and taking him back with him to Bhizana in the Eastern Cape, with stern directives that if Nomvula wants her child back she must come to the Eastern Cape. His actions are fuelled not only by his knowledge of his son's existence but by also the information he received regarding Nomvula's impending marriage to another man (Radebe:59). Makhaya is opposed to another man raising his child (Radebe:71). By 'abducting' the child from his mother the narrative redirects attention from this cultural expectation and focuses on both the relationship between parents and child, and on the lovers' estrangement, where Makhaya's seven years of estrangement is equated with Nomvula's several hours of estrangement from her son. By shifting localities from Gauteng to Bhizana Radebe symbolically recreates an island without cultural bounds for the estranged lovers to refigure their relationship away from the binding traditions represented by families. Radebe attempts to show that the causes of these estrangements are superficial and have been unnecessary because underlying the convictions of both partners' views on why their relationship failed is their undying love for each other which constantly surfaces and overwhelms them. Thus their interaction whenever they are alone veers towards rekindling their love relationship, captured by a proverb, "*lapho amanzi ake ema khona aphinde eme*" (a pool of water recurs where it once stood) cited by Makhaya's lover in desperation at seeing the natural attraction between Nomvula and Makhaya (Radebe:50).

In addition, the shift in focus aims to emphasize Makhaya's biological right to the child as opposed to a social or cultural right that could have been occasioned by his observance of *inhlawulo* practice (Radebe:65). This reading is deduced from his retort, "*Anginamsebenzi nomthetho […] Ungowami, uyindodana nendlalifa yami ngokwemvelo. Akukho mthetho ongangiphuca ilungelo lami lemvelo* (I do not care about the law […] He is mine and naturally he is the one to take on my inheritance. There is no law that can deny me my natural right) (Radebe:65). Although the cultural of observance of *inhlawulo* is key in such cases as the narrative intimates, however there is a reading that suggests

that Radebe emphasizes the biological claim above customary laws. Makhaya's views regarding which claim is weightier reveal underlying ambiguity of the narrative, where patriarchal views are allowed to be selectively applied and observed by male members of the society. For Makhaya who espouses patriarchal values of the author is given greater ambiance in his assessment of the social or cultural values that can further strengthen his case as he attempts reclaiming his son. The fact that *inhlawulo* is a necessary cultural bridge between parties and families is downplayed is indicative of the room given to patriarchal members of the society.

The centrality of the patriarchal head in Radebe's conception of a family unit goes against other emerging truths concerning the success of single mothers. Radebe seems to allude that Nomvula's pregnancy and the untraditional manner in which it has been handled occurs as a result of the absence of the father-figure who would have ensured that proper traditional practices are followed. For Radebe the presence of the father would have been instrumental in extracting *inhlawulo* (payment for the damages) from the man who impregnated Nomvula. Her mother has not questioned Nomvula's pregnancy, because it seems, she understands and knows about the probability of success in single parenting. However single parenting as a contemporary reality in many African societies is not fully exploited in the narrative because it would have questioned the lining up of all the proverbs that allude to the fact that it takes two parents to raise a child. Thus the narrative underplays the material acquisitions that are equally important in raising children and instead focuses on questioning the character and the intelligence particularly of Nomvula in her intentions to be a single mother.

**Proverbs and the boundaries of the family**

The nature of relationships is another aspect which the narrative has exploited to reveal the author's preferred reading of the traditional episteme around the family. By exploiting what constitutes an ideal family Radebe has not only reconciled Nomvula and Makhaya but also been able to dismiss contemporary views that families can be constituted by adults who are not biological parents of children. This is illustrated through the

impending marriage between Nomvula and Sipho. Their relationship is subjected to a series of tests through which it emerges that Sipho has always despised Nomvula's son. Consequently Nomvula is left with no option but to terminate her engagement. The proverbs used to describe his actions and personality illuminates his position as an intruder into Makhaya's family unit and significantly show how unnatural his role as a father-figure will be. Sipho is said to have "*bhodlela emswaneni*" (a belated grumbling) (Radebe:22) when hearing about the abduction and how Nomvula has gone after Makhaya to beg for the return of her child. However, even though he grumbled he saw in Makhaya's act a solution to get rid of Nomvula's child. He has intended to send Sibusiso to a distant boarding school after the wedding, but opportunities created by Makhaya's actions prompt him to negotiate for the child to be handed to his father through a legal process. Sipho's actions point to an axiom that a man cannot raise another man's child, a concern also raised by Makhaya that led him to "abduct" his son away from Nomvula.

Nomvula's entrapment between Sipho who she has realized harbours a deep-seated hatred for her child and Makhaya's chauvinistic demands pushes her towards a desire for escape. When the three of them are supposed to discuss the status of the child, she disappears and the proverb "*usele nesisila sehobe* (he was left behind holding a feather of a wild dove) (Radebe:79, 82) is cited. This formulation predicts that Sipho will be jilted in favour of the biological father of the child. The proverb also describes Sipho's destitution after he has been deserted by the woman he loved: he feels as though Nomvula has dumped him like "*inyongo yenyathi*" (the gall bladder of a deer). Thus axioms deduced from these proverbs foreground Sipho's deceptiveness, and warn against raising another man's child while that father remains alive, and emphasizes the sanctity of the family. Makhaya's re-appearance in Nomvuyo's life helps her to see Sipho for who he really is. Sipho is found to be morally repulsive as she is drawn back to Makhaya. The union between herself and Makhaya occurs despite Nomvula's earlier protestations of, "*lingawa licoshwe zinkukhu*" (it [the sun] will fall and be eaten by the chickens) (Radebe:28) meaning she will never be involved with Makhaya again. However, this union has been predicted through numerous citations strategically located in the narrative.

In the application of the latter proverb, there is an implied understanding that the father acted within his rights to take the child, because Nomvula's family has warned her that, getting the child back might not be as easy as she thinks, saying "*uyodela uMakhasana*[24] *oyozibona zingqubuzana*" (It is well with Makhasana who will see them fight) (Radebe:19). The realization of the proverb's maxim works in *tandem* with the pressure that her family exerts on her in which her decisions about single parenting are questioned and are made to appear thoughtless and egocentric, causing her lose confidence in her convictions as she sees the need for dual parenting (Radebe:10,53). Equally the events of the narrative are structurally arranged in such a way that all her attempts to get her child back fail and the proverb "*ufe olwembiza*" (breaking up to little pieces like a clay pot) (Radebe:80) describes her state of speechlessness after all her attempts have failed.

Regarding Thembisile's involvement with Makhaya, there is an application that inevitably compels Makhaya to choose between Thembisile and Nomvula. For the narrator says, "*akukho zinkunzi zimbili zakhonya sibayeni sinye*" (two bulls will never stay in the same kraal) (Radebe:96), implicitly introducing in the author's perspective on the sanctity of family. Even though the application creates suspense, it is anticipated that Makhaya will opt for Nomvula since it has been prefigured in the application of the proverb "*ubucwibi obuhle ngobuhamba ngabubili*" as discussed earlier on.

Certain structural devices have also been employed by the author to channel the interpretation of the narrative. These are the dream artifice, the ancestral intervention and nature as reflected in the ecosystem. The dream artifice has been structured in such a way that in all three instances Nomvula is saved by Makhaya (Radebe:36,64) prefiguring their re-union at the end of the narrative. And with the second technique, the author has

[24] Makhasana was a war commander-in-Chief in pre-colonial KwaZulu. It was custom that the king/Chief remained behind when his regiments went to war, except during the reign of Shaka who usually led his armies. Makhasana as an army commander would come back from these wars and he would re-narrate to the king/Chief and other council members who remained behind all that transpired in actually battle. Giving minutiae details regarding how the regiments were sectioned (ukuphakwa kwempi), how they advanced and attacked and who singled themselves out as fearsome brave warriors that deserving of branding and how the enemy was defeated. This re-narration replayed the storytelling sessions will all the paraphernalia that went into them and thus was an occasion that was looked forward to by the whole kingdom/ Chiefdom.

operated in the traditional belief system, in which the ancestral agency is supposed to intervene in human destinies (Radebe:52). The last structural strategy deals with the inevitable processes of natural phenomenon. In this case the author dramatizes the capture of a frog by a snake (Radebe:92). This is localized in the narrative in a scene where Nomvula has failed for the third time to take her son back from Makhaya. Conveniently, it occurs at Makhaya's place in the Eastern Cape, where the belief in *inkwankwa* (a snake believed to be representative of the ancestors) takes precedence in matters relating to ancestral acknowledgement of children. Both on the literal and symbolic levels the ecological relationship between the prey and the predator is unavoidable. Thus there is a reading in the narrative that the matrimonial bond between Nomvula and Makhaya is an inevitable fact in which Nomvula's individuality will be swallowed by the greater demands of social expectations.

**Proverbs and the moral lessons of post-apartheid society**

Buthelezi's application of the proverb as a title in **Impi,** and its extension to encompass social developmental issues, race relations, gender relations, class politics, rural and urban dialectics, etc., have been structured in such a way that while the issues comment on evolving trends of life experiences of contemporary South Africans, tensions and conflicts characteristic of the life experiences and lifestyles are shown to be attributable to inequality and social injustices that prevent access to basic human ne(eds.) There is a sense that the life experiences of Africans in South Africa are simultaneously engulfed by modern entrapments and are reeling from the colonial and the apartheid legacies. By postulating post-apartheid as the third epoch (colonialism and apartheid being the first and second) Buthelezi is able to present the direction that should be taken by Africa's development. Buthelezi seems to suggest that true development should stem from past values. This view certainly concurs with those of leading African developmental scholars like Azikiwe (1969), Davis (1962), Davidson, (1964) and the others.

The first example that demonstrates Buthelezi's manipulation of the plot relates to the customary practice of adopting nephews begotten out of wedlock which has been a

valued practice in the African society. It is viewed as a familial responsibility underpinned by the philosophy of *ubuntu* (African humanism). Through this philosophy Buthelezi has been able to satirize and critique modern lifestyles that have denuded urbanized elitist Africans of their sense of nationhood. The juxtapositioning of the rural and urban dialectics seems to suggest that vestiges of *ubuntu* can still be found in the rural areas.

The traditional world, not only controlled the sexuality of youths, through the system of *amaqhikiza* (regimentation of girls) and *ukubuthwa kwezinsizwa* (regimentation of young men), but the problem of children begotten out of wedlock was normally solved by assigning a widower to the 'fallen' girl. A classical example of this practice in Zulu history is the marrying off of Nandi, Shaka's mother, to Gendeyana. With the impasse of colonialism and industrialization, the age-old practice gradually changed to be replaced by the adoption of these children by their uncles. It is believed that in modern times it is *ubuntu* not to burden a new husband with the children of another man. There seems to be an underlying understanding that uncles assume responsibility for the girl's failure to control her sexual desires (Buthelezi:25). That failure should be contained within the family and thus patriarchal members of the family are assigned to raise these children and of course they rely on the material benefits accrued by the family. Also implied in this custom is that the wives of these patriarchs, as they are foreigners in the home themselves, are not consulted on matters related to the adoption of the children and are expected to raise these children as their own (Buthelezi:22-23), thus they are called *umalumekazi* (female gendered uncle).

The morphology of the word is:

Malume (uncle) + kazi (suffix denoting a female gender)

The wives become the extension of their husbands in all motherly duties. Because they have married into the family knowing that it is "*ubuntu nobuzwe bethu*" (African humanism and nationality) that the uncle "*uyozibutha zonke izingane zikadadewenu.*

*Uyozibutha noma zingaba yishumi noma amshumi amthathu* (will collect and raise all the children of his sisters. He will collect and raise them all even if they are ten or thirty) (Buthelezi:65) because it is their right to be raised under their uncle's law (Buthelezi:26). Thus Cele, the character representative of the traditional epistemologies in **Impi YaboMdabu Isethunjini,** fails to understand John's refusal to add these children to his family. What comes into sharp focus is the Eurocentric and the Afrocentric conceptions of what constitutes a family, and how these conceptions financially affect an urbanized educated African. In these texts the clash of culture which was dominant in the writings of the first generation of isiZulu writers is propelled beyond pitting Western and African values against each other, in the course of which the superiority of the Western values are emphasized. The focus now is on how the African traditional notions that kept the society intact are revisited and used to question accepted and normalized Western notions

Buthelezi retrieves and re-concretizes African values, by activating numerous proverbs which are strategically distributed throughout the narrative. The proverbs work in *tandem* with axioms derived as moral lessons in the narrative. For example, the narrative's conflict is based on the violation of a fast declining social code, the adoption of children out of wedlock, which is captured in the quotation "*kwakuyothenga ilala*" (it is dead). However, the subsequent structuring of the events indicates that throwing away good social practices is tantamount to throwing away ones' identity and humanity, and this act only contributes to the state of poverty and underdevelopment witnessed in the country. The axiom that captures the loss of identity and nationhood becomes a base for the exploration of a general state of affairs within the African nation.

The observation that Buthelezi's narrative depicts a myriad of multi-layered intricacies besetting the urban African lifestyles is captured in the citation, "*insumansumane imali yamakhanda*"[25] (an anomaly, the head tax issue) (Buthelezi:3,6). This proverb not only captures a sense of loss but emphasizes the absurdity of urban lifestyles. Cele, who was

[25]The head tax promulgation in 1906 and the poor translation of the concept Poll Tax as *Intela Yamakhanda* in isiZulu elicited responses from the peasants that alluded to the fact that it was an anomaly to pay for one's head. Subsequently all ideas that did no make sense in Zulu language and culture were said to be *insumansumane imali yamakhanda*. The basic definition of *insumansumane* though, relates to a folktale that has mythical origins which is called *insumo*.

once a migrant, is not adverse to change but his fundamental criticism of urban life stems from his realization of the lack of foresight from urbanizing and modernizing Africans regarding the nature of this change and the indifference with which valued customs are treated in the urban areas. The fact that in the cities, life is different and people lead their lives in a manner different from the rural areas is captured in "*seligaya ngomunye umhlathi*" (it chews on another side) (Buthelezi:7). This proverb sets the tone of the narrative, establishing the moral depravity, materialism, hedonism and the decadence of the city life which illustrate the change from traditional life to urban Westernized and elitist lifestyle. This proverb channels the reading to a conclusion, "*lafa elihle kakhulu*" (the beautiful (land) is dead) (Buthelezi:14), which is a lament about the good past that will never be retrieved.

By comparing the lifestyles of blood relatives situated both in the rural and the urban areas, Buthelezi is able to direct readers to a conclusion regarding the causes of the evils that beset African urban dwellers and their lifestyles. Life in the urban centers is at all times bound by monetary considerations. As a result, city dwellers are seen to have traded with their humanity because they are now known as people "*abangabekelwa nja*" (those for whom one does not keep a dog) and their homes have turned into "*kukwanja yotha umlilo*" (it is the house of a dog sitting near the hearth). This implies that they are stingy and inhospitable, as has happened to Cele when he paid an unscheduled visit to John, his nephew.

Given this cluster of proverbs it is expected that John will not accede to Cele's request of adopting Uzithelile and Hlanganisani. John bases his declining of this request on different reasons, one of which is the very old adage, "*intandane enhle ngumakhothwa ngunina*" (the beautiful orphan is the one licked by its mother), implying that the children will be well raised if their mother takes care of them. Because he violates the custom, by discriminating among his own children, for his sister's children are his own, Cele points out that John's mother "*akazalanga ubole amathumbu*" (she did not bear an offspring, but her intestines were rotten). The significance of the proverb and particularly the emphasis on the metaphor connoted by the word *ithumbu* (singular) and *amathumbu* (plural)

operates in the same way as in the proverb "*impi yomndeni isesendeni*", because both allude to the feuds in the family. In the narrative John is the metaphoric rotten and selfish offspring of the Ngubane family. John's Eurocentric conception of a family is interrogated and shown to be based solely on uncompassionate selfishness. This materialistic selfishness makes him reject his own children. John's parents died when he and his sister were very young and his uncle, Cele, because of the customary duties expected of him, raised them (John and his sister) as his own children (Buthelezi:26). When he adopted John and Lenolo, Cele's material position was different to that of John's because it bordered on poverty whilst John's current affluent status puts him in a position to afford anything.

The second example through which Buthelezi directs the plot to preferred readings involves class politics and how the peasant and working class is predestined to observe culture and how the values harboured by the educated are a barrier to cultural observances. Some of these values relate to the position of women in educated families, where they abuse the powers accorded to them by their educated husbands, as is the case with Popi, John's wife. Popi's role in this family is depicted as having a negative impact on African values that should be inculcated in their children.

Changing gender roles that are based on Western formulations shift power bases that adversely affect the family structure in urbanized educated families. The choices and decisions made regarding traditional culture are based on material acquisition and gains. Popi's values are those that look up to European mores at the expense of the African ones, creating "*umlungumnyama*" (a black white man) out of her children. The localization of these children in a black urban township worsens matters because they become islands. Their cultural disconnection is witnessed in the white friends they have, their use of English as a first language, the white schools they attend, the white manners they display and their preoccupation with status consciousness. This explains Cele's retort, "*Izingane zikaBafana ngeke zilibone eliwinayo, uyongibuza ungiphale ulimi*" (Bafana' (John) children will not be able to see the winning one, you will ask and scrub my tongue) (Buthelezi:48). Buthelezi's class distinctions in urban areas postulate Cele's

class as "*izinqe zoluntu*" (the bottoms of humanity) and as far wealthier in human values than educated ones, "*izingengelezi zezimpandla*" (the bald heads) because this class success and education "*igugule ubuntu basala bezingebhezi, benqunu*" (has eroded their humanism and left them bald and nude) (Buthelezi:10).

Equally disparaging is the kind of education provided by white schools which black learners attend. For Buthelezi, these schools are far from being multiracial. They still remain white, in spite of their multiracial student constituency. Buthelezi is of the opinion that true education is only offered in the rural areas, as it is related to their material conditions. Evidence is provided by Uzithelile and Hlanganisani's performances in class and in sports, and their subsequent success in Ongoye and the American universities. The tendency of black parents to enrol their children in white schools and universities only heightens their deculturation and the crises in their identity as has been the case with Melody (Buthelezi:223, 224, 228). Euthanasia eventually defies his mother and goes on to study at Ongoye like his rural cousins where he is successful in his studies. According to Buthelezi, seemingly studying in what was known as 'bush universities' prepares one sufficiently to be able to cope with any situation where education is concerned. Thus Euthenasia also is successful in American universities like his cousins. The kind of veiled racism operative in white schools and universities limits the freedom of black children, hence their excellence is always restricted to sporting activities only (Buthelezi:137), however, American institutions still holds a glimmer of hope for such children as observed from the performance of Euthenasia and his cousins.

Buthelezi's concept of education is that which is based on life long learning, during the course of which individuals take an active role in pursuing programmes for social development. He exploits this perception through juxtaposing John and Popi's social involvement after completing their studies, and John's nephews' involvement in agricultural, economic and social politics. John's education only procures him a certificate. He only studies for the first degree that enables him to get a good job and spends the rest of his life siphoning material benefits for himself and his immediate family. Thus his education creates class divisions between the educated and the

uneducated. This education only contributes to structural underdevelopment and intellectual poverty (Buthelezi:140). John fails to use his education to find solutions to problems besetting the society. Elite class of John's caliber are intellectually emaciated and given to escapism as ways of dealing with the anguish faced by their societies. They drink heavily, live in perpetual lethargy, indulge in hedonistic lifestyles of popular township and American ghetto music and seek affection and fulfillment in sexual overdrive, diluting values and contributing to general depravity, decadence and social entropy that typify urban lifestyles (Buthelezi:140).

Popi's education is equally castigated. She engages in life long learning of the wrong kind since her learning only increases the number of degrees she has obtained. Her education fails to broaden her mind and she cannot translate it into tangible aspects that can contribute to social development or at least identity definition. Her learning accords with her financial viability and status consciousness that she uses for career connections in her un-satiable desire for top positions at the hospital, but that also causes the disintegration of her marriage (Buthelezi:65,187-189,191). For Buthelezi, Popi's education does not lead to development because her appointments to the positions that she fills are not based on knowledge and skills that can lead to true social development when correctly applied.

However, Uzithelile and Hlanganisani's life long learning by contrast contributes to social development. Their return from America is marked by their involvement in social politics that seek to effect change through agriculture and education not only for the rural women in the informal trading structures (Buthelezi:231,236), but also in politics where women participate in political structures that seek to uproot all causes of poverty and underdevelopment in African societies (Buthelezi:153-158). Through these siblings Buthelezi demonstrates the kind of educated people that Africa needs for true development in all spheres of modern living.

The dramatization of racial politics and interracial relations in the narrative also follows the infighting that is characteristic of family life. The politics of pigmentocracy as

reflected in educational, religious, political and economic matters are all causes of interracial tensions and racial exclusions that lead to underdevelopment and poverty in the country. Buthelezi achieved this aspect by postulating three categories of white people to assess their contribution to the state of black people in the country. The first category comprises dubious colonial Christians (Buthelezi:226) and the impact they have in causing social strife, particularly the clashes of civilizations that is characteristic of African modern life and the accompanying poverty, a psychological violence to which African societies have been subjected.

Affluent liberal capitalists constitute the second category represented by John's employer. These capitalists contribute to the state of apathy witnessed among black South Africans. The realm of this category is characterised by self-deluding tendencies based on fallacious outlooks. In their eyes offering poverty inducing wages to a majority of Africans, and out of the ordinary salaries to a few blacks, bring about social development. However, as far as Buthelezi is concerned, this outlook is based on "*ubugovu bedlazana*" (aggrandizement of the few) (Buthelezi:258,259) which is poverty-causing. For Buthelezi, this category of white people not only denude the majority of their sense of self and pride as seen in the character of Velemseni, renamed Williamson, for the pronunciation convenience of his white employers, but creates a class of affluent Africans who are also delusional about their identities and human value as evinced by the character of John.

The third category, represented by Martin, consists of good white people, who are true Christians, and who are socially conscious and have a sense of duty to the underprivileged sectors of the community. They are characterised by respect for other cultures. Their involvement with the disadvantaged in the society does not stem from the desire to benefit but the desire to advance humanity in general (Buthelezi:74,78, 81,84).

Both in **Aphelile Agambaqa** and **Impi YaboMdabu Isethunjini** the application of the proverbs as title of the narrative presupposes that the narrative will be read in such a way that its truth is demonstrated. At times, however, evolving trends in contemporary life

experiences produce certain flexibility in the linguistic formulation of the proverb that manages to capture and interpret these from the traditional perspective. Moving from the family infighting produced by the violation of a cultural code as captured in the proverb *impi yomndeni isesendeni* (the war of the family is in the testicle) to *impi yaboMdabu isethunjini* (the war of Africans is in the intestines), allows Buthelezi to transcend the original application and interpretation of the proverb bringing into the narrative issues that would have never been captured by the old adage in its original meaning. He has thus has been able to raise socio-political and economic issues as reflected in the interaction of cultural practices of different racial groups in South Africa.

**Conclusion**

Proverbs are independent texts, which can be incorporated into a variety of genres. As embedded texts their illocutionary role cannot be underestimated. Whole narratives can be formulated to reflect the truth they espouse. Narratives like Buthelezi's **Kushaywa Edonsayo** (1993) or **Buchitheka Bugayiwe** (1997) are titled after proverbs, as is the case in the novels discussed in this chapter, and yet they can be used as quotations depicting completely different experiences and situations. The title of Nyembezi's translation of Paton's **Cry the Beloved Country** as **Lafa Elihle Kakhulu** (1957) uses the underlying proverb found in both **Aphelile Agambaqa** and in **Impi YaboMdabu Isethunjini** for completely different situations.

In **Aphelile** it is applied in gender politics, to warn against working mothers because they are no longer able to perform the traditional role of raising children. There is a nostalgic lament for the past roles of women in society, because their strict adherence to the roles they performed ensured that the social order as it pertains to the younger members of the community is not disrupted. In **Impi YaboMdabu Isethunjini**, the proverb is applied in a different situation whereby a general outrage against city life is registered (Buthelezi: 14). The significance of both applications lies in their lamentation of the transient nature of time that forever pushes the societies into the intricacies of modern life experiences. It is also fascinating to note as well that at times the proverb can be used for similar

emphasis. As in both narratives, the proverbs, "*amasongo akhala emabili*" (this type of bird normally make similar sounds and they are always together) (Buthelezi: 146) and "*ubucwibi obuhle obuhamba ngabubili*" (it is a beautiful sight to see two birds flying together) (Radebe: 24) have the same illocutionary force and in both instances they emphasise the importance of both parents in the raising of their children. Proverbs as quoted texts in different genres have embedded moral imperatives, so that the axioms derived from their application, reinforce the absoluteness of accepted norms and values. Thus Barber (1999:36) points out that "anything that is constituted as quotable can be recruited for new purposes, expanded or inflected in new ways, attached to new textual forms."

## CHAPTER TWO

### Folk narratives in two post-apartheid novels

The impact the traditional oral verbal expressions has on modern literature is a phenomenon that has shaped modern African languages literature and as Lindfors (1973) points out, has contributed toward the creation and exploitation of new aesthetic opportunities. The ensuing discussion builds on the observations regarding proverbs, and will discuss the influence some isiZulu folk stories have had on post-apartheid isiZulu novels. This influence can either be on the structural (see Msimang (1986) for structural influence) or thematic levels of the novels. Most isiZulu novels, from the early stages of literary development, have shown a tendency of absorbing as much as possible of the narrative devices of folk stories. These devices can be related to the plotting strategies, archetypal characterisation, thematic considerations, or the use of predetermined motifs like that of the journey, the myth, or binary oppositions especially between good and evil and how good always prevail over evil. According to Schmidt (cited in Lindfors, 1973:11)

> Even though the content of the fiction may bear little resemblance to that of oral tradition…the primary narrative nature of the fiction can be traced to [it] (sic) as can be the use of proverbial references and praise names for description and the use of proverbs and tales for providing commentary on the actions of the characters.

Further stylistic devises derived from folklore as pointed out by Chiwome (cited in Thosago, 2004:14) include

> The formulaic beginning of the story, regular repetition of information to maintain coherence in an oral tale, use of traditional poetic discourse side by side with prosaic narrative, use of make-believe, references to love and adventure, prevalence of overstatement as well as use of significant names.

Different writers have accessed these oral aesthetics not only to engage with a variety of issues but also to add 'authentic bits of aboriginal colour and to comment on the eccentricities of human behaviour' (Lindfors, 1973). For example, Dube in **Insila kaShaka** (1929) (The body servant of Shaka) has drawn on the folktale tradition. Dube's emphasis is on the journey motif, in which he illuminates Jeqe's psychological development as he overcomes adversities on both the physical and the metaphysical level. Bhengu's **uNyambose noZinitha** (1965), (Nyambose and Zinitha) which bears striking similarities to Dube's novel has also drawn on the folktale tradition. Here the emphasis is on the picaresque hero. In the novel, the hero's bravery is celebrated in the tradition of the Zulu warrior of the past. The first drama in isiZulu literature, **uGubudele Namazimuzimu** (1941) (Gubudele and the Cannibals), by Ndebele is also drawn from the folktale motif. In this drama, Gubudele, just like Phoshozwayo in the folktale, single-handedly, annihilates the cannibals for eating his father. Although **uGubudele Namazimuzimu** attests to a simple innocent plot, scholars like Zondi (2001), have pointed our attention to its political significance, as it is regarded as a commentary on the colonial question. This chapter focuses on Ngubo's **Yekanini Ukuzenza** (1996) (I am to blame) and Muthwa's **Isifungo** (1996) (The pledge), which have been selected as representatives of the broader class of novels which rely on folktale motifs to construct a didactic outcome.

Chiji (1998) raises a significant observation regarding the interconnections between oral literature and written forms. He observes that the tendency to privilege the written form has to a large degree contributed to considering oral aesthetics as functioning only to embellish or add colour to the written narrative. This tendency overlooks the fact that the oral resources can be the basis and the pivot on which the meaning of the narrative rotates. As we shall see in the novels, **Yekanini Ukuzenza** and **Isifungo**, lessons embedded in the oral imagination of the traditional knowledge system form the basis of the texts. In both novels the representation of gender sensibilities are drawn from the archetypal representation of women in isiZulu folktales. This representation is brought to bear on the reality of present day African society in the face of the onslaught on traditional cultural values. The revisiting of the past through these archetypal

representations is a means through which writers attempt to halt what they obviously regard as an onslaught on past sensibilities, and most important, it is an attempt to recreate and reinvent cultural practices that have been known to be capable of holding the society together. The spirit of these novels is captured in Biesele's (1993:60) observation that

> Stories can be understood as effective, ongoing mechanisms both for educating the young and for sharing information and creating consensus about attitudes which continue to be important throughout adult life in an oral culture.

The reconfigurations of traditions that govern gender sensibilities in isiZulu literature are authoritative and absolute. In *Traditions and reconstruction: the culture play in Zulu* Groenewald (2001:35) traces the early stages of isiZulu drama to the late 90's and focuses on the centrality of the topic of love and marriage which brings aspects of gender relations into thematic focus. In most of these narratives, the events that lead to marriage revolve around "courting, acquiring a husband and the choice of a husband." These cultural values are expressed from a generalised perspective in which general rules apply. As Biesele (1993:54) points out, the multiplicity of these stories is important, since "not only one story is told but many and the truth of what they say is believed to be somewhere in the dialogue of them all." Her comments reveal that there exists a myriad web of mutual and cross references that attest to the truthfulness of the depiction of gender issues in these texts.

Barber (2000) also points out that the interaction of oral forms and written texts produces an abundance of repeated narratives. This web of stories is disseminated via the broadcast media and through their repetition, listeners or readers are drawn to the life-like realities of the narratives, so that they see in them 'real' experiences. However, in isiZulu literature these gendered perspectives are normally conveyed from a patriarchal point of view. These literary materials form a web of 'mutual reference' that direct readers to predetermined interpretations of the narratives. The discussion in this chapter will focus on gender as a site for understanding the interaction of folktale and written forms in

isiZulu novels, by comparing Biesele's thematic conceptions of the functions of Ju/'hoans folktale to isiZulu literature.

**A summary of *Yekanini Ukuzenza***

The novel's expository scene depicts MaMsomi, Busisiwe's mother, having just alighted from a taxi. She has been to town where she witnessed a heinous crime committed by Busisiwe's boyfriend, Sipho. She talks to her daughter about this and also mentions other devilish crimes committed by the boyfriend against other people in their neighbourhood. Some of the people that have fallen victims are family relatives. MaMsomi is worried about her family's image if the relationship between Busisiwe and Sipho continues. Busisiwe is head over heels in love with Sipho and she tends to be on the defensive whenever her mother cautions her about her relationship with Sipho. Even though Busisiwe seems to be a well brought up child she is too materialistic to care about the repercussions of her involvement with Sipho. When Sipho proposes to elope with her she does not hesitate to agree. Sipho has killed the leader of another gang on the previous night hence his sudden desire to leave his hometown, Harding. He deceives Busisiwe into thinking that his affluent uncle in Richmond is about to die and thus has called on him to help in his businesses.

Sipho's true nature is revealed to Busisiwe when they arrive in Richmond. They are financially stranded because the little money that Sipho had is gambled away. It is in this state that they meet iNswephe, a seasoned criminal. All three devise a scheme through which they extort large sums of money from local businessmen. However, Sipho and iNswephe are eventually killed in an accident with a fuel tanker and Busisiwe is arrested and sentenced to fifteen years in prison for her complicity in the crimes committed by the two men.

**A summary of *Isifungo***

Gcinekile is a young nurse at Scottburg Hospital. Her relationship with her boyfriend, Thami, is strained because Thami has been unemployed for several years. He seems

uninterested in doing something about his life but seems content with his occasional part-time jobs that he gets from time to time and with his poetry writing. The relationship is under pressure and eventually both decide to call it off. This is a painful process, particularly to Thami, who still remembers their promise not to part before death. He even attempts suicide but his friend, Sibusiso, comes to his rescue. Eventually Gcinekile marries a local tycoon, Pita, but because she married him for money, she is unhappy and constantly lonely in her marriage as her husband is forever on business trips. Eventually she reconnects with one of her previous suitors, Frisco, a car hijacker. Her husband eventually finds out about her infidelity and when they are supposed to celebrate their second anniversary he exposes her to her family and her friends.

Thami wins a prize in a poetry competition. He establishes a small business and eventually adds taxis to his businesses. He falls in love with Zime, who later turns out to be Gcinekile's stepsister. At their wedding the police attempt to arrest Frisco. During the scuffle Gcinekile is paralysed by a stray bullet when Frisco shoots at the police and misses. Her parents are too old to care properly for her. Zime and Thami decide to take her in as their responsibility.

**Adaptation, hegemony and folktales**

Biesele (1993) conducted research into the verbal artistic forms of the Ju/'hoansi community. Her observations and conclusions have far reaching consequences not only for the verbal art forms in the Ju/'hoan community but also for verbal art forms of other African communities as well. In her study of the verbal artistic forms of the Ju/'hoan, Biesele outlined the role that these stories play in cognition and communication. While the community she studied is very different from the contemporary Zulu society, some of the aesthetic strategies she outlines can be usefully be applied to isiZulu folktales and their deployment in the novels under consideration.

One of the concepts Biesele (1993:42) uses is that of adaptation. Adaptation refers to the cognitive ability to "recreate situations to convey what has been found to be of interest and of value and for which it is worthy to adapt." In relation to Zulu society, this idea of

adaptation can be explored in relation to the idea of the family, a recurring trope through which themes of social change and urbanization have often been explored. The focus is generally the urban family since the rural family is often thought of as being suitably 'traditional'. The family becomes a favoured novelistic site for exploring and re-exploring a range of ideas regarding tradition and modernity.

A second notion outlined by Biesele is that of "sense and consensus making". Sense or common sense formation entails a positive representation of all aspects of the social activities that are perceived to be vital for the continued balance and sustenance of the community. Thus she concludes that:

> Sense must be made, for human beings, of biological and social life, and consensus based on the sense must be reached concerning the rules by which social activity will gain its end, the perpetuation of the society. What is more, social agreement or consensus must be reached not once and forever but repeatedly in the lives of each group and generation in order for the human life as such to continue. This is true whether the intervening time has been characterised by great change or has been relatively changeless. The process of incorporating new meaning into understanding is fundamentally the same as the process of reiterating old meaning: both are recreations, performances of already accepted and newly accepted imaginative realities which bear a relationship felt to be vital to the concrete realities of living.[26]

There is obviously a close relationship between consensus making and tradition. In consensus making certain features of social life are selected and constantly re-iterated and hence attain a hegemonic status. The next section examines how these processes play themselves out in relation to themes of gender in the two novels.

**Gender issues in isiZulu folktales and post-apartheid novels**

[26] Ibid, 47

In the view of many isiZulu writers there are certain vital traditions that are needed for the continuous survival of the Zulu community. In isiZulu novels the hearth of this vitality is the family. The family is a centralized and highly valued institution in the Zulu culture. It serves as a site for the instruction of the young members of the community in the ways of the people. Not only is cultural consciousness actively instilled in the family unit, but also certain prejudices and stereotypical views regarding people and their environment are internalized.

One of the persistent views in isiZulu literature relates to gender relations and the socially gendered differences that justify the inequalities between women and men in the family and society. IsiZulu literature has conventionalized these notions. Indeed only a handful of narratives question the apparent inequities between women and men. The most outstanding writer in this regard is Buthelezi, an expatriate and a new comer on the isiZulu literary scene. In the vast majority of novels there is a sense of a tradition being played out, of women being assigned their traditional positions despite the fact that times have changed. In instances where feminist discourses are part of the thematic treatment in the narratives, these are trivialized and postulated as libertine views of a Western onslaught on traditional values. The growing feminist consciousness in African societies seems to have challenged the dominance of the patriarchal setup, and to a large extent disrupted the presumed harmony that characterised gender relations in traditional African societies.[27] The novels under discussion conform to this pattern.[28]

On considering the studies conducted so far regarding the position of women as both storytellers and as characters in their stories, one is struck by their marginalisation which insists on their inferiority and subservience. However, Biesele's findings reveal a different aspect regarding the nature of stories narrated by both males and females in the

[27] The convention of isiZulu literature regarding gender issues fails to acknowledge that the female sense of independence is not only a recent occurrence but can be traced back to the establishment of the earliest urban centers in Kimberly or Barberton. Furthermore the literary tradition fails to recognize that prostitution and general lawlessness amongst urbanized women not only reflect a loss of grip on female sexuality but also their strong will for adaptation and survival in harsh environments.

[28] There are texts whilst attempting to foreground a feminist consciousness are entrapped in a contradictory consciousness, because the patriarchal sensibilities associated with female characters in the texts outweigh the feminist discourses.

Ju/'hoan community. Those narrated by males reveal the chauvinistic male-centred interpretations of reality. Those narrated by their female counterparts, not only celebrate their femininity but also the heroines' roles that most often undermine male power, so that there is constant equilibrium in the visions of reality between men and women.

IsiZulu folk narratives and novels very rarely deal with the reversal in gender representations, even in the stories narrated by women.[29] In the folktale about the Mother-in-law and sour milk (*Umkhwekazi namasi)*, for example, the mother-in-law is punished by her son-in-law for putting on his loin skin cloth and for eating with his utensils. This is viewed as her way of reversing gender roles and the position of mothers-in-law within the household (Canonici, 1993). Consequently this deed is met with a harsh punishment. This folktale indicates the rigidity of culturally constructed gender roles in Zulu culture and tradition. There are many other folktales that explore hierarchical relations with regard to gender in which the lesson conveyed warns against tampering with the established norms and which instill a deep observance of societal injunctions to mainly female members of the society.

Linked to the rigid gender relations in the family are those associated with the institution of marriage. The presence of matrimonial bonds in both oral folk narratives and the novels reveal a profound philosophy in the Zulu conception of life. Matrimony and matrimonial preparation of the young members of the community, particularly female members, makes up a big proportion of the total values. All other cultural observances revolve around this fundamental aspect of Zulu culture and tradition.[30]

Two isiZulu folktales are presented in the following section. These are similar in structure to the novels under consideration.

***The story of Maqinase***

[29] For a discussion of isiNdebele storytellers, see Isabel Hofmeyr (1993) **"We spend our years as a tale that is told": Oral Historical Narrative in a South African Chiefdom**.

[30] This notion is derived after observing the extent of the cultural forms like rituals, verbal expressions, and observances associated with the institution of marriage.

The story is about a little pig called *Maqinase* (The self-willed one), one of a litter of ten. Her mother was very strict and kept a tight watch over her litter. She forbade them from going outside their enclosure because she feared for their safety. However *Maqinase* was pig-headed, and would not listen. She made a habit of sneaking outside their enclosure on hot days when she knew that her mother and the rest of the litter were fast asleep.

One day she sneaked out as usual with the intention of going to a farm where she had once noted an abundance of delicacies. She had a high gait characteristic of pig-headed pigs. On her way she met a donkey who greeted her enthusiastically, but *Maqinase* dismissed the donkey, saying it should mind its long ugly ears instead of being a nuisance to her. She did the same with the toad, citing its ugly protruding eyes. Many other animals that she met along her way were subjected to her scathing ridicule and they were all disappointed in her. By the time she approached the fence that demarcated the farm, *Maqinase* was furious with everyone she had come across because they just could not let her be. That is probably why she did not notice the greyhound rapidly approaching towards her at a fast speed. The dog pounced on her just as she had jumped over the fence. She screamed scuttling through a small hole that she spotted in her state of fright. The fence tore her skin and the dog bit her behind. She raced back home encountering all the animals she had belittled on her way, and asked them all to help her. All of them told her they were minding their own business. She got home covered in bruises and her mother was so furious on learning that she had been outside their enclosure that she was punished her all over again.

***The story of Mamba kaMaquba***

*Mamba kaMaquba* (Mamba son of Maquba) is a tale about two sisters who set out to find a husband. The older one was properly socialised and was respectful of elders and other people she came across. The younger one was bad tempered and disrespectful to everyone she met: she was not properly socialised into her role of being a woman. Along the way they met an old woman whose eyes oozed so profusely that she could not see properly. The old woman asked the girls to lick her eyes. The older sister licked the

mucus until the old woman could see, but the young one ridiculed the old woman. The old woman showered blessings on the older sister and the sisters continued with their journey. They met many other people who requested to be assisted in various ways and the older sister helped all of them while the younger ridiculed and mocked them. They eventually arrived at their destination and the husband-to-be turned out to be the black Mamba, a snake. The older girl submitted to the snake but the younger one screamed and ran away. The snake, *Mamba kaMaquba,* was so furious that he gave chase. As the younger sister was approaching her home, her family, on seeing that a snake was chasing her, killed it and burned it. The older sister cried on seeing her new husband being killed. Out of grief she collected the ashes, returned with them to *Mamba kaMaquba*'s home and buried them in his hut. After some months, out of the ashes rose a young handsome man. And the older sister was overjoyed because he was to be her real husband.[31]

**Folktale's patterns in *Yekanini Ukuzenza* and *Isifungo***

The two folktales bear structural similarities to the novels in terms of image, symbols and metaphor. Let us first consider *uMaqinase* and **Yekanini Ukuzenza** where numerous symmetrical images, symbols and metaphors, and social practices which are core cultural codes emerge. Zulu social organization commences with the home and the relationship that exists between the members of the family unit. In **Yekanini**, MaMsomi's role, like that of a mother in **Maqinase**, is clearly established. In the folktale the role of Maqinase's mother is also clearly established. Both instill respect for instructions in their cildren. In the novel Busisiwe is warned about her involvement with Sipho, a local gangster (Ngubo:9-11). The same happens in the folktale: Maqinase is given a warning, but both violate these instructions. However, the bodies of the narratives detail the repercussions of violating the culturally revered practice of respecting instructions.

[31] There are different versions regarding what happened to the younger sister, some stories conclude that she was killed; as she was running so fast she could not stop even when she saw that her people have come out to help her. She ran into *exhibeni* (a traditional kitchen) and fell into a big pot on the hearth in which soft porridge was being cooked. And other versions do not mention what happened to her after the snake was killed because the moral of the story intended to dramatize the extent to which she was unprepared for marriage.

In the novel, **Isifungo** and the folktale *uMamba kaMaquba*, the family base is only implied because there is a presumption that the girls have had a proper upbringing and therefore are at a stage where they can make independent decisions. In the novel Gcinekile and Zime are already young government employees. Gcinekile is a nursing sister and Zime is a schoolteacher. In the folktale the girls are already on their way to search for a husband. In both stories the message is that girls are properly brought up so that they will be eligible for marriage and be good wives. Properly brought up girls are those who conform to social expectations regarding womanhood. Ill-reared girls do not conform to social expectations as noted in the depiction of Gcinekile in the novel and the younger sister in the folktale.

Underlying both tales are values associated with respect for the law, elders, self-respect, humility, kindness and unselfishness. IsiZulu narratives, whether of folk tale or modern origin tend to respect traditionally observed social codes. The absoluteness of these codes is affirmed by a variety of stories composed about them.

The relationship between novels and folktales is underlined in the foreword of **Yekanini Ukuzenza** by a well-known manager of one national broadcaster, Khaba Mkhize:

> K*hululeka ufunde le ncwajana ukuze ugubhe izimpande zentuthuko ekufanele siyilandele, ukuze sigweme ukuphonseka eweni. Lelibhukwana liyinselelo yokuthi sigcwalise isikhala esashiywa abadala sokulondoloza imilando yemilolozelo kanye neziyalo ezakhayo entsheni yakithi, ngoba phela yona isabhekene nohambo olude, esifisa lube nezithelo ezimtoti futhi ezithokozisayo* (Mkhize cited in Ngubo:1997: 9).

(Read this little book in order to dig the roots that we are supposed to follow, to avert calamity. This little book is a challenge and must compel us to fill the space left open by the ancestors, especially in preserving history, tales and constructive advice to our youth, because there is still a long journey awaiting them and we wish will bear fruit).

Mkhize's quotation not only alludes to the value of traditional imperatives but also suggests that the recreation of these traditional verbal expressions in modern literature is

key to educating younger generations. Although the emphasis of Muthwa's novels is on educating female children, Mkhize's perceptions are more encompassing of all young people. Muthwa's parochial interpretation of Mkhize's observation as mainly directed to the female youth is in line with the general trend in this literature of addressing the youth question through a gender biased prism.

The construction of gender identities and roles across generations in both novels lead to a reading that assumes that the current contemporary African social reality is generally flawed, as it is susceptible to a variety of influences that compromise the Zulu traditional customs and values. This reading is established as early as the opening sections of the novels which have employed a folktale technique normally used to present a state of lack or disequilibrium. In **Yekanini Ukuzenza** the lack of equilibrium foregrounds the loss of parental power experienced in contemporary African societies. The parent-offspring relations in Zulu culture metamorphosed with cultural changes and were also susceptible to foreign cultural influences. The adoption of foreign cultural practices in these relationships posed complexities and intrigues with which traditional practices could not completely integrate. Traditionally, issues affecting parent-offspring relations and generational gaps could be mediated by strong institutions such as the regimentation of male youths and the *qhikiza* (Girl Guide) systems that governed socially acceptable behaviour for young people. The absence of these institutions in contemporary settings meant that parents directly involved themselves with issues affecting young people, including issues relating to romantic relationships. There is a general agreement, in terms of the latter aspect, that contemporary parents have always been unsure of the role or the extent to which they can be involved in the love affairs of their children.

Their involvement at times is characterised by two extremes; by being too relenting or too stern. Furthermore underlying these contrasting states is a sense of apologia, as if the precautionary views they offer to their young are interfering with their children's right to freedom as can be noted in MaMsomi's remonstrance:

> *Ukuthi mntanami angazi ukuthi ngizokubonisa ngithini. Yebo, khona kakufanele ngigamanxe kangako ezindabeni zakho. Ngihlala ngikutshela njalo ukuthi*

*kangisho ukuthi ngiqonde ukukukhethela. Kodwa mntanami ngakutshela ukuthi mina njengomzali wakho, kungumsebenzi wami ukuthi ngikubambe ngengalo ngikuhlenge uma ngikubona uyokhalakathela eweni*

(It is just that my child I no longer know how to get through to you. Of course I am not supposed to interfere extensively in your affairs. And I have always told you that I do not intend to choose a suitor for you. However as I have once said to you my child that as a parent, it is my duty to guide and protect you, (Ngubo:9). MaMsomi's apologetic emotional outpour reveals not only her helplessness in her failure to influence her daughter regarding her choice of suitor but also her uncertainty regarding the role she should play in this stage of her stormy adolescence. MaMsomi's depiction points to a bigger reality: the receding influence of parents over their offspring).

Another conspicuous state of lack is underscored by the absence of the father figure in this family, a state that isiZulu literature has conventionally established to be the underlying cause of problems with young people in African societies. Ngubo's inability to state the reasons behind the absence of the father figure in this family points to a flawed social structure in contemporary African societies, owing not only to natural causes but also the denial of responsibility by the male members of the society in establishing viable functional families. Busisiwe's elopement (Ngubo:26) points to the underlying dysfunction of the family unit as an institution fundamental for the instruction of the youth in the ways of the society. The absence of the father figure heightens this sense of family dysfunction.

Muthwa's exploration of the dysfunctional modern family, however, is revealed through a traditional conception where both parents are present but confusion around the roles that they should play in the family leads to a collapse in values instilled in the younger members of the family. Zondi, Gcinekile's father, instead of reproaching her regarding the manner she handles her courtship with Thami, complains to his wife, MaNtuli, who is very defensive of Gcinekile's actions (Muthwa:6). In his failure to get MaNtuli to admit knowledge of Gcinekile's wayward activities, he says "*Ngizithulele-ke mina wako-Zondi. Funa kuthiwe ngikhuluma kakhulu njengomsakazo*" (I, of the Zondi clan will keep quiet.

Otherwise it will be said I speak continually like the radio (Muthwa:6). His remark on Gcinekile's elitism projects his fears of being associated with being old-fashioned, but the essence of his remark satirises the apparent libertine behaviour of educated women. He notes

> *Uthi kuseyikho ukufundiswa lokhu okwenziwa amadodakazi enu? Kuseyikho ukuthi ngoba nakhu eyizifundiswa ezinkulu sekumele ahamba ema isidana nabafana phambi komphakathi?*

(Is it still education, the things that your daughters are doing? Is it because they are highly educated and therefore they can stroll about parading with boys in full view of the public? (Muthwa:6). The class differences between himself as an uneducated traditionalist and his educated middle-class daughter ironically prevents him from addressing obvious defects in his daughter's behaviour. When Gcinekile is eventually in his vicinity, he keeps quiet and decides to visit one of his neighbours. (Muthwa:7).

Both Ngubo and muthwa seem to suggest that in dysfunctional families such as these the continuity of the traditional values is subjected to strain. Even when certain cultural practices are observed in these families, these are misunderstood and the distortions resulting from these malpractices can be catastrophic as observed towards the close of the novels. Gcinekile is crippled during a shoot-out between the police and his boyfriend and Busisiwe is arrested and indicted for the crime committed by the members of her syndicate who die during a police chase.

At times ill-conceived practises around the sanctity of courtship have disastrous consequences in both novels. Ngubo's depiction of Busisiwe's misplaced reverence for Sipho highlights this point. Busisiwe respectfully calls her criminal boyfriend by his clan name, Dlamini. She pledges her commitment and she is the one who suggests that they elope (Ngubo:7). Addressing her boyfriend by his clan name is undue respect for a social nuisance who is terrorising and murdering people in the neighbourhood. Underlying her utterance are matrimonial aspirations as she alludes to some of the Christian vows repeated by the couple after the priest during a wedding ceremony. At Richmond they lived together as a 'married coupled', a crime infested family unit, an extension of the

dysfunctional element existing in her home. In this state, they survive through a network of syndicated criminal activities which involve instilling fear within the business sector of the neighbourhood and through extracting large amounts of 'allegiance fees' from unwilling businessmen. Of course these criminal activities are short-lived because during the commission of their third crime, Sipho and one other gang member are killed in a high-speed chase accident and she is arrested and sentenced to fifteen years for her complicity in the syndicate's criminal activities. The picture Ngubo is drawing through these dysfunctional family portraits is that of the vicious cycle of degradation.

In a similar vein, in **Isifungo** the values associated with the institution of marriage are exposed through the depiction of Gcinekile, whose conception of marriage is shown to have had modern influences. Gcinekile's conception of marriage revolves around materialistic values,

> *usibona kahle isimo somnotho ukuthi sitsheke kanjani. Ngakho-ke uma ukumgcina kwami uThami kuzongenza ngiphile impilo enswemphu, neNkosi isiyongithethelela*

(do you realize how bad the economic state of affairs is. Therefore if my keeping Thami means that I lead a difficult life, God will forgive me. (Muthwa:25).

Thami's state of unemployment is regarded as a major issue that will hamper her development. She uses a conceit, comparing blooming womanhood to a ripe fruit in arguing for the fact that she wants to be married before it is too late. She therefore intones:

> *Uma isithelo sesivuthwe kahle ngokwanele – kumbe-ke ngilinganise ngepentshisi, uma selivuthiwe kufanele likhiwe lidliwe ukuze livundele esiswini limuncwe imithambo yegazi lisize ekwenzeni impilo emzimbeni, kunokuthi livuthwe lingakhiwa ligcine ngokubolela emthini, kuthi nofikayo lapho ethi uzolikha alifice selinezibungu* (Muthwa:33)

(When a fruit is ripe – let me use a peach, when it is ripe it must be picked and eaten so that it nutrients sustain life, because if it is not picked, it will rot in the tree, and whoever wants to pick it will find that it has maggots inside.)

One striking aspect of the characters of both Busisiwe and Gcinekile is their narcissism. Their narcissistic sense of self operates between the private sphere of self-reflection and the public sphere that invariably involves the public reflection of one' self or an individual's identity. The fear of being consumed and have their identity swallowed by the public reflection is what drives their redefinition of a private reflection to override and transcend the public one. One such attempt at redefinition is through their status consciousness, because with a different status, they will stand out from their peers or family relations in the neighbourhood or their colleagues at the working environment. In the case of Busisiwe her relationship with Sipho is not based on feelings of love and honesty, but rather on convenience as Sipho helps financially to maintain her chosen lifestyle (Ngubo:10,26,44). At Richmond, when their fortunes have completely changed, she contemplates betraying Sipho in order to be the leading gangster's girlfriend (Ngubo:41,72).

In **Isifungo**, Gcinekile's self-love and status consciousness make her give up the only person who has value for her: "*uThami ngiyamthanda. Akukhona ukuthi ngimthanda ngenhliziyo yami yonke, kodwa ungukuphela kwento eyigugu esengake ngaba nayo empilweni"*/ I love Thami very much. And I not only love him with all my heart, but he is the only most valuable thing that I ever had in my life (Muthwa:25). However because of her being materialistic, she says *"into eyigugu iyagcinwa, nami bekuyisifiso sami ukuthi uThami ngimgcine njengegugu laphakade"*/ priceless possessions are kept, it was also my wish that I keep Thami as my most valuable possession for ever (Muthwa:25). She terminates her relationship with Thami and she marries a local tycoon.

Family values are not the only social codes underlying the above mentioned narratives. Codes governing social interaction amongst the members of the community are also brought into sharp focus. In all the narratives the interaction of the main characters is brought to bear on their destinies and fates. Maqinase's mockery of the different animals

that she met on her way to the farm shapes her fate when she is chased and violently attacked by the greyhound. If she had shown proper cultural greeting etiquette, she could have been warned that her intended stroll held danger in the form of the dog. In **Yekanini**, there is a recreation of this folktale episode:

> *Indlela ashesha ngayo uBusisiwe eqonde kubo! Impela nethwasa lishesha kangaka nje, hhiya! Lalingadlela ogageni. Wayekhabuzela. Nempangela kuthiwa iyashesha nje, impela sengathi yayingeke ilibone elidlalayo ngalolo suku. Wayeshwabuzela. Wadlula ngakwaMdlalose indodakazi yakhona endala usisi Ntombi eme egcekeni. Wathi uyambingelela, wavele waphakamisa isandla uBusisiwe wachitheka eyosithela ekhoneni. Ikhehla lakwaJali elalizimele egcekeni kwalo, lathi lingambona eza ngalo mfutho, lasondela ngasesangweni. Lelula umqala lafifiyela, kwathi lapho edlula ngakulona, wezwa likhuluma lodwa lithi: "Kazi kuthiwa yini-ke igama lalo mdlalo osufikile. Impela izingane zethu! Sengathi lukhulu esisazolu…" Akabange esezwa ukuthi laqhubeka lathini, ngoba wayengenaso isikhathi sokulalela lezo zinto. Kanti mhlawumbe ukuba wayelichazele ukuthi ujahe kuphi, kunokwenzeka ukuthi laliyombonisa kangconywana*. (Ngubo:24-25)

(The way Busisiwe sped towards her home! Even a trainee diviner, known for his/her speed, would not catch up with her. She was walking like a mad person. Even the guinea fowl would not catch up with her that day. She was shuffling so quickly. She passed by Mdlalose' home, their older daughter, Ntombi was standing in the yard. She greeted her, but Busisiwe simply answered by raising her hand and disappeared from sight. The old man from Jali's home was also standing in the yard, when seeing Busisiwe is such haste, he approached the gate. He stretched his neck blinking, and when Busisiwe passed by the old man, she heard him saying to himself: "I wonder what the name of this new game is. Really our children! There is still more to be …" Busisiwe could not hear the rest of the utterance, because she had no time to listen to such things. Yet maybe if she had explained the reasons for her haste, the old man could have reasoned with her and gave her better advice).

As in the folktale, her lack of respect is brought to bear on her fate at Richmond. The narrator implies she should have made some time to greet and speak to the people she met. Culturally one does not only inquire after the other's health during greeting sessions, but a variety of issues come up as are one's intended actions or journeys. The individualistic lifestyle that is a norm in contemporary society has prevented her from respecting perennial customs such as greeting elders who could have been instrumental in protecting her from the catastrophic consequences she experienced in Richmond.[32]

The value of social interaction is also observed in *uMamba kaMaquba*. The older sister's positive relation to the people around her prompts them to wish her well in her journey of seeking a husband, but the younger sister's interaction invites bad luck and also points to her lack of preparation for the phase she intends entering. It is therefore inevitable that the younger sister will escape when she finds that the husband she has sought out is not what she had in mind. The snake metaphor in the folktale not only conjures up phallic interpretations but also points to deeper religious meanings. In most Nguni societies, the snake symbolises the presence of the ancestors. The Xhosa people show respect for *inkwankwa* (python), respectfully called *uMajola*. The Zulu people revere *iNyandezulu*, a non-venomous green snake normally found at *emsamo* (the anterior section of the Zulu hut), a sacred ancestral place in the hut. The significance of the snake metaphor directly points to ancestral approbation and sanctioning of certain modes of behaviours amongst the female sector in the society. In the case of uMamba *kaMaquba* there is an implication that women who have been properly socialised into behavioural expectations of the society benefit from ancestral intervention in their choice of husbands. The implication of the older sister's social interaction for Gcinekile's actions in **Isifungo** cannot be underemphasised. Her materialism, narcissism and her constant belittling people especially of Thoko, her friend, and Thami, her boyfriend, are indications that her interpersonal relations are flawed and therefore casts doubt on her success in married life since a sound interpersonal interaction characterised by love, loyalty and compassion are essential in marriage.

[32] Culturally a child is raised not only by his/her biological parents but by the whole village. This cultural practice is implied in the passage.

Another striking parallel that **Isifungo** draws with the folktale *uMamba KaMaquba*, concerns the snake's transformation into a human after it has been brutally killed by the sisters' family. Similarly in **Isifungo**, Thami's thwarted suicidal intentions after being jilted by Gcinekile result in his metamorphosis which not only included changed perspectives but also his identity. He adopts a new name, Thulasizwe Phungaza, starts up a small business and pursues the affections of Zime, a Christian girl who turns out be Gcinekile's half-sister (Muthwa:47-68).

The inclusion of Zime, Gcinekile's dialectic is an extrapolation of the dichotomous female images conventionalised in isiZulu literature and also has a cathartic effect in that the readers and the audience are led to socially desired interpretations that affirm social codes. The dialectic relation between Zime and Gcinekile revolves not only around their personalities but also in their professions as well. IsiZulu literature has tended to stereotype certain professions: nurses, hospital sisters and matrons are disparaged for their libertine behaviour and questionable morality in contrast with those in the teaching profession whose virtues are exalted as role models. In **Isifungo**, the characterisation of these two sisters operates in this manner. Zime is virtuous whilst Gcinekile is a villain. Commenting on how certain genres pre-empt the reading of desired interpretations, Zounmenou (2004:128) notes that oral genres reflect "the conception of life of the community who produced it." Therefore the behaviours of the female characters in the narratives carry the desired type of social construct. Furthermore, in view of the fact that they are stories constructed under the auspices of a patriarchal set-up, their ideological implications for social control must not be under-emphasised.

Looking at the literary output of the period under study, one is struck by the insistent patriarchal ideological construction of the female image. In novels such as **Kuhaza Impophoma** (1995), Mngadi's **Siyogcinaphi uma kunje** (1996) and **Ifa Ngukufa** (2001) Msimang's **Walivuma Icala** (1996), Buthelezi's **Buchitheka Bugayiwe** (1997) and **Impi YaboMdabu Isethunjini** (1996), and many other novels in this period, the characterisation of the female image is based on binary oppositions of good and evil. This has been achieved through the juxtaposition of dialectically opposed characters.

The emergence of Christianity discourses in **Isifungo**, points to Biesele's principle of adaptation. The interaction of Zulu tradition and Christianity is a well documented historical occurrence. The merits and demerits of this interaction in isiZulu literature depends on the stance taken by different authors. An overwhelming majority of writers, beginning with Vilakazi in **Noma Nini** (1934), have assumed a stance that vouched for the acceptance of Christian ways as logical alternatives to the traditional way of life. In the last century, the presence of Christian discourses in isiZulu literature underpinned the hegemonic framework operative in literary processes related to African languages. But its recurrence in post-apartheid literary production points to a broader realisation regarding the centrality of Christianity in the life experiences of Africans. Christianity has become a necessary adaptation strategy, not only for religious purposes, but also for the continuous survival of certain cultural values. Its association with selected traditional values, especially those regulating social relations, have made its inclusion within the traditional cultural values system almost natural. In **Isifungo**, the education of women is not questionable when it is aligned with Christianity. Zime's teaching profession finds acceptance because she involves herself both in the school environment and the church where she actively manages the church choir (Muthwa:60, 62).

**Narrating stereotypical male discourses**

In **Isifungo** the patriarchal construction and characterisation of male identities is beyond reproach. There is a reading that seems to project the view that the failures of males either in securing employment or furthering their education should be sympathetically understood. This observation holds when taking Thami's portrayal into consideration. His inability to secure employment or further his education is not fully explored or linked to other social realities known to be existing in the South African context. Instead Gcinekile's is blamed for raising these concerns. As a result she is trivialised and infantilised throughout the narrative as though she is indecisive and incapable of knowing what is of worth to her (Muthwa:5,24,25,42,71). This notion is epitomised in her paralysis which connotes a permanent infantile state. The running comment to these observations is captured by a proverb "*umuntu akalahlwa nanini, inqobo nje uma inyama isahlangene nomphefumulo*" / a person is never forsaken, as long as the soul and the body

are still intact (Muthwa:87). This implies that Gcinekile must continue being involved with Thami as long as he is alive, regardless of his situation.

Equally Zondi's irresponsibility both in neglecting Zime, a child born out of wedlock and in failing to intervene meaningfully in Gcinekile's life is not questioned. Instead his infidelity and adultery is said to be "*ukubhokelwa ubusoka esenomuzi*" (womanising spree when married) (Muthwa:86), which is not portrayed as necessarily morally questionable. In traditional society a young man who keeps numerous girlfriends at any single time has been affectionately called "*isoka*" (a ladies man). He has been respected and held in high esteem as opposed to "*isishimane*" (a young man with one or no girlfriend at all).

The writer's indecision regarding Zondi (the father of Gcinekile and Zime) and his misconduct stems from past matrimonial practices that privileged men by allowing polygamous marriages, which means that his misdeed cannot necessarily be termed adulterous. This view is further supported by the ambiguity with which the author closes the narrative. Gcinekile, in a vegetative state, is cared for by Zime and Thami. It emerges that Thami has feelings of love for Gcinekile, and he still wishes to keep their vow to be together in both good and bad times. Her ill health provides him with the opportunity to fulfil that vow. He asks Zime's permission to do this[33]. He says

> *….ukuthi ngangenze isifungo noGcinekile sokuthi ngiyomthanda kuze kube sekugcineni. Ebuhleni nasebubini. Ngeshwa-ke leso sifungo sengisenze nawe. Ngingazi-ke nami kuwena. Ngokwami bengibona lisekhona ithuba lokuthi ngigcine isifungo sami ngokuthi ngimnakekele nami uGcinekile kuze kube sekugcineni. Singazi-ke phela ngoba nesikhwele sibuzwa kinina* (Muthwa:96).

*(*…it is just that I made a vow to Gcinekile that I will love her until the end of time, in bad and good moments. Unfortunately I have now made that vow with you. As far as I am concerned the opportunity still remains for me to fulfil that vow, to care for her until the end. But I would not know because I know women can be jealous.)

[33] According to Zulu custom the man discusses with the first wife his intention of taking up a second wife. He can only take up the second wife if the first one approves.

Acting contrary to her Christian doctrine, Zime agrees to Thami's proposal,

> *kuhle ngoba nangu ubaba ukhona. Kuzomele umnike ilobolo lakhe kusashisa nje. Angazi noma umfundisi uyosamukela yini isithembu sakho* (Muthwa:96).

It is good because here is father, he is still alive. You had better pay him his *lobolo* immediately. However I would not know if the reverend will accept your polygamous marriage.)

This utterance substantiates the assertion put forward in this chapter that Christian doctrines are viewed not as an end to themselves but as values that can be continually harnessed and infused with traditional mores to achieve normative value systems that favours a traditional episteme. The syncretism of both traditional culture and Christian doctrines points not to the negation of either but to the societal tendency to selectively engage in habits and practices that are necessary for the survival and continuation of core social codes.

Muthwa's silence is not confined only to Zondi's conduct: there is an implied understanding and tacit acceptance of male misconduct that is pervasive throughout the text. It is not only Zondi's adulterous past that is unquestioned. Thami's role in breaking Gcinekile's virginity (Muthwa:40-41) and the fact that he eventually marries her younger stepsister indicates the same (Muthwa:93-94).[34] Instead she is made to feel guilty for her complicity in the act. While Thami is repentant for his part, his self-justification absolves him of any wrong doing, so that the guilty party remains Gcinekile alone,

> *Ngifisa ukuxolisa kakhulu ngobuntombi bakho. Empeleni ngangingaboni iphutha uma gibuqeda ngoba ngase ngenelisiwe ukuthi sesiyofa silahlane nawe. Kubuhlungu-ke nokho ngoba ngisho ungaze ushade nenkinyankinya yesikhumukane, kawusenaso isipho esiligugu oyosiphathela umyeni wakho.*

[34] In isiZulu tradition, marrying twice into the same family is an acceptable marriage practice. For the depiction of this practice see, Mncwango's **Ngenzeni** and Vilakazi's **Nje Nempela**. The problematization of this practice in Vilakazi's **Noma Nini** stems from the Christian influence, which brought about conflicting views and the resultant clashes in cultures as practised by early Christian converts.

*Kawusenakumbonga ngalutho kukho konke ayobe ekwenzele khona, kwazise nokuthi ubuntombi bomuntu yibona obuyisisekelo somshado onenjabulo*

I apologise profusely about your virginity. Actually I did not see any problem consuming it because I was sure that only death will tear us asunder. It is a shame though that even if you could be married to a tycoon, you no longer have a priceless possession that will be a proper gift for your husband. You will never be able to thank him enough for everything that he will do for you. It is known that the virginity of a maiden is the foundation of a happy married life (Muthwa:40-41).

In addition Muthwa's one-sidedness in this belief has left unexplored aspects about male sexuality and virginity, as Thami is equally a fallen man. This belief operates on the social level, where it has become natural to conclude that it is women who fall and as a weaker sex, they bear the brunt of the blame.

Contrary to the depiction of the misdemeanours of male characters in the novel is the irony entailed in the attention paid to similar misconduct of female characters in **Isifungo**. Thoko, a self-declared loose woman, is eventually institutionalised in matrimony. Her worldview and convictions about relationships accordingly change to conform to those of society. Her whole personality is also transformed:

*Kwakungeseyena loya Thoko owayethi noma ekhuluma afane nomntwana oqhumisayo. Kunalokho wayesenezeluleko nomqondo owawungacobela kuwona uma kukhona ongakutholi kahle*

She was no longer that Thoko who when she spoke, it was as if a teething child spoke. Instead she was full of advice and she could be consulted on any issue (Muthwa:64-65).

There is a sense that her transgression of the social code is pardoned, because she agreed to be institutionalised in marriage. However Gcinekile's transgression can not be pardoned, her cardinal sin is materialism. Her attraction to Frisco's material possessions and Pita's wealth (Muthwa:45) blinds her judgement to such an extent that she marries Pita for his wealth, and keeps Frisco as a secret lover. She is discovered and exposed by

her husband. Even as a divorced woman she cannot find acceptance in the society because her relationship with Frisco is also short-lived since the police kill Frisco.

In isiZulu literature, disrespect for the law has frequently been paired with failed romantic relationships. And this observation echoes Biesele's principle of sense and consensus making. There is a reading that self-willed uncontrollable female characters invite anti-social outcasts such as criminals. This representation has been a steady theme from as early as Dhlomo's **Indlela Yababi** (1962). Delsie, the protagonist in this narrative, and the prototype in this form of characterisation, attracts a corrupt and abusive police officer. The end of the narrative is marked by her returning to the rural area dejected and rejected by the world. Numerous publications spanning the period from the 1930's to the present day revisit the theme instilling a cathartic acceptance of the traditional ideology. In both novels, the law plays a crucial role in reinforcing the repercussions of disobedience and disrespect for the social codes which are integral frameworks in the organisation of the society. In **Yekanini**, Busisiwe's relationship with Sipho is a failed one, because of his criminal involvement while his violent end is pre-empted by their involvement in organised syndicate crime (Ngubo:80). A similar depiction is observed in **Isifungo**: Gcinekile's relationship with Frisco is a doomed one, she is paralysed because of his involvement in organised crime (Muthwa: 94).

**Conclusion**

The preceding discussion has focused on how folktale motifs are apparent in the structural formulation of modern novels. Folk narratives are reservoirs of commonly shared references of a worldview and they also provide metaphors, symbols and images that, when recreated provide varied complex stories that affirm the values and a set of beliefs of the given worldview. Canonici (1988:20) points out that "*insomi* (folktale) images reflect a need for an ideal, ordered society. Thematically, adherence to custom is emphasised as the most effective means of ensuring the continued equilbrium of the human community, stylistically, animals and fabulous images are worked into plots to communicate vividly such a harmonious or disharmonious society. Movements towards an ideal society forms the thematic focus of the narratives, and cultural values are

discovered in the mechanism applied by individuals and the society as they attempt to duplicate the natural harmony."

Some of Canonici's observations relate to Biesele's principles. These principles refer to selected immutable and flexible epistemological and cosmological worldviews of the society, which have to be communicated to the younger generation in repetitive form in order to reach consensus. In spite of the colonial and Christian assault on the Zulu tradition there still remain certain immutable codes. It is hoped that these recreations will eliminate anti-social behaviour and also promote moral order and ethical values that have always defined social organisation.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Acts of naming: The detective plot in Masondo's fiction

Masondo is amongst the few isiZulu writers who have introduced detective stories into the literary tradition. He has produced six detective novels and one anthology of detective short stories within a period of four years, spanning between 1990 and 1994.[35] Although he eventually wrote outside the detective plot, he is particularly celebrated for his detective stories.[36] His first trilogy[37] namely **Isigcawu Senkantolo**, **Iphisi Nezinyoka** and **Ingwe Nengonyama** set him up as amongst the first to introduce novel ways of dealing with contemporary reality in the literature of isiZulu, especially in the face of the crime crisis and the waning confidence in the South African law enforcement agencies (Mokwena 1992:42).[38] Perhaps even more intriguing in Masondo's writing are his naming practices in all his detective stories. Masondo's act of naming in these narratives is peculiar and unusual, and might be regarded as fortuitous. In this chapter these naming stylistics are regarded as extra-ordinary strategies for disrupting expectations.

This chapter will firstly employ Literary Onomastics and the Ethnographic Study of

[35] The first two **Isigcawu Senkantolo** (1990) and **Iphisi Nezinyoka** (1991) made it to the Department of Education prescribed set works for isiZulu matriculation in the early 1990's. The latter novel being further prescribed for the grade elevens in the late 1990's. In 1994 alone he published five more detective stories. After this marathon he seems to have shifted focus and experimented with closet drama **Kungenxa Yakho Mama** (1996) and **Sixolele** published in (2004). He also wrote a radio/stage/TV drama; **Inkundlanye: A collection of one-act stage, radio and TV plays** (1997) which was translated with the collaboration of Rachelle Gauton into **One-act Plays: A collection of one-act stage, radio and TV plays** (1998). Masondo also collected folklore and published it as **Inkunzi Isematholeni** (1997).

[36] In a telephone interview conducted in July 2005, he intimated that he completed a manuscript of each text within four weeks. He was referring in particular to **Ingwe Nengonyama**, **Kanti Nawe**, **Ngaze Ngazenza** and **Ingalo Yomthetho**, **Kunjalo-ke Emhlabeni** all published in 1994.

[37] In the same interview, he intimated that he was attempting a trilogy and hoped to repeat that with subsequent publications. However with subsequent publications, the relationship between the texts is not as apparent and stylistically effective as with the first three texts.

[38] During the apartheid period the law enforcement agencies were held in suspect by the black majority and white progressives who lived under the repression of apartheid regime and after elections this view of the law enforcement agencies never changed much. The negative associations of law enforcers was further exacerbated by the upsurge in criminal activities in the country and their failure to combat this upsurge has since made their image a national crisis.

personal names to study Masondo's naming practices in **Ingalo Yomthetho** and **Ingwe Nengonyama**. Secondly a brief overview of his naming stylistics will be given. Thirdly a compendium will be used to briefly analyze Masondo's de-stereotyping and disruption techniques in naming and this will be followed with an in-depth analysis of these concepts in two sampled texts.

**An overview of Masondo's naming in his fiction**

There is an established tradition in the use of names in isiZulu novels which invariably is a simulated practice of centuries of orality and of literary writings in dominant languages. As Ragussis (1986:4) claims, the novel "emerged as a genre by organizing its plots around acts of naming." Masondo's naming techniques, particularly in his detective novels, take on an unconventional, non-standard, but refreshingly unique approach. While his naming of personages in the narratives serves to highlight their personalities, capture their mannerism, and centralize their roles, his application of similar names explores entirely different psychologies in his other narratives. In other words, the names he assigns to characters in a particular text exploiting his/her physical attributes, temperament, psychological or emotional state, could denote a completely different personage when the same name is used in a different text. There is a conception that whilst he exploits stock archetypes with the nature of the roles the personages represent in the narratives, he disrupts and defamiliarizes their received meanings in the Formalist and Structuralist sense. This element of simultaneous stock-typing and de-stereotyping is seen in the prevalence of the same names across his detective narratives which are consistently drawn from different personalities across the social fabric and strata. In spite of this unusual naming stylistics, the commonality and migratory naming patterns and the intertextuality of issues and concerns not only contribute to a fixed structural framework of the narratives but these names ironically also create both continuity and familiarity, and invariably predetermine the interpretation of the narratives.

The major paradox introduced by Masondo's act of naming is observed in the realization that, whilst names act as a central locus of meaning in the narratives, the manner in which

he exploits them as pointers, indicators or shadows is premised on the basis that - just like personalities or psychologies - they can never be representative of the whole, but can only be units of a greater whole. Different facets of personalities or psychologies are glimpsed at, not by assigning or relegating their meanings to received archetypal notions, but by recreating personalities or psychologies within particular contexts in contemporary urban/rural spaces. Furthermore, by not following established trends, Masondo unravels an unexplored terrain in relation to characterization and representations that grants him the liberty to explore the contradictions, the bizarre and the absurd, the intrigues and complexities that typify modern African societies from an angle beyond constraint or conventionalization.

IsiZulu literature has long since established a convention regarding the manner in which personalities representative of localities (rural vs. urban) can be read. These social variables include classes and economies, racial politics, historical politics, education and elitism, literacy politics, gender and masculinities, urban and rural/traditional folklore, youth and generational gaps. However, Masondo's naming stylistics introduces novel ways in which contemporary African societies can be looked at. He toys with the established foundations and questions some of the assumed principles of characterization. In this manner he introduces alternatives that not only demonstrates the pitfalls of straight jacketing representations or character portrayals, but that also open up other possibilities of representing and reading characters through names assigned to them. The disruption at the heart of his naming practices across his detective narratives does not reflect a lament with past morality or with Christian re-proselytizing. Rather, it is reflective of a contemporaneity where new values and lifestyles, (a consequence of a cultural mix from various influences across numerous nationalities), have shaped modern values in South Africa and how these values are continually evolving and therefore requiring continuous re-inscription. His idea of the identity of a modern black South African is not confined to traditional perceptions and it is in this way that Masondo defies the norm. The spread of similar names in his detective stories is not a token of a lack of ingenuity on his part but attests to his realization of the complexities of human psychologies in contemporary African societies.

**Literary Onomastics: Analysis of character through names**

According to Alvarez-Altman (cited in Neethling 1985:88) onomastics

> is a more specialized literary criticism in which scholars are concerned with the levels of significance of names in drama, poetry, fiction and folklore. These include names of places, characters, cosmic symbols, etc. as they relate to theme, structure and other literary considerations.

However, literary onomastics does not necessarily explore cultural aspects beyond the literary texts. Hence, in this analysis literary onomastics will be supplemented with the ethnography of isiZulu naming practices. This latter approach can point to derivation, linguistic relationship of names, philosophical relationship between individuals and their names or customary practices such as different forms of address or change and transition in society which Masondo exploits to depict differing personalities across the social fabric. Koopman (1990 and 1992) provides a detailed account of the changing nature of the uses of names within Zulu cultural life. His points out that

> […] other linguistic processes such as adoption of words from outside the language, neologisms, coinages, and compounds of various linguistic sorts […] are part of the linguistic strategy which Zulu uses to adapt to modern times" (1992:99).

Nicolaisen (as indicated in Neethling, 1985:88) argues that literary names and naming admit three significant levels of meaning. The first is the lexical level which examines the meaning of names in a manner equivalent to dictionary entries. The second is the associative level which looks into reasons why particular words are used in the naming process. The third is the onomastics level which looks into the meaning of a denotative name. Stewart (1986), Pyles, (1986) or Fairglough, (1986) have devised various onomastics schemes for an in-depth analysis of names associated with these levels. The most rewarding is Alvarez-Altman's (1981) classification scheme. She identified twelve

classes of literary names and all of them in some way relate to these three levels of meaning. The first class comprises the anonymical family of literary names. According to Alvarez-Altman (1981:222), these names do not impart a sense of clarity marked by individuality or personality but rather imply anonymous faces like an idea that has no exact term to express it. In this regard Neethling (1985) gives examples drawn from the isiXhosa repertoire of this type of names, for example, *uBani* (who), *uSobani* (the father of whom), *uNozibani* (the mother of whom), *uMasibani* (the wife of whom). These names refer to individuals whose names are not perhaps significant for the narrator.

The second class consists of proper names. They function on the denotative level as labels referring to entities. Many of these words are lexically meaningless. Alvarez-Altman (1981:223) refers to them as 'purely invented fantastic names', names like *Taga* and *Kabasa*. These have no meaning but are nevertheless names used to refer to certain entities. However, there are meaningful names that could appear as contextually meaningless. They function on the onomastics level. Their application is both on the denotative and associative level. Names like *Themba* (hope), *S'fiso* (yearning), *Popi* (doll), and *Thandi* (loved one) are well established and their usage in both **Ingalo Yomthetho** and **Ingwe Nengonyama** does not contribute to thematic development, but merely brings variety to the characters populating the text.

Some names in this class have personality traits implicated in the text. In this regard Makgamatha (1992) explains that in such characterization, the roles of the characters are encapsulated in the names. This enables the polarities of moral and social situations revealed in the formal patterns and advances the aims of the narrative. Names like *Magwegwe* (crooked legs), *Vika* (take cover), *Bhadi* (ill-luck), and *Mamba* (a poisonous snake) have particular significance in the texts because through them the narrator underpins certain thematic issues. Their names entail what Ntombela (1994) calls semantic axes because they exert influence on events.

The category of personal names also includes a class of names whose characters are presented symbolically and through whom certain epistemological and cosmological

aspects of the African community are revealed. In **Ingwe Nengonyama** names like *Makhosonke* and *Makhosazana* invoke ancestral beliefs that represent a way of life and the hierarchical positionings of the name bearers within an isiZulu society. Their significance in the text points to certain aspects about ancestral belief and social organization considered very significant in the African society as will be shown later.

According to Alvarez-Altman (1981) names either fall into the chimeral family or the diactinic family of names. The chimerical family includes some of the categories mentioned earlier which have to do with invented or fantastic names commonly found in folktales. The diactinic family of names has to do with names that carry with them certain attributes. These attributive names can be entail self-explanatory words that reflect a personality trait, or describe the physical characteristics of the character or point to the etymology of the name or to the paranomasic punning or childish distortion of names or change in gender markers. Some of these diactinic names have been utilized in both novels and their relevance will be demonstrated later.

**Ethnographic names**

Harder (1986) and Neethling (1994) mention that names are rooted in the culture and are fixed in connotation and societal restraint. This is true of African society, where naming takes on a very particular cultural significance. In certain African societies an individual goes through three important stages that are concomitant with the different stages of his/her life. According to Thipa (1984) the individual is named as a newborn child. During and after initiation s/he assumes a new name that points to the stage attained and in married life yet another name is given to him or her.

Herbert (1994) delineates some of the key issues with which the ethnographic study of names is concerned. These relate to the name bestowed at birth, public or private coinage of names, stages of life and name usage and alternation in forms of address, for example the use of kinship terms. The first bissue is related to the process involved in the naming of a child because there can be significant happenings which occurred during the time of

birth. Names like *Majalimani* (the Germans) or *Mangisi* (Englishman) or *Mpiyimpi* (war) refer to particular situations or moments in history. Names may allude to the status of the family during the time the child is born like *Nomcebo* (wealth) or *Mhlupheki* (suffering) or *Nokufa* (mother of death). Related to the period underlying the birth of the child is the status of the name giver and how the name giver has gone about the selection process of the name. In this regard Neethling (1994:88) points to an underlying motive for the naming of children in African societies, namely that "it is common practice for parents to embody in a name the expectations they might have for that child in the future."

The second issue relates to the coinage of names. This apect looks at whether the coinage has been done privately or publicly. This is imperative for our discussion, because in Zulu culture both circumstances prevail in naming. An individual is privately bestowed with a name when he/she is born, but as he/she goes through the stages of life he/she creates his/her own new names or other people around them bestow new names upon them. Canonici (1993) states that an individual obtains these names through his/her actions and involvement in the society. These names become a string of names revolving around certain events, utterances or actions and are called *izibongo* (traditional praises). Canonici (1993: 9) defines *izibongo* as:

> praise poems in honour of individuals. Any person may have 'praises; in fact one may even compose one's own praises. Izibongo are developed from initial 'praise names', that an individual is given or gives himself, which briefly describe or epitomize an event or action in his life, his achievements or failures, or a peculiar physical characteristic. A praise name may soon become a 'praise phrase' or a 'praise sentence': this may constitute the nucleus of a praise poem, which will then grow with episodic and occasional additions as demanded by events.

Gwala and Gunner (1991) point out that the word 'praises' is misleading because *izibongo* are primarily concerned with naming, identifying and therefore the giving of substance to the named person or object. As Turner (1999: 196) points out these *izibongo* are praises that extol

> The virtues of manly prowess, of courage and fighting skills, of exceptional hunting ability, of brave leadership and outstanding physical and behavioural presence.

This argument is further explored by Gunner (1995:188) who comments that *izibongo* are

> Manifestations of cultural power broking, where the values the poetry espouses, validate the righteousness of war and conquest, of heroic struggle and of courage through physical action and endurance

The last issue relates to the alternation in the form of address, for example addressing an individual with his *isithakazelo* (singular)/ *izithakazelo* (plural) (clan praises). Canonici (1993:17-18) defines *izithakazelo* as clan names for "adulation' or a 'flattering phrase' or a 'tribal salutation' or a 'term of polite or friendly address peculiar to each clan." *Izithakazelo* are ancestral names that have been assumed by the whole clan as names identifying them. They can extend to several praise phrases and they reveal a myriad of interconnections in relations. In the past, these were recited in full and in that way the interrelationship between clans were revealed and intermarriages were avoided.

However, in the contemporary period, these phrase names are no longer recited in full. Only the initial *isithakazelo* is cited. Herbert's (1995) approach takes into cognizance the naming practices under the impact of many changes in the social organization and the culture of everyday life. These changes may allude to the modification of naming practices, because of Christianity or modernity or the general decrease in the art of naming which has led people to draw names from the stock of available names. Neethling (2000:208) observes that "personal names reflect the sociology and psychology of the era in which they are or were used".

**Disrupting and de-stereotyping archetypal representations**

Following classical detective narrative structures Masondo's act of naming is structured around fixed categories of characters that propel the narratives.[39] In his detective novels, and one collection of short detective stories, the framework around which characters are structured are: the owner of the private investigation company, the detective, the prime suspect, the criminal(s) who fall into the category of major characters, a motley cast of minor characters, and the general populace, constituted by faceless and nameless characters. Equally, the developments of the plots in all the stories follow classical formations where adequate clues, digressions and omissions are part of the narrative structure to bring about suspense and twists. In order to highlight some of the contentions set out above regarding Masondo's naming technique, the discussion will use a compendium of two tables to demonstrate both the structural frameworks of the roles of certain characters and also the naming style Masondo uses across all his detective stories which make up his first and second trilogy.

**Table 1. Naming of character roles**

| **First triology** | | | **Second triology** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Isigcawu Senkantolo* (1990) | *Iphisi Nezinyoka* (1991) | *Ingwe Nengonyama* (1994a) | *Kanti Nawe* (1994b) | *Ngaze Ngazenza* (1994c) | *Ingalo Yomthetho* (1994d) |
| **Detective**<br><br>*Themba Zondo* | **Detective**<br><br>*Themba Zondo* | **Detective**<br><br>*Themba Zondo* | **Detective**<br><br>*Zimisele Wela* | **Detective**<br><br>*Qodlwana Mthethwa*<br><br>*Themba Zondo* | **Detective**<br><br>*Makhosonke Ndima*<br><br>*Popi Hadebe* |

[39] Masondo, in an interview informed the researcher that in his teen years and early adulthood, he has been an ardent reader of detective stories. But that which kindled his interest has been the James Hardly Chase collections, which were readily available in paper back cover in many urban households. He also had an access to the detective stories of Sherlock Holmes. Some of the ways in which received reality is disrupted is through the introduction of unthought-of twists which invariably affect conventional social stereotypes about classes, professions or the general society. These devices are also apparent in Masondo's acts of naming as reading strategies of the psychologies of contemporary black South Africa.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Owner of PI Co.**<br><br>*S'fiso Ngubane* | **Owner of PI Co.**<br><br>*S'fiso Ngubane* | **Owner of PI Co.**<br><br>*S'fiso Ngubane* | **Owner of PI Co.**<br><br>*Bongane Simelane* | **Owner of PI Co.**<br><br>*Qodlwana Mthethwa* | **Owner of PI Co.**<br><br>*Moyeni Hadebe and*<br><br>*Makhosonke Ndima* |
| **Prime suspect**<br><br>*Mrs. Kubheka* | **Prime suspect**<br><br>*Taga Nxumalo* | **Prime suspect**<br><br>*Magwegwe Buthelezi* | **Prime suspect**<br><br>*Makhanda Zuma*<br><br>*Mbamba Mlaba*<br><br>*Mamba Luthuli* | **Prime suspect**<br><br>*Thoko Ntsibande*<br><br>*Mginsa Nxumal**o*** | **Prime suspect**<br><br>*Dr Bhadi Shongwe* |
| ***Corpse***<br><br>*Mr. Zikode* | **Corpse**<br><br>*Bheki Hlophe* | **Corpse(s)**<br><br>*Mrs. Kubheka*<br><br>*Taga Nxumalo*<br><br>*Themba's family and fiancée* | **Corpse(s)**<br><br>*Zodwa Sihlahla*<br><br>*Jabulane Mthiyane*<br><br>*unnamed characters* | **Corpse**<br><br>*Bhekani Ndlovu* | **Corpse**<br><br>*Mamba Nxumalo* |

The similarities of the names of the law enforcers, *Themba Zondo* and the company holders; *S'fiso Ngubane*, in the first trilogy and the resurfacing of the name *Themba Zondo* in **Ngaze Ngazenza**, of the second trilogy, does not necessarily mean that the names denote the same personage with the same personality. Actually, across the four texts both characters are constituted differently in terms of their physical makeup, psychological outlook and mannerism. Furthermore, there is no continuity or progression from one character so named with the one found in subsequent texts. To substantiate this point further, look at *Taga Nxumalo*'s name, in the text **Iphisi Nezinyoka**. The character

so named is considered a prime suspect which is his structural role. However, in a different text, **Ingwe Nengonyama**, his structural role is that of being a corpse, whose murder should be investigated. The name acts at a primary level or function, signifying 'nothing but the ideas that are in the Mind of the Speaker' at a time (Locke cited in Ragussis, 1986: 4).

The same can also be said with regard to the prevalence of certain surnames across the narratives. These surnames do not refer to any relation between the personages carrying such surnames or have any particular reference to the clan so named, they are just surnames. In all texts where certain frequently used surnames like Nxumalo are used, these refer to entirely different individuals. There seems to be a reading that Masondo simply recycled names and surnames from a bank of common names, not with particular ideological imperatives in mind, but because he was simply eager to narrate a situation that warranted an investigation. The emphasis for him seems to be on how the investigation is carried out more so than on the shadows of meaning carried by the name.

The same observations can be made for Masondo's naming of major and minor characters, whose structural positioning propel the plot. The similarities of the names assigned to certain characters do not necessarily allude to their typification but are constitutive of a wide ranging variety of psychologies and emotional consciences making up a contemporary black South Africa, as demonstrated in Table two below.

**Table 2. Naming of major characters**

| **First triology** | | | **Second triology** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Isigcawu Senkantolo*<br><br>(1990) | *Iphisi Nezinyoka*<br><br>(1991) | *Ingwe Nengonyama*<br><br>(1994) | *Kanti Nawe*<br><br>(1994) | *Ngaze Ngazenza*<br><br>(1994) | *Ingalo Yomthetho*<br><br>(1994) |
| **Major criminals**<br><br>*Magwegwe* | **Major criminals**<br><br>*Magwegwe* | **Major criminals**<br><br>*Vika Kubheka* | **Major criminals**<br><br>*Khende* | **Major criminals**<br><br>*Mrs* | **Major criminals**<br><br>*Makhosazana* |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Buthelezi*<br><br>*Mhlobo Mvubu*<br><br>*Vika Kubheka* | *Buthelezi*<br><br>*Mhlobo Mvubu*<br><br>*Vika Kubheka* | *Duduzile Kubheka*<br><br>*Bheki Nxumalo* | *Sibisi*<br><br>*Popi Xaba*<br><br>*Magwaba ba Shange* | *Kubheka*<br><br>*Mpondlela Xaba* | *Xaba*<br><br>*Jona* |

An intriguing name is that of *Magwegwe Buthelezi*. The appearance of the name *Magwegwe Buthelezi* in the first trilogy operates in a similar fashion as in the first table. In **Isigcawu Senkantolo** and **Iphisi Nezinyoka**, this name is assigned to criminals but in **Ingwe Nengonyama** it is assigned to a prime suspect who is later absolved and acquitted of any wrong doing. The interest is not so much in the first name but in the surname *Buthelezi*. The recurrence of this surname in the two texts of the first trilogy would have suggested typification[40] and signaled an analogous reference since the name of *Buthelezi* in the period around the writing of these texts had politically loaded connotations, but the role given the character bearing this name in **Ingwe Nengonyama** does not support such connotations.[41] However, the ambiguity implied in this name in the narratives makes for a fascinating reading of the dark political intrigues associated with the political figure bearing the name of *Buthelezi* especially in the early 1990's when the ravages of *Inkatha Yesizwe*, a quasi-cultural/political group he led, were felt in the eastern townships of Gauteng. In the three texts, the characters bearing this name are also implicated in double worlds; the underworld and mainstream, with intrigues, secrets, murders and double dealings trailing their personalities. In this way the inclusion of the surname operates as in allegories. According to Fletcher (1964:2), Honing (1965:113) and Whitman (1987:2) allegorical writings say one thing and mean another. Fletcher (1964:7) further mentions that allegory does not need to be read exgically because on the literal level it does make sense without an interpretation. But the literal surface suggests a peculiar doubleness of

[40] Sholes and Kellog (1996), Scheuber (1991) and Ogude (1996) discussed extensively issues of allegorical characterization. They conclude that allegorical characterization lead to considerations of characters as types stripped of all individuality but the symbolic functions or discourses standing for a larger framework.

[41] The name of Buthelezi brought up associations with the leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party, uMntwana uGatsha Mangosuthu Buthelezi. On the eve of the new political dispensation, his controversial political stances to both mainstream politics and black national politics earned him and the organization he led mistrust, animosity and marginalization in the post-apartheid South Africa.

intention that invites an underlying reading. This gives the narrative a richer and more interesting interpretation. Key to the use of *Buthelezi*'*s* name is the invitation to its possible allegorical implications, however fleeting or peripheral. Finnegan (1970:470) and Turner (2001:449) also raise an important observation regarding such names. Both agree that names in African society are not only used for surface meaning but they may also serve as a

> Way of 'working out tension', or for social function in 'minimizing friction' or even more importantly […] as a useful form 'for providing a means of indirect comment when a direct one is not feasible. (Finnegan, 1970:470)

Not only *Magwegwe Buthelezi* is repeatedly used, there is also *Vika Kubheka* and *Mhlobo Mvubu* whose personalities are different in each text. A similar table of minor characters in all six narratives can be drawn up and it will also show the same migratory patterns of names from different structural roles drawn from different social backgrounds and made to characterize and depict different aspects of black contemporary society throughout both trilogies. The similarity of names and their migration seem to suggest that Masondo has drawn from a stock of common names reflecting personality traits across the social strata. Only at a structural level does Masondo's naming technique operate as in most narratives captured in Sucksmith's (1970:250) observation of Dickens' art of narrative, when he says,

> The psychology and social realism of Dickens's characters, their evolution from originals, their relationship to the structure of the novels which they appear […] may not be related to the structure, it is itself structure and may be related to effect and vision.

In order to understand how Masondo's names function aesthetically, we need to follow what Culleton (1994:4) says of Joyce's naming process:

> Studying names in Joyce we not only find largely untapped resources that extend our

> study of genealogy, history, sociology, folklore, literature, philosophy and other disciplines outside of linguistics, but we enhance our ultimate understanding of the writer with whatever information we can harness about the processes [he] went through when he selected names for his characters.

Therefore the study of Masondo's names can also be enhanced, not by looking at archetypal representations in his naming, but by broadly looking at these names as anthroponyms drawn from a bank of popular names of a contemporary society, names that, while loaded with meaning and showing clear genealogical or typological information, resist straight jacketing in all levels of meaning. Although there is a strong temptation to explore Masondo's naming technique in all his detective novels because of the prevalence of his cross-referencing of certain names, only two narratives, **Ingwe Nengonyama** and **Ingalo Yomthetho**, which are part of the first and the second of Masondo's trilogies respectively will be studied.

**A summary of Ingwe Nengonyama**

Themba Zondo works for the company of private investigators headed by S'fiso Ngubane at Nquthu. He is a spendthrift and is constantly broke. However through smooth talking he is able to get loans from Thandi, the secretary, and Sambo, an elderly detective who always grudgingly lends him money. He is assigned a job to investigate the arsonist responsible for burning down the house of an affluent businessman, Vika Kubheka whose bedridden wife was killed in the blaze. In his investigation, Themba discovers that Vika Kubheka, together with Magwegwe Buthelezi, and Taga Nxumalo, belonged to the Kabasa Gang in Mbabane. The gang then relocated to Nquthu and their gang leader, Vika Kubheka, married a rich widow. As soon as Vika Kubheka has settled into his wealthy life, he starts a campaign of eliminating everyone that knew him as a gang leader. Not only does he attempt to kill all his gang members but he also kills his wealthy wife to make way for another wife, Duduzile, with whom he has married long before he tied the knot with the murdered wife. One gang member, Magwegwe Buthelezi is framed by Vika

Kubheka to be linked with arson and murder of his (Kubheka's) wife. Magwegwe is found guilty and is given a death sentence.

Whilst the investigation is under way, an attempt is made on Themba's life. Later on his son, Sandile is kidnapped by unknown people who call themselves oMashayabhuqe (killers) and when he is about to resolve the case, his mother, son and fiancée are murdered in cold blood. At this point his boss compels him to drop the case. Themba however refuses because he thinks he has got nothing to loose. Eventually Vika Kubheka and his hit man, Bheki Nxumalo are arrested and sentenced to death. Their arrest exonerates Magwegwe who is eventually released.

**A summary of Ingalo Yomthetho**

Makhosonke Ndima is a co-director of the *Ndima and Hadebe* private investigating company. The other coordinator, Hadebe, has since died and his wife Popi currently runs the company with Makhosonke. Makhosonke and Popi are lovers, and seemingly they have been lovers even when Hadebe was still alive. Popi is much older than Makhosonke, and this together with the fact that she is a widow of his friend torments his conscience. He is constantly self-conscious of what the society is thinking of him, yet at the same time he cannot live without Popi.

Hlophe, a friend of Popi's deceased husband has at one time used the services of Makhosonke. Makhosonke's success with that case had made a lasting impression and as a result Hlophe recommends him to another friend of his, Mvivi Nxumalo. Mvivi Nxumalo is a cattle farmer. His company supplies fresh milk to various dairies. He has two companies, one located in Johannesburg and the other in Lesotho. His son, Mamba, runs the company that is in Lesotho. Of late, his son has been misusing the money. Cheque payments of large amounts are made out to people Hlophe does not know. And he cannot prevail on his son to tell him what he pays the people for. Moreover, his son has left his wife, Makhosazana Xaba, and he is living in a hotel with a woman unknown

to Hlophe. He fears that maybe his son is being black mailed so he hires Makhosonke to investigate his son's activities in Lesotho.

Makhosonke and Hlophe agree that the former will impersonate an accountant, and proceed to Lesotho where he learns from Zethu Masondo, Mamba's secretary, that Mamba is running the company into the ground. It happens that Makhosonke has been booked into a hotel where Mamba is staying. In this way he is able to learn about Mamba's gambling activities. Just as Makhosonke filed his report and is planning to go back to Johannesburg, Mamba is poisoned. In addition, a large sum of money he has withdrawn to gamble with is stolen during the commotion accompanying his death.

On investigating, Makhosonke learns that Mamba was being robbed by the gambling gang and his girlfriend, Alicia. They drug him heavily and cheat him during the card games. Dr Shongwe who seems to be the leader of the party is arrested on suspicion that he is responsible for the murder of Mamba and for the disappearance of the money the night of Mamba's death. He is found guilty by the court and he is given a death sentence.

Meanwhile Popi, who has insisted on following Makhosonke to Lesotho, has all along planned her own investigation. Through impersonating *isangoma* (diviner), she discovers that Mamba's wife and Jona are the ones who poisoned Mamba. Jona, one of Mamba's gambling gang, is in love with Mamba's wife. And together they have been spear-heading a ploy to get Mamba to sign over large amounts of money, especially when he is in a drunken stupor, to another gambling member, Dr Bhadi Shongwe, who unwittingly reroutes it to Jona and Mamba's wife. Her finding exonerates Dr Bhadi Shongwe and he is released with a light sentence.

**The paradox at the heart of Masondo's naming and characterization**

The use of anonymical names in both **Ingalo Yomthetho** and **Ingwe Nengonyama** does not hold any imaginative significance, because in most instances, when Masondo intended to make reference to anonymous characters in the text, he uses the names of

their employment. These characters do not have any significant role except to function as auxiliaries. For instance, when *Makhosonke* checks in at the hotel in Maseru, in **Ingalo Yomthetho**, reference is made to luggage assistants or the hotel receptionists whom he questions regarding the people he is investigating. Their presence adds flair to the variety of the characters populating the texts, and moreover, they enhance the credibility of the scene and setting. In most instances mention is made of them only once, and then they fade out of the plot.

Perhaps the most interesting class of names is that which relates to 'purely invented fantastic names.' Whilst at times they do not hold any imaginative value, they are meaningful and some of the characters represented by these names are very central to the plot and reflect the migratory pattern mentioned earlier. The name *Taga* is one such example. Similarly names like *Bhoyi* and *Sambo* in **Ingwe Nengonyama**, appear in more than one text. *Lasi*, *Skero* and *Mamba* in **Ingalo Yomthetho** are also invented anthroponyms, which according to Ngonyani (2001), the writer purposefully invented and used because they are meaningful in some way and contribute in different ways to the narrative. As diactinic names, they are descriptive of qualities or the trade of the characters. For example, the names *Lasi* and *Skero* are not inherent in isiZulu. They are street names or nick names that locate the characters in a non-conventional lifestyle, of overnight illicit gambling, heavy drinking and general debauchery (Masondo 1994:43, 57, 87). Both Koopman (1987) and Neethling (1994) hold the view that these hypocorisms are used in certain intimate social circles as it is the case with the close gambling party that *Mamba* keeps.

An intriguing aspect of Masondo's act of naming regarding the latter category of names relates to *Mamba*. Conventionally the name signifies a deadly snake found in South Africa. In **Ingalo Yomthetho**, the attributes of the snake are personified in the character bearing this name. *Mamba* is the son of *Nxumalo*, a rich milk farmer, who has hired *Makhosonke* to investigate his son's activities that have resulted in heavy financial losses for the Maseru-based company which *Mamba* heads. Whilst *Nxumalo*'s description of his son bears all the semblances of a venomous deadly snake and *Makhosonke*'s initial

assessment of this character attested to that description, *Makhosonke* soon discovers that it is a disposition dressed up as a front that conceals his numerous weaknesses, including his addiction to gambling, hedonism, debauchery and lack of vision and foresight. Masondo's naming strategy with regard to this name has created unrealized expectations as he has subverted its received meaning by showing that names do not often mean what they entail. The structural paradox underscoring this name lies in the fact that *Mamba*, whose attributive associations would personify the most venomous snake, is actually killed by poisoning. The beverage which he takes on the spur of a moment of compromise is laced with poison. The fact that he dies through poisoning can be read at a symbolic or connotative level in terms of his negative attributes in relation to his immediate family which he left for a younger model-like Maseru beauty, Alicia; or in relation to the family business that he was bankrupting through his illicit gambling activities and in terms of his social standing as a businessman, as role model to the society he compromised through the dark activities he engaged in and the party of friends he kept. It is at this level that his symbolic poisonous role is ironically undercut by his actual poisoning that leads to his death.

Not only *Mamba*'s name exploits Masondo's style of de-stereotyping. Names like *Bhoyi* and *Sambo* are also reflective of the complexity. Both are law enforcers in **Ingwe Nengonyama**, yet ironically their names carry pejorative meanings in racial politics and racial discourses. Both names are derogatory within the racial politics of the South African, African and African American contexts. In the South African context, the name *Bhoyi* is derived from the English noun 'boy', which when politically considered during apartheid and possibly in the post-apartheid context, was a pejorative term for any domestic black male in white employ or as a marker of black male inferiority when used outside white employment. Interestingly though, the name *Bhoyi* has made it into the praises of Cetshwayo.[42] Equally the name *Sambo* was used to refer to slaves of African

[42] There is a line in Cetshwayo's praise, which refers to the Zulu civil war of the late 1870's between his supporters Usuthu and Mandlakazi under the leadership of Mbuyazi. When Cethswayo received information that his regiments are winning against Mbuyazi and Mandlakazi supporters, he is said to "*watakasa njengebhoyi*" (he was as happy and performed certain dancing steps like a boy (a male servant at the colonial place of employment). See Nyembezi, (1958) **Izibongo Zamakhosi**.

descent in Africa and in America. In the area of Musina in the Limpopo Province, the name *Sambo* is prevalent as a surname of the Tsonga and the Venda people.[43] The point being made is that the received meanings of the names are instrumental in emphasizing inferiority, dehumanization, mockery and derogation. However, in **Ingwe Nengonyama**, the use of these names is devoid of the received meanings, as the characters bearing these names are law enforcers. For instance *Sambo* and *Bhoyi* form part of an investigative team in **Ingwe Nengonyama**, for *Themba* calls on them for backup when he intends to expose the culprits (Masondo, 1994a:88-92).

*Taga* is very central to the plot of **Ingwe Nengonyama**. Part of the mystery in the case which *Themba* investigates is unraveled by the clues that he slips out from time to time. Some of the clues he gives out to *Themba* relate to the movements of *Duduzile*, *Kubheka*'s new wife (Masondo, 1994a:6-8). *Taga* is also instrumental in informing *Themba* about the people who tried to kill him and also visited him in hospital to finish him off (Masondo, 1994a:36-37). Later on in the novel, after *Taga* has been murdered, the letter he left with the police for *Themba* helps him solve the case (Masondo, 1994a:60). Although his character is very central to the development of the plot, the name assigned to his character does not have any contextual meaning. It could be that the name comes as a result of his involvement in the *Kabasa* gang in the secondary plane of the narrative. In the primary plane, where he is involved with the police and private investigators the essence of the name is lost. However the association of the name involves the gang, identifying him with the underworld. As pointed out before, the name has been bestowed on a character in **Iphisi Nezinyoka** and has migrated to **Ingwe Nengonyama**. In **Iphisi Nezinyoka** it structurally depicted a prime suspect and in the latter text a corpse. Although *Taga* eventually becomes a corpse in **Ingwe Nengonyama**, his centrality as opposed to his peripheral positioning in the former text, has assisted in reading his character as a completely different entities, because in the latter text he has been endowed with personality traits as a former gang member and eventually a

[43] The ethnic mix that constituted the Tsonga and the Venda people, because of migration and the Mfecane wars of the second and third decades of the nineteenth century makes it difficult to assign whether the surname is originally from the Tsonga or Venda or other ethnic group that could have migrated from the neighbouring states like Mozambique or Zimbabwe.

vagabond, which the other character bearing the same name in the other text did not have. Exploited in his depiction in the latter text is the interplay between reality and appearances. His disposition as a vagabond was a pretext and a cover-up for his illicit involvements in his past and as a decoy to deflect focus from *Vika Kubheka* who has been on a spree to kill all his criminal associates from the underworld.

Linked to these names are those that are semantically meaningful but are contextually meaningless. According to Ngonyani (2001) there are three sources of names: realistic names, invented names and mythological names. Realistic names are those that are common. Masondo's employment of these names reflects to a certain extent the stock of names from which he has selected for variety. Quite interestingly, these are names commonly found in the urban areas and they do not reflect much ingenuity in their coinage. Even though the plots revolve around the characters of *Themba* and *S'fiso* in **Ingwe Nengonyama,** or *Popi* in **Ingalo Yomthetho**, their names do not reveal any thematic significance. Equally names of secretaries, like *Thandi*, *S'fiso Ngubane*'s secretary in **Ingwe Nengonyama** and *Zethu*, *Mamba*'s secretary in **Ingalo Yomthetho** are common realistic names reflecting the urban milieu of the narratives. For the latter two characters, beyond their secretarial job, their function in the texts is very minimal. The paradox regarding the secretaries' depiction is their attraction to the main characters, *Themba* and *Makhosonke* respectively. In **Ingwe Nengonyama**, *Thandi*'s generosity regarding the money loaned to *Themba* is a pretext to get closer to him. Much later in the narrative, when she is married to *Themba*, *Themba* remarks that

> *Suka lapha mkami! Ukuguga lokhu sekwenza ukuba nenhliziyo encane. Angithi wabe ulunge kakhulu ngalesiya sikhathi ngisahlupheka ngiboleka imali njalo. Nguwena kuphela owawunginika imali eningi*(Masondo, 1994a:109).

(Oh put a sock on it, my wife! I think old age makes you too sensitive. You were too kind when I used to borrow money from you. You were the only one who gave me more money.)

Equally *Zethu*'s depiction in **Ingalo Yomthetho** is ambiguous. Although she has a lover, she indicates to *Makhosonke* that she wants to be involved with a man in his thirties, someone like *Makhosonke*. Her attraction to *Makhosonke* is also reflected in her seductive behaviour whenever *Makhosonke* is around (Masondo, 1994:34, 63). Whilst Masondo might be faulted for stereotyping secretaries, his stereotyping stems from the presumed public view of the secretary career in general and not through naming.

Name-giving where personality traits are implicated is a widely used stylistic device in isiZulu literature. Masondo has also drawn from this class of names in illuminating some of the thematic concerns of his texts. Two names will be selected for analysis in **Ingwe Nengonyama**. These names are those of the characters, *Magwegwe* (crooked legs) *Buthelezi* and *Vika* (to duck) *Kubheka*. The underlying didacticism of this novel is captured in the axiom 'crime does not pay' and the observation that 'an individual's innate goodness is subsumed by being in the company of evil people.' These truisms are applicable to both *Vika Kubheka* and *Magwegwe Buthelezi*. *Magwegwe*'s involvement with the *Kabasa* gang, led by *Vika Kubheka*, has tainted his good heart. His desire for wealth clouded his judgment and impacted on his morality. The name *Magwegwe* seems to highlight these marked defects in his moral being. In the narrative he is introduced as a failure who has resigned his life to living in the jungle. Out of the reach of not only his enemies and the people he blackmails, he retreats not into the inner self on a moral psychological journey but into a world that is underpinned by an existentialist self-effacement (Masondo, 1994a:14-21). His withdrawal stems from a penitent realization of his complicity in the murder of *Kubheka*'s wife. *Magwegwe* is one of the people who knew *Vika Kubheka*'s history. Therefore he could have warned *Kubheka*'s wife about his underworld affiliation or better still informed the police about his past shady dealings and his current intentions. Furthermore, *Kubheka*'s wife whole-heartedly trusted *Magwegwe*,

> W*abemethembe kakhulu lo mlisa oboshiwe. Wayengakaze akhononde ngaye ngiso nangelilodwa ilanga. Okungenani wayeke amtuse* (Masondo, 1994a:42).

(She trusted him immensely. She never complained about him, not even on a single day. Instead she praised him.)

Another important observation regarding *Magwegwe*'s ambiguity relates to the assistance he gives *Themba* in unraveling the case. He slips out clues but retains much of the necessary information required for the arrest of the culprits. His assistance is marked by a sense of fear of what *Vika Kubheka* will do to him (Masondo, 1994a:27-30, 64-66) and a sense of anger because he believes that *Vika Kubheka*'s unbounded gluttony and greed have failed him**.** He insists that his gang activities are not crime-related but driven by an ambition to become wealthy. Yet it is this very ambition that led to the murder of *Vika Kubheka*'s wife.

*Vika Kubheka*, for his part, is a conniving, immoral and hypocritical gang lord. He waits two years before he hires investigators to find the person who killed his wife (Masondo 1994a:3). However, it soon becomes apparent in his second meeting with *Themba* that his soliciting of private investigators has been 'to duck from the law', as his name suggests. He has been ducking from his gangster friends ever since striking it rich. His failure to share the loot equally with *Magwegwe* and *Taga* has compelled him to employ a hit man, *Bheki Nxumalo*, who eliminates all the people who knew him before. However, his ducking from the law is short-lived as *Themba* uncovers the secrets through his former contacts and he is arrested and indicted for the murder of his wife.

The character *Bhadi* (ill-luck) *Shongwe* in **Ingalo Yomthetho** also emphasizes thematic issues. His involvement with a gambling party and its illegal activities and his presence when *Mamba* is poisoned make him a prime suspect for murder. His education (he has a Doctor of Philosophy Degree) misleads readers into thinking that he is the mastermind behind all the activities that eventually lead to *Mamba*'s death. Only after *Mamba*'s death is the semantic significance of the name highlighted. His name means bad luck or misfortune. However what the author seems to be highlighting through the association of the name with this character, is the misfortune in society where intellectuals are reduced to practitioners of illegal gambling in pursuit of wealth or as a recreational activity.

Meaningful names that have a contextual relation also include the class of symbolic names. In **Ingalo Yomthetho** *Makhosonke* and *Makhosazana* represent such names. Both names have to do with ancestral belief in the African society and the positions of eldest sons and daughters who, in the case of first-born male children, stand to be heirs and benefactors of their fathers' assets or, as in the case of first-born female children in families, the ones called upon in an oath. In **Ingalo Yomthetho** both characters so named are involved in relationships that culturally are regarded as abominable. *Makhosonke*, a private investigator, is in love with a wealthy old widow, *Popi Hadebe*, a wife of his deceased partner. And *Makhosazana*, *Mamba*'s estranged wife, has an affair with *Jona*, a gambling friend of her husband. As pointed out earlier such names can reflect certain beliefs. However, in the text the association of both names is with actions that society frowns upon. In the African tradition, a love affair with widows is a phenomenon that emerges with the industrialization and urbanization of African people. Traditionally a widow would have been married off to one of the brothers of her husband. Culturally marriage is not simply an agreement between two parties but takes on a deeper symbolic signification that involves ancestors when two families are brought together. Therefore the continuity of the relationship is ensured by the widow being married off to one of the brothers of the husband. *Makhosonke*'s involvement with *Pop*i reflects practices of contemporary society, which are heavily influenced by a Western mode of life.

A similar reading is reached for the character of *Makhosazana*. Her involvement with *Jona*, (whose analogous implication to Jona in the Bible cannot be underemphasized) is something that is unacceptable to both the African tradition and the Christian belief. On the symbolic level both *Makhosazana* and *Makhosonke* are representative of the traditional episteme. There is tension and conflict in their names, which is reflective of the conflict between an African view of life on the one hand and their actions which are steeped in the practices of modern life on the other. On the symbolic level the clash between the African tradition and the Western way of life are played out. Their end attests to African tradition's rejection of Western practices. *Makhosazana* and *Jona* are sentenced to death for their hand in the murder of *Mamba* (Masondo, 1994d:166). *Makhosonke* and *Popi* are killed in an explosion at a party celebrating their success in

resolving this case (Masondo, 1994: 170). Not only Makhosonke and his lover are killed but all the major characters are killed in the explosion (Masondo, 1994d:168). Through this ending Masondo seems to suggest that these types of people, irrespective of the positive attributes they may have, are not fit to be part of society.

Regarding these culture-symbolic names, King's (cited in Ngonyani, 2001:126) investigation of names in the African-American naming traditions is very useful in illuminating Masondo's intention. She cites three sites of meaning produced by names, categorizing them as categories of onomastic nomenclature. The first category is the referent-orient, which is the basic signification of characters and other referents. Single-voiced objectified nomenclature is the second category. In this category of meaning, names serve as abbreviations of descriptions of referents. The names communicate to the reader the characteristics of the referents or personify behaviour. The third category which is of interest in explaining Masondo's conclusion of **Ingalo Yomthetho** is double-voiced signifying practice. With this category the names convey the narrator's or writer's message. *Makhosonke*'s name, actions, conquests and his involvement with a widow, a contemporary practice however culturally abhorred, not only draw attention to the symbolic significance of his position in the society and traditional belief, but also reveal the author's message regarding such relationships as embedded in the ironical reading of the name and behaviour of this character. The same reading can be reached for the double-pronged names and love relationship between *Makhosazana* and *Jona*. There seems to be a notion that from both the African traditional and Christian values the relationship is frowned upon and that seems to be the reason why the author gave them no opportunity for repentance as they are sentenced to death.

There are certain names like *Sandile* (*Themba*'s only son, who is kidnapped and later killed by *oMashayabhuqe*) in **Ingwe Nengonyama** and that of *Jona*, in **Ingalo Yomthetho** that represent a class of paranomasic punning, which involves an ironical reversal of things. In the former text, *Sandile*, which means 'we have multiplied', that is, the family has multiplied, works in sharp contrast with actual events in the text, for *Themba*'s family is not multiplied when it is annihilated by *oMashayabhuqe* hit men. He

is the only one of his family who survives (Masondo, 1994a:53). In a similar manner Jona, a derivative from the Bible, points to double a contradiction in the sense that in the Bible, the ambiguity of the individual so named, is highlighted, but eventually in the context of the Bible, he repents and does as God has advised him to do. In the context of the novel, whilst the name alludes to this ambiguity, he is not given a chance to repent. On hearing the sentence *Jona* indicates to the group of hit men he has organized all along to carry out the explosion that kills everyone at the end of the text (Masondo, 1994d: 166).

**Culture: Praises and naming in Masondo's novels**

There are two key issues mentioned by Herbert (1995) that are relevant for the discussion. These relate to the private and public coinage or name bestowal and interchange in forms of address. Their relevance points to a practice typical in isiZulu culture of *izibongo* (praises) and *ukuthakazela* (to say a clan's praise phrase). The inclusion of *izibongo* and *izithakazelo* has been a dominant stylistic practice in the writings of the first generation of writers. However, the literature produced during the apartheid period was marked by a sharp decline of this stylistic device. Therefore the re-emergence of the use of *izibongo* and *izithakazelo* in novels does not point to any newness in Masondo's application, but to an existing practice whose novelty had been established by the first generation of writers. Masondo's characterization through this device also reaffirms past applications, whereby the individual whose praises are recited is urged on. In **Ingwe Nengonyama**, *Themba* recites his praises:

*Ngingumphikeleli ophikelela kumnyamakuluvindi!*
*Umsusuluzi wenkanyamb' emakhandakhanda.*
*Usilwa netshe ngob' amagabade ayazifela!*
*Umkhukhuzi wenyama kusal' amathambo,*
*Okhukhuz'imamb' emagilo!*
*Nani bafazi baseNcenceni nofa nizilanda,*
*Ngokuhamba nihefuz' ize,*

*Nith' ekaXaba kayizalanga yazal' ivaka,*
*Kodwa nisho ningabonanga!*
I am the forceful one, who forces his way even when it is dark and invisible!
I am the beheader of the great river snake that has many heads.
The one who fights with the stone because the clods break up!
The eater of meat until the bones remain, the eater of the mamba of many throats!
You, women of Ncenceni you will die talking.
Because you go about talking nonsense,
Saying the daughter of Xaba did not give birth to anything but a coward,
When actually you have not seen anything! (Masondo, 1994a:16)

Themba recites this praise in one of the instances of his investigation into the activities of *Kubheka* and his new wife *Duduzile*. These praises appear in the beginning of the text, alluding not only to *Themba*'s bravery but also to the fact that he is very forceful, and not numbed into immobility easily. Thus when a number of mishaps befall him, that is, the kidnapping of his son and later on the killing of his family members, these are anticipated, and urge him to find a resolution to the case.

Linked to the use of *izibongo* in the narrative is that of *izithakazelo*. Masondo has explored traditional practices, reflecting different situations. Surnames and *izithakazelo* in the narratives do not point to underlying meaning but they add a cultural flair of conversation in the narratives. *Zondi* is alternatively addressed as *Mthiyane*, and *Dlamini* as *Lusibalukhulu*, and *Nxumalo* as *Ndwandwe*. However Ngonyani (2001:131) points out that the use of surnames locates an individual in a genealogy and in a society. In addition this practice establishes social or close personal relations. Quite interestingly these social relations are what Masondo explores to show that they are not premised on old lore where people were good citizens who aimed to uphold the law. In the narratives the personal and social relations are a pretext for deeply embedded social conflicts, tensions and intrigues where the ones shown respect are not actually deserving of the respect shown to them by the society at large. Vika Kubheka is interchangeably addressed by his means of his clan name *Khathide* in **Ingwe Nengonyama** and as Dr *Shongwe* and *Mamba*

*Nxumalo* or *Makhosonke Ndima* in **Ingalo Yomthetho.** Also many female characters are addressed respectfully whilst they were not deserving of that respect.

Also significant is the change in addressing the female characters in the texts. If their first names are not used, they are named after their husbands. For instance *Kubheka*'s wives are called *Nkosikazi Kubheka* and in the case of another character, *Nxumalo*, his wife is addressed as *Nkosikazi Nxumalo*. This naming practice acts contrary to the custom whereby women are addressed by the surnames of their fathers, in which a gender marker /*Ma*-/ is prefixed to the surname. The usage as it stands in the narrative is reflective of the Western forms of address of *Mrs Kubheka* or *Mrs Nxumalo*.

Another striking observation in **Ingalo Yomthetho** is *Makhosonke*'s refusal to be addressed by his surname, *Ndima*, saying that the real *Ndima,* (his father) is still alive. The motives for his refusal are seemingly deeper and largely informed by his relationship with *Popi*. He has always been self-conscious about the affair with his partner's older wife. Could it be that the reason for his refusal to be located within his father's genealogy is to shield his family against this abominable behaviour or is it reflective of urban forms of address, where genealogies have long lost essence? To a large extent these changes substantiate Herbert's (1994:1-2) observation that the urban centers are marked by a decline not only in traditional morality but also in traditional naming practices, since all of Masondo's characters are drawn from an urban setting.

**Conclusion**

Ntombela (1995), Makgamatha (1992) and Kunene (1994) have shown that characterization through naming is a widely used narrative strategy in literature. Masondo introduces an angle in isiZulu literature whereby characterization does not necessary proceed from the names assigned or selected for characters. In this way he de-stereotypes the act of naming as a stylistic device while acknowledging, as Neethling (1985:88) points out, that names are loaded with associations. While the paradox underpinning the act of naming and characterization is a fundamental aspect of de-typification, he

introduces a practice whereby similar names are drawn from the stock of realistic names and are simply deployed and re-iterated in different texts to animate different personages, personalities, psychologies and emotional states. This migratory technique contributes towards the disruption of archetypes.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The money trail: intertextual readings of traditionalism in inheritance politics

This chapter discusses the intertextual dialogue informing two African language drama series **Hlala Kwabafileyo** and **Ifa LakwaMthethwa** broadcast in the mid 1990's. The intertextuality in these art forms is reflective of broad responses to the social and cultural dynamism related to inheritance patterns manifested in contemporary and post-apartheid black society. In particular, these responses are directed firstly at a new phenomenon that resulted from the democratic processes in the country where a new black elite class consisting of political expatriates and local political activists took over the reigns of ruling the country. Secondly the responses are aimed at a renewed phenomenon, the social mobility and financial independence of black females,[44] heightened by the consolidation of laws that sought equality between the genders as enshrined in the South African constitution and the new opportunities that emerged because of political change. These changes are set against a traditional framework.

The filmic presentations aim at reaching large audiences, prompting the discussion in this chapter to draw from black popular cultural discourses in exploring the underlying thematic concerns. Lindfors (1991:2) postulates that popular literature is any work that seeks to communicate an African perspective to a large audience in a style that can be readily apprehended and appreciated, and further notes that "popular literature manifests a will to speak directly to as many people as possible. There is little obscurity or subterfuge in this kind of literature because the author is intent on making an immediate impact. He wants his art to be understood."

[44] Social mobility and financial independence of the Africans in general and African women in particular are some of the aftermaths of missionary modernity at the turn of the twentieth century. Converted African women in particular became experts in providing modern commodities through skills obtained from the missionary stations. They soon started to trade thereby accumulating vast amounts of colonial currency. For further discussions, see Comeroff Leah and John (1997**), Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier**, 119-165 and 218-273.

## Black film and the changing world

**Ifa Lakwa-Mthethwa** and **Hlala Kwabafileyo** are part of a corpus of films produced in the mid-nineties by Philo Pieterse Production and Scholtz Film Production respectively. In both instances, the films are white-financed and the production team is mostly white with an all-black cast. The dominance of white production teams in black target films has a dual outcome. It either accelerates cross-transference of knowledge systems, producing in the process very successful films or it overwhelms the production, resulting in a superficial film product that has no relation to the reality it is purporting to portray. If **Ifa LakwaMthethwa** is viewed from this perspective, it could be said that it betrays a sense of being overwhelmed by inclusion and dominance of a white crew on the production side. However, from a slightly different view, its formulation configures or prefigures the positioning of black people within the changing political situation. It locates them in a world of high profile business ventures which are not only outstripping local competition with holdings listed on the South African Stock Exchange, but which are also contending with international markets. In the series, the Mthethwa royal house ascribes to a syncretised traditionalist and modernist economic model, an admixture and complete fusion of the pre-colonial economic system, where royalty oversees assets and property for the collective good of the society, and a capitalist monopoly underpinned by ideals of individualism. **Ifa LakwaMthethwa** yokes together the economic aspect of the royal house and the traditional governing institution, and projects a symbiosis between traditionalism and the modern economic imperative needed for developing the nation under Chieftaincy rule.

## Summary of Ifa LaKwaMthethwa

**Ifa LaKwaMthethwa** revolves around the struggle for succession, both in the Chiefdom of the Mthethwa clan and in their business empire. The Mthethwa Chieftaincy is an extremely wealthy entity, with all its business listed on the stock market. It is headed by two rival half brothers, Sizwe, a Westernised elite businessman and the rightful heir to the throne and Nzobo, a traditionalist, backward, domineering regent. The struggle within

the business empire is played out between Nana (Sizwe's niece), a ruthless and ambitious woman, and Bafana (Sizwe's son), who is a shrewd, arrogant business mogul. Sizwe and his children have laid a foundation of a modern Western-styled business enterprise. The power struggles between his children are fuelled over acquisitions of shares. As a result, they blackmail and sabotage one another. The conceptualisation of the business is constituted around traditional familial relations that also include the extended family, allowing the children of the assassinated Chief, Mabandla, to be core partners and occupy positions of power in the business. Eventually Bafana acquires the most shares illegally, and Sizwe, acting on the advice of the family advocate, Xaba, resolves the matter using not the relevant Western business protocol, but his traditional position as a head of the family and of the Mthethwa Chieftaincy.

In the secondary plane of the filmic narrative, Nzobo, one of the brothers, from the left non-throne-ascending Chiefly house, had overseen the assassination of Mabandla who has been reigning in the Mthethwa Chiefdom. He has killed Mabandla knowing that Sizwe, the intended successor, is not interested in the throne, since his interests lie in the Mthethwa Empire. Initially Nzobo's assessment of Sizwe's interest in the business empire is correct. However, Nzobo's arrogance stemming from this certainty makes him a tyrannical ruler, and he soon falls out of favour with the Mthethwa people. All his attempts to have Sizwe killed are foiled as his hitmen and his witchdoctor defect and expose him to Sizwe and the grand council. Nzobo is dethroned and Sizwe is prevailed upon by the grand council to assume his rightful position as the ruler of the Mthethwa people.

**Film signification in Ifa LakwaMthethwa**

**Ifa LakwaMthethwa** is a carefully crafted filmic narrative that draws on two broad ideologies, an African and a Western economic philosophy, to reflect the changing political economy of South Africa in the 1990's. Through this ideology, it achieves radical cultural and racial relations by a "structured absence" (Gavshon, 1987 and Guerrero, 1993) of whiteness, so that its construction of blackness reflects dominant

positions that were formerly a preserve of the white race. The framing out of whiteness in **Ifa LakwaMthethwa** brings about the contentions around realism in film. Jean-Louis Commoli (1969:45) on the subject of realism explains,

> The basic deception of direct cinema is really its claim to transcribe truly the truth of life, to begin the position of witness in relation to that truth so that the film records objects and events methodologically. In reality the very fact of filming is of course already a productive intervention, which modifies and transforms the materials recorded. From the moment the camera intervenes a form of manipulation begins.

In **Ifa LakwaMthethwa** the mediation process operates in the suspension of knowledge about historical economic realities, infusing in the space created a reality where blacks exert economic power and occupy positions of dominance. Commenting further on the issues of both filmic distortion of reality and the absence of whiteness in this film, Botha and Aswegen (1992:71) explain that the absence of whiteness in black target films as follows:

> More images of whites would have the result of drawing correspondence between the fabricated world and the historical reality of the spectator, and corrode the illusion of the logicality of the narrative. Given that a dominant image of these films (indeed most films in commercial cinema) operate on the supposition of the freedom of the individual to negotiate the conditions of his experiences, the presence of whites would evoke wider questions regarding structural boundaries. In every way there is an attempt to create a 'normal' world in which the aspirations of the characters are met, as in any 'normal' social formation, and it is important that any images are avoided that would suggest South Africa as an aberration.

In **Ifa LakwaMthethwa**, however, this ideological signification is inadequate and fallacious in articulating aspirations of the majority of poor blacks and those of the

middle class, since it replaces their economic aspirations with a grandiose fantasy of a business enterprise able to compete in the international markets and listed on the South African stock exchange. It represents two types of blackness: one pre-colonial, and the other, that of a post-colonial/post-apartheid, highly affluent middle class, which dovetails with the traditional ruling system. The African multitudes appear minimally and are represented either as servants to the Chief, affectionately called "*bantabami*" (my children) or as pseudo-waiters who are actually Nzobo's hitmen. The articulations of the underclass as represented by the waiter(s) are reduced to a personal vendetta devoid of any class-consciousness.

The overriding ideology in this film lobbies for an understanding of the symbiotic relationship between Western and African traditional modes of knowledge as a solution to South African economic problems. It seeks to show values that are most beneficial to both modes of lifestyles, and how their transference will have mutual benefit between the traditionally based Mthethwa people and the Chief's family, which is Western orientated, save for a few instances when they visit KwaZulu. The strict demarcation between KwaZulu, where the Chiefdom is based, and *Esilungwini* (at the place of white people), accessible only by ferry, betrays the film's projection of a reality where white people are absent and it also marks the differing interests between the Mthethwa people, and Sizwe and his children. Sizwe and his children, and his associates, are ferried on numerous occasions on this unnamed river, the first occurrence being when they go for the cleansing ceremony (*ihlambo*), to mark the end of mourning and the recalling of the departed spirit into the homestead. The historically symbolic connotation of the river in the presence of folk memory recalls a similar river that demarcated Zululand and Natal during colonial times and the colonial discourses of civilization and the darkness of Africa. Africa and its inhabitants were associated with darkness and evil, with the forces of night and the underworld (Barlet, 1996, 3). The re-enactment of Sizwe's coming as a new powerful economic house, echoes colonial encroachment that resulted in the annexation of Natal and Zululand. In the film, the symbolic annexation becomes Sizwe's coronation as Chief of the Mthethwa people. The filmic significations play out the second conquest of Zululand where the black bourgeoisie has replaced colonial players. The new

bourgeois conception of economic relations between social classes proceeds from that established by the white economic political relations, which is marked by strong divisions between the classes of masters and that of servants.

The beginning of the film is marked by this bourgeois privilege. The constitution of Sizwe's Chiefly house is modelled against that of super affluent classes in other races. Sizwe is awoken from a nightmare to the scuttling of servants as they prepare his day for his journey to KwaZulu. The servant class is signified by their garb, which marks them as different from the other members of his family. A professional chauffeur drives him to all business commitments, and it is this chauffeur who takes him to the ferry that transports him across the river to KwaZulu. All of these activities betray a white lifestyle. The homogeneity that the apartheid ideologies assigned to black people as all belonging to one subclass is reversed, to reveal differentiation that follow stratification lines observed in other capitalist societies. This reversal of received monolithic perspectives about black people generally invites a construction of black images that emphasise their betterment as opposed to a depiction that exploits their reality. Such positivity in the filmic imagery is generally denounced by African and black film makers in the Diaspora. One such scholar observes that the positive depiction particularly of the bourgeoisie class stems from the realisation that it is a class that has been fully integrated. Barlet (1996:3) further points out that the positive construction of blackness, which resulted in images that are more familiar, happened only when they (black people) were fully integrated and less threatening.

The African conceptualization of modernity, associating being civilized or sophisticated with class mobility, is reinvented to celebrate this bourgeoisie class. This is revealed in the interplay between populist tendencies of the subalterns and self-consciousness of the affluent middle class in the filmic narrative, which is marked by the juxtaposition of Sizwe and the traditionalist populace when he arrives at KwaZulu. He is thronged by the masses with the women ululating as he makes his way to a waiting car. Such display of populist disposition and Western material acquisition project him as a fetish-like icon (Mbembe, 1992 and 2001). His encounters with the peasants not only illuminate his

status as their Chief, but also marks the distances between his class and their peasant status. In all of Sizwe's encounters with the members of this class, his superiority is emphasised. Not only does Sizwe compare best with Nzobo, a despotic tyrant ruling on his behalf, his stature radiates a cultured man, projected in a dialectical relation to the barbaric Nzobo whose rule is marked by fear, violence and brutality. In his attempt to offset his inferiority, Nzobo rules by instilling fear in the Mthethwa people and ascribes to an interpretation of traditional knowledge systems (whenever in public or Sizwe is present) which reflects a primordial preoccupation with an intention of projecting himself as more knowledgeable than Sizwe. The inconsistencies between his public and private life projects him (Nzobo) as an opportunist who is bent on subverting Sizwe's birthright for his egoistical selfish ends.

Alternatively, Nzobo's characterisation can be explained as the film's attempt to single out decadent morality within the traditional mode of life so that it is exposed for its destruction. Nzobo's actions are reflective of moral intrigues informed by self-centred and individualistic intentions that are destructive not merely to himself and the people around him, but that are unable to bring change and prosperity. Nzobo's reign is that of fear, as he conspires with witches and the hitmen in his attempt to remove all those who are a threat to his newly acquired position. His representation not only alludes to the menace of such kings, but also re-articulates circulating stereotypes about the tyranny of African leaders, whose reign is marked by brutality, physical and psychological violence and inhumanity. His destiny is thus predetermined, since there is no place for retrogressive rulers, and, in this manner Sizwe's decision is pre-empted. Sizwe's decision to dethrone him stems from Nzobo's inhumanity and cruelty. Nzobo's depiction is common in representations of African society. It has always been challenged and denounced by African filmmakers, as Souleymane indicates,

> "Those who came to film us never showed the people as human beings. They came to show us to their audiences as though we were animals. They saw us with their eyes. They filmed us any old how. We know the camera can give a positive image of human beings. This white cinema shows Africans as not belonging to

the human community. They film wild animals with respect" (Cisśe Souleymane, cited in Barlet, 1996, 5).[45]

Nzobo's depiction proceeds from the practice of earlier films such as **King Solomon's Mines** (1937, 1950, 1985), **Allan Quartermain** (1987) and so forth, where African rulers, who have never come into contact with Europeans and gained from the Western culture, are demeaned by being projected negatively. The ethnographic exotic gaze informing the film approach has contradictory nuances. The ethno-fiction in African filmmaking was a style introduced by Jean Rouch (1917 – 2004), a European-African filmmaker. Rouch's films saw themselves as respectful of human beings, but sought above all to document a tradition, a disappearing world.[46] However, in other sectors of African film criticism, led by Med Hondo, the ethnographic approach is seen as a cinema of contempt, where Rouch "brings out an alleged African cultural specificity which makes us appear ridiculous"[47] (Med Hondo cited in Barlet, 1996:8). Rouch's film approach is seen as being informed by superiority, paternalism and exteriority and "requires chocolate-box images; the kind of backdrops designed to serve our desires and our fantasies – fantasies of the barbarian, the savage and the primitive."[48] The depiction of the rural landscape and the constitution of the rural people in **Ifa LakwaMthethwa** conform to the ethnographic film technique, and the documentation of the past traditions in this film also betrays an ethnographic gaze as the spatial and temporal aspect of this film illustrates. The setting of the Mthethwa royal house is depicted as a site for happy and merry Mthethwa people singing, dancing, ululating and men singing praises and drinking beer with the king, seated in a circle with the calabash taking its round with all the men who have come to visit the Chief, and the grand council scuttling about, soliciting affirmation and support as they negotiate and deliberate in preparation for the rightful Chief to be throned.

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[45] See also Ndugu, 1996. 'Apartheid and Cinema. In Imruh Bakari and Mbye Cham, (eds.), **African Experiences of Cinema**.

[46] Barlet, **African Cinemas: Decolonizing the Gaze**, 6.

[47] The criticism that some filmic scholars levelled at Jean Rouch's film has been sparked off by his 1947 film, **In The Land of the Black Magi** (a documentary by the Educational Resources, North America).

[48] Barlet (1996), **African Cinemas: Decolonizing the Gaze**, 146.

According to Barlet "the return to the roots" film genre, including ethnographic films, operates in two significant ways. It either solicits authenticity in drawing past traditions or alternatively makes it "possible to ask how things stand in the here and now: what part is this authority to play in contemporary Africa."[49] Drawing from past traditions and performative elements in black expressive art is a literary style that emerged at the turn of the twentieth century with modern literature in African indigenous languages (Schipper, 1982, 1993 and Julien, 1992). Furthermore, it has been a practice with popular drama in South African theatrical practices.

In black film criticism, drawing from past traditions is a necessary standpoint. Not only do such presentations buttress the resilience of the black cultural traditions but they are also presentations that "proceed from a point of view located within the black experience as opposed to a pre-determined use of the dominant society's point of view. The creative act of drawing from past traditions foregrounds a cultural framework that has its own autonomous systems of values, behaviour, attitudes, sentiments and beliefs" (Lardner, 1972:80), as in the conflicts and tensions besetting succession politics in **Ifa LakwaMthethwa.** These are projected within a traditional culturally autonomous framework that reflects old ideological positions for resolving succession feuds. During the preparations for the cleansing ritual (*ihlambo*) Nzobo's selection of the cows for the ceremony is framed by two songs, which indicate the brewing tensions between him and the old members of the grand council. The sound images also allude to Nzobo's precarious position as an interloper. The names of the cows: *itsobe*, *ithathilunga* and *inhlavukazi*[50] are highly suspect as they connote his intentions and refusal to hand back the throne. The song images thus act in counterpoint to Nzobo's plans. They act as moral censors and embedded in the inferences of the songs are age-old maxims regarding transgressions and deviations from the norm in matters relating to the enthroning of traditional leaders. Fundamentally, the songs point to the general disaffection of the populace with him as their ruler:

[49] Ibid, 10.
[50] There are no known descriptions of the cows/oxen bearing such names. As pointed out before Nzobo tended to display his cultural knowledge knowing very much that the subalterns will never directly contradict him and in addition, Sizwe, a Westenised man, does not know much about tradition to contradict him as well.

Song 1

Call: *Uyambona elokhu eqhatha abantu*? / Do you see he is setting up people to fight?
Response: *Ukhulum' amanga yona zifa ngayo*/ he lies to them but they love him to bits
Call: *Ye mama, khona lapho*/ Oh mother, just there
Response: *Wo ha ho ha ho zonke ma*/ Wo ho ha ho ha all of them mother

Song 2

Call: *Iyakhalis*' /There are complaints
Response: *Selokhu yakhulum' inkosi*/ The king had said it all along
All: *Nansi*/ There he is

Both of these songs allude to Nzobo's corrupt and self-serving tendencies and the manner in which he unnecessarily divides the Chiefdom, as traditional authority, following cultural directions in such matters, has long-established mechanisms to be used when appointing the rightful heir to the Mthethwa throne.

One of these mechanisms which also links to the aural significations inferred from the song, is the myth associated with a hunting ritual for the *ihlambo* cleansing ceremony. The myth points to deep philosophical and religious convictions of the Mthethwa community regarding ancestral approbation of a successor. This myth is an important part of succession ritual processes, and the success of the hunting is a highly prized value and it is called *inkatha yabaphansi* (the choice of the ancestors).[51] Instances that necessitate the practice, as in the film, are sparked by factions that result between the princes from their conflicting claims to the throne. In such instances, the feuding princes are sent out on a hunting expedition (*inqina*). During the hunt, one prince must be killed by the wild beast and the surviving one would be said to have been identified by the ancestors and will get the approbation of the nation as well to rule over them. Significantly, the beast that has maimed the prince must be overpowered, killed and brought back to the palace. Normally the corpse of the prince is not returned, however the carcass of the beast must be brought back. Although the film does not exploit the first phase of this ritual, where

[51] There is a intriguing treatment of this ritual in Gcumisa's (1978) play **Inkatha Yabaphansi**.

feuding princes are sent out on the hunting expedition, there is a depiction of warriors returning to the palace with the carcass of the kill. This symbolic pronouncement is further substantiated by a council member who points out the old-age tradition of enthroning the rightful king, saying,

> *Kusemqoka ukuba kungenzeki iphutha kubekwe ikhohlo libe inkosi. Ukwenza kanjalo kungaba nomphumela omubi esizweni sonke kanye nabasebukhosi imbala*

(It is important that mistakes do not happen and a non-throne ascending royalty is installed, should that be the case, it will have negative consequences in the nation and in the royal house as well.)

This indicates that Sizwe is not only appointed to the position of leadership by his birth status alone but by the ancestors as well. The implication of this resolution, in relation to Sizwe's bourgeois status, lies in the underlying interpretation of this symbolic construction. The filmic narrative seems to suggest that the bourgeois class represent a logical solution to leadership problems and that they have been sanctioned, by the traditional ancestral institution, to be in that position.

The bourgeois claim to inheritance of the traditional ruling system is couched within a filmic language that denigrates the backward and barbaric manner in which Nzobo claims the throne. His belief in witchcraft and sorcery is mocked. The witch, Zembe, to whom he entrusted his ambition, is confused regarding the particularities of the role he plays in the traditional institution of divination. In a scene where Nzobo threatens him because of his failure to kill Sizwe, Zembe points to the possibility of Sizwe's supernatural power. These are implied when a trap which he set for Mabandla, Sizwe and Sizwe's wife, is successful in causing the deaths of all but Sizwe. Furthermore, Zembe's philosophical views about his trade are confused: he fails to distinguish between witchcraft and the traditional institution of divination and healing. The song images during his preparation of the spell are indicative of this assertion. The songs are legitimate diviner's invocation of the ancestors during divination and not part of the witch's activity he is engaged in.

His failure to kill Sizwe may stem from his invocation of a sacred institution for evil ends. Moreover, the strategic positioning of the song, engulfing a true divination by Mamba, a traditional diviner, prefigures Zembe's failure in bewitching Sizwe. As Mamba's divination unfolds, Zembe's witchcraft is revealed and can thus be pre-empted. Furthermore, in later sequences of the film, Zembe is smelt out during *umhlahlo*, which is the traditional investigative ritual of identifying witches in the society.

In addition, Zembe's characterization seems contradictory to his nature and the role he must play in his career to which he professes. He maintains a modern popular fashionable dress style. He wears trendy trousers, flamboyant colourful shirts and a hairstyle introduced to South African black popular culture in the 1980's based on popular black American popular hairdos.[52] This type of dress code is very unusual for the institution associated with his role, and is contrary to the regalia of traditional healers or received notions of witches represented in the film. On a surface view, his characterization manifests cultural inaccuracies, with the film projecting failures in presenting proscribed formulations. However, on another level, his difference marks out his practice as different from the traditional healing practice untainted with the evil and diabolic activities with which he is concerned.

According to Thackway (2003), there is an evolution in the way in which film interrogates Africa's past in order to inform and reflect upon the present and the future, where African knowledge systems are not systematically condemned in pursuance of the Western values thought to be 'clean and sophisticated'. This is a reversal of the past conceptualisations of traditions, where their significance and values, under Western tutelage and African views of modernity, were often rejected as obstacles to progress (Barlet, 1996:10). In **Ifa LakwaMthethwa,** the symbolic juxtaposition of African traditional and Western signifiers points to a strident call for the utilisation of African knowledge systems as part of the practices of modern/Western informed rationality. Zembe's plotting illuminates this view. His failure to kill Sizwe incurs Nzobo's wrath,

[52] The popularity of the permed hair is also underpinned in Coming to America, which depicted an African American family, whose business has to do with the new look of wet looking curly hair.

who gives instruction to have him burnt alive in his hut. He is spared by Sizwe's intervention and is taken to a Western medical institution. His recovery is achieved through a combination of traditional and Western medicine. It is significant to note that the milieu that allows for this syncreticism is within the confines of the black environment of the film's reality that marks the other races as absent.

Cultural control mechanisms in **Ifa LakwaMthethwa** are not only confined to succession politics but their utilisation overlaps with other conflicts besetting the nation. The filmic narrative infuses traditional discourses with African bourgeois sensibilities. The peasant community, who, according to Ngugi (1986), conserve, preserve and keep alive the traditional culture and African vernaculars, are marginalized and projected negatively as the faceless throngs that regard leaders as fetishes. Although they can discern Nzobo's actions, as reflected in their songs, they are incapable of taking a stand. Similarly, their voice is subsumed within the articulations of the ambiguous grand council members who are dressed in Western suits.

**Finding the middle ground: Western economy, development and traditionalism**

**Ifa LakwaMthethwa** cannot be summarily dismissed as pure escapism, because it engages in debates about economic development, the position of women, and raises issues about the construction of blackness in film. Its treatment of these issues is marked by a trend started in black-themed and black directed African-American filmmaking. The filmic practice of the black genre has been constituted by the construction of black positive images. According to Smith (1997:1-2 and 1998:65), many problems exist in positive/negative debate about the construction of blackness because

> It presupposes consensus about what a positive or negative image actually is. To some viewers, images of hardworking, middle-class, heterogeneous African Americans are inherently positive and to be celebrated wherever they are found, because they replace models of African American pathology with signs of the fact 'we are like everyone else'.

Smith further points out that this practice begets uncritical acceptance of this equation and allows the hegemony of the mainstream representational strategies to go unchallenged. It also overlooks the ideological impact these films will have, and may lead to essentialism.

According to Shohat and Stam (2003:198-199), the exclusive preoccupation with images, whether positive or negative, can lead to a kind of essentialism which generate in its wake a certain ahistoricism; the analysis tends to be static, not allowing for mutations, metamorphoses, changes of valence, altered function. This view is also substantiated by Smith (1997:4) who notes that black film criticism has moved beyond this preoccupation and is now concerned more with diversity than with the homogeneity of the black experience. The construction of positive images as synonymous with the bourgeois class and negative images with the traditionalist, in **Ifa LakwaMthethwa** provides an example of the issue that Smith, Shohat and Stam's raise. Its engagement in the debates/discourses of authenticity postulates Sizwe's class as the authentic black image that occupies the interregnum between primordialism and the contemporary forms of development.

Sizwe occupies the middle ground between the African traditional and the Western modes of life. He is both a traditional leader and the head of a successful Western-modelled business empire. Both the African and the Western lifestyle are linked together by issues of inheritance. In **Ifa LakwaMthethwa,** the usual polarised lifestyles between the Western/city and the traditional/rural areas are brought to bear on the rituals and processes proper for the appointment of the rightful Chief. The Mthethwa business empire becomes a rallying point for individual success as witnessed in Sizwe's children, and that of the nation, as more land is developed creating in the process employment opportunities for the Mthethwa people. Unlike in instances where a clash of civilisation is postulated in the juxtaposition of the Western and the African values, **Ifa LaKwaMthethwa** seems to suggest that both Western and African lifestyles can meaningfully co-exist and be mutually beneficial to those pursuing it. Sizwe's syncretic

lifestyle is explored in the conceptualisation of his business model and in how traditional values cap it, as well as in the matrimonial bonds he has.

The view that traditionalism can be used to cap Westernized and appropriated syncretic values is demonstrated in the depictions of Sizwe's children, who each represent specific aspects of Sizwe's bourgeois' class. His son, Bafana, begotten of a Western marriage, and director of a business empire, presents extremes of excess in Sizwe's class. Bafana is depicted as a wastrel whose unbridled sexuality, manifested in his sexual transgression with an ex-girlfriend now appointed to be his father's favourite wife, is reflective of an Oedipus psychology that knows no social bounds. In spite of him being a business mogul, in directing the day to day running of the Mthethwa business, his disposition is far removed from that which is considered to be beneficial to the African traditional economic lift needed for the development of the Mthethwa people. His hunger for power, greed and his alcoholism are inherent flaws that rule him out as a part of the economic development advanced in the film's narrative.

Bafana differs greatly from Sizwe's children begotten from his traditional marriage. Through these children, tensions existing in Sizwe's polygamous marriage are played out. Bafana's claim to his father's inheritance stems from the Western legal system that only recognized matrimonial relationships bound by a legal paper, whilst the claim of Muzi, Sabelo and Mumsy are recognized by traditional laws. Sizwe's children from this marriage are further explorations of the positionings of this class. Through Muzi an alternative business model is seemingly postulated. Muzi exchanges his shares in the Mthethwa business for farming. His farming methods are not based on the traditional agrarian system but based instead on highly profitable commercial farms in which he uses the latest technology, commercial agricultural funding system and sound labour relations. Eventually he procures a corporation, a mill and sugarcane fields. Through Sabelo, his other son, politics are seen as an alternative as well. Sabelo exchanged his shares for a political career and became an ambassador in Paris, a career that points to international relations.

It is through Bhekifa, Sizwe's illegitimate son, that the narrative suggests a model for economic leadership. His honesty projects him as a better leader than Sizwe. This is illuminated in his philosophy about family. His views about family are informed by the value and responsibility he feels for his long lost daughter and the woman he lost during his youth, unlike Sizwe's, who denied any responsibility towards him and his mother. Bhekifa is a monogamist and he values a single unit family, a philosophy that Sizwe does not follow. The latter contrast is explored in Sizwe's traditional wedding. His selection of a set of new young wives after his coronation is his second, the first being those that gave birth to his sons. Not only do the contrasts in the depictions of Sizwe and his son Bhekifa explore the heterogeneity of this class, they also explore the irony of this class' conception of how the syncreticism of Western and African lifestyle should be viewed. This syncreticism involves a different system, where only the privileges of the traditional patriarchal systems are selected and infused with the Western lifestyle, as in the case with the customary marriage that Sizwe observed.

**Ifa LakwaMthethwa** attempts to map out black possibilities through an exploration of past cultural values and how these can be used in pursuing economic ideals that not only advance individual interests in capitalist sensibilities, but also those which also overlap with the black nation. This contention echoes Cripps' (1978) call for the black film movement to "instil a sense of the past and acknowledge its own traditions as part of its self-consciousness" (Barlet, 1996:vii). **Ifa LakwaMthethwa**'s traditional background is infused with the Western modern economic zeal, so that the modern values of prosperity are bounded by the traditional values. It is in this regard that black film theory emphasises that the significance of the film's narrative lies in its ability to explore the mechanism that blacks use to survive on a daily basis. It also lies in its ability to move "beyond social paradigms that foster a victor-victim, power-subordinate mentality to develop alternative modes of knowledge and social organisation" (Yearwood, 2000:9-10). The filmic narrative of **Ifa LakwaMthethwa** presents a new class of highly affluent blacks who use a pre-colonial economy create, advance and succeed in a Westernised stock market economic system from which black people were formerly excluded. The bracketing out of whiteness from the camera's eyes paradoxically emphasises their being

frames of reference, since white people are on the production side of the images and interpretations of this film and also project their own perceptions stemming from their culture specificities of this class in this film. However, white absence from the film allows narrative spaces that project self-sufficient and independent blacks that behave and decide independent from paternalistic or racist whites.

**Traditional significations, popular culture and inheritance politics in Hlala Kwabafileyo**

South African black television dramas drew not only from dominant Western film conventions, and particularly Hollywood conventions, but also drew heavily from sensibilities encapsulated in the literature of black elites. The conceptualisation of African languages literature in elitist terms meant that its thematic considerations reflected a class-consciousness that in most instances marginalized the interests of lower classes. Most often subaltern voices were suppressed in favour of the elitist perceptions and ideological pronouncements. This practice further fragmented the black society along class lines. The inaccessibility of means of production to the lower class, ensured the dominance of the middle class imperatives. Middle class sensibilities permeated all aspects of black life and became mainstream. Ever since the emergence of the black middle class from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the sensibilities of this African class have reflected mobility aspirations. This African middle class, because of their social standing and education, sought inclusion in white mainstream culture. However the nature of racial politics of South Africa proved intransigent. By the 1980's there was a tacit acknowledgement of the existence of this class as a separate self-contained group. According to Tomaselli (1986, 1991, and 1993) the state used a political strategy of incorporating the African middleclass by acknowledging their socio-economic ambitions. This incorporation was achieved by creating illusions through television programmes that seemed to acknowledge their aspirations. It was hoped that these constructions would be interpreted not only as equality but also acceptance into the white mainstream culture. From the 1980's onward, numerous social development programmes solely targeted at this class were implemented as seen in the housing sector, whereby Africans coming from this category were housed in structures similar to the ones seen in

white suburbs, the salaries of this category was also significantly improved and, for the first time, medical aid programmes were instituted for them.

The apartheid state's concessions exploited the black middle class imperatives instituted and modified over the last century. This apartheid's policy of incorporation exploited already existing forms of social differentiation. This adoption policy was carved out from existing social fragmentation, patterns of solidarity and social organisation, and the social aspiration for general improvement of the black society. The elitist terms through which these changes have been explored in literature and the first phase of television drama production resulted in a stultifying conservatism that yoked together both African traditional and Christian morality in pursuance of a syncretic culture that typified contemporary society. In such juxtapositions, the traditional episteme is re-invoked to address pro-Western modern sensibilities, with the scale tilting towards a model that exalted an admixture of cultural ethos. Although earlier films proceeded from this premise, those produced between 1990 to 1995, harnessed the popular urban perspectives that problematised conventionalised maxims. Simplistic dichotomies between good and evil, or moral and immoral, became underemphasized in favour of heightened and relevant exploration of social specificities and particularities in popular black modern lifestyles. The construction of black representations in **Hlala Kwabafileyo** follows this new paradigm that brought new ways of analysing and interpreting black township life. In this drama series issues are explored beyond simplistic Christian or African traditional moral authority, even though these seem to have been the basis of the filmic discourse.

African languages literature, from its nascent years to date, and black television dramas of the 1980's successfully laid fertile ground for the reception of drama series like **Ifa LaKwa-Mthethwa** and **Hlala Kwabafileyo** which were broadcast to an audience which had definite tastes and expectations, and which also responded well to the middle class sensibilities depicted in these expressive forms. **Hlala Kwabafileyo** differs from **Ifa LaKwaMthethwa** because of its urban popular familiar locale. Like Senegalese Francophone films during the same period, **Hlala Kwabafileyo** is a "hybrid, urban film that freely juxtaposes popular cultural forms of all origins with more specifically African

cultural references" (Thackway, 2003:11). Furthermore, **Hlala Kwabafileyo** reflects some of the foundational concerns of Black Film and Third World Cinema in that it is "able to grasp and portray popular life in a more profound authentic, human and concretely historical fashion" (Teshome Gabriel, 1982:8). It portrays a petit bourgeoisie within a familiar locality, reflecting a cross-section of the Soweto community. Further more, it critically engages certain aspects of African cultural beliefs and traditions, and uses the resources of these traditions to comment on the contemporary social, cultural, political, historical and personal realities, experiences and challenges faced by Africans (Bakari and Cham, 1996:4).

**Hlala Kwabafileyo** is written by Shabangu, a literary writer turned screenplay writer. Shabangu's stint as a creative writer began in the 1960's with the publication of **Imvu Yolahleko** (1966), a narrative exploring an incestuous relationship between two siblings. The story starts when their mother dumps her illegitimate infant son in her youth, only to be reunited with him when, as a young criminal she has to confront the reality of a romantic relationship between her son from the underworld and her daughter whom she conceived in her married life. It is most likely Shabangu's conspicuous realism that earned him attention from filmmakers who adapted his **Bamngcwaba aphila** (1982) (tr. into Siswati as **Bamngcwaba ephila** (1989) to **Hlala Kwabafileyo** (1994). **Bamngcwaba aphila** (1982) is his second novel.

Significant in the adaptation of Sidney Shabangu's novel is the sedimentation of a site for further contesting, approximating, directing and expanding representations of black lifestyles. In addition, writing for television provided him with more opportunities for development because he co-wrote **Ifa LaKwaMthethwa** with John De Kock, and the comedy series, **Emzini Wezinsizwa**, which he co-wrote with his brother, Pixley Shabangu. Sidney Shabangu's earlier stints as a literary writer utilized cultural discourses that looked into the role played by tradition in resuscitating cultural consciousness, and the use of traditional knowledge systems to counteract social entropy resulting from modern and Western imitative lifestyles. The heavy Zulu nationalism, that saw the formation of a number of cultural societies, stemmed from the social decadence resulting

from rapid urbanisation and the attendant dislocation and deculturation of the African masses. Tradition and culture came to play a pivotal role in realigning urbanised morality with the supposedly "pure authentic rural" morality, even though such morality was articulated in elitist terms.

**Summary of Hlala Kwabafileyo**

**Hlala Kwabafileyo** is about Zakhe Mhlongo, a rich businessman and his family. It starts with Zakhe's illegitimate son, Zuzumuzi and his attempt to murder Zakhe on the night before the wedding of his only daughter, Babazile. On the wedding day, Zakhe Mhlongo, disappears while on his way to see his jealous young lover. He goes missing for several days until the family decides to search hospitals, prisons and mortuaries. A corpse is mistakenly identified by Jessie, Mhlongo's wife and Bheseni, Mhlongo's brother. It is buried in a funeral of such splendour that almost divides Jessie and her children. After almost a year has gone by, and after the lawyer has apportioned the inheritance as reflected in Mhlongo's will, Zakhe Mhlongo reappears, having been released from Sterkfontein, a mental hospital, to which he has been admitted. His reappearance shocks the community and particularly his wife, Jessie, who has conducted his mourning, burial and tombstone unveiling according to custom. She thinks this is a conspiracy by her enemies to swindle her and her family of their inheritance, which by this time her illegitimate son, Zuzumuzi, has now squandered. However, her real rejection of Zakhe is fuelled by her love affair with a local bankrupt and married taxi owner, Sgwili. Zakhe's presence serves as an obstacle as he (Sgwili) is pressured to repay his debtors. Both Jessie and Sgwili conspire to kill Zakhe whom she takes for an impostor and whom she strongly believes is solely interested in the inheritance left by Mhlongo. The plan goes awry and Zuzumuzi is killed instead. The night Zuzumuzi is killed is also that on which Zakhe has planned to commit suicide having realised that no one, but Babazile believes him. He writes a suicide note calling Jessie, '*Nomkhubulwana wami*'[53] an affectionate term he

[53] Nomkhubulwane is a Zulu rain goddess associated with fertility, celebrated every spring, by the young female folk. During this ceremony, girls dress up in male regalia, herd the cattle towards an enclave where they will partake of traditional beer and howl obscenities and vulgarity to passersby, particularly male passersby. See Berglund, (1889).

normally uses when assuring her, and indicates that he should be buried in the grave in which Jessie buried 'him' and had unveiled when he was still alive. Zakhe's suicide attempt fails as Babazile and her husband, Ben, a local policeman, save him. One morning, long after he has healed from the rope wounds around his neck, he meets Jessie at the graveyard and Jessie tells him that she now believes that he is who he claims to be, as no impostor will call her *Nomkhubulwana*. The film closes with Jessie holding Zakhe's hand, going back home, a home from which Zakhe was previously banished after his reappearance.

**Selective traditionalism, illegetimacy and the inheritance politics**

**Ifa LakwaMthethwa** like **Hlala Kwabafileyo** is an 'all-black spectacle' that has its own internal forms of reflections and critique, confined within the realities of an urban up-beat lifestyle. Its selection of traditional elements is in *tandem* with the popular township cultural practice of picking certain traditional systems to reflect on both the functionality and the extent to which these traditional systems have been grafted with modern influences of other cultures. This is evident in the *mis-en-scène* of the expository sequences of the film. The wedding preparations combine a township image, and the traditional flare indicative of popular culture. Mhlongo's house is teeming with neighbours, both inside and out, who have come to help. Cows have been slaughtered, and men are scuttling about as they prepare a customary eating festivity. These activities take place infront of a yellow and white tent, a proclamatory symbol in township culture of an imminent occasion *(umsebenzi)* to be held in the household. Included in this *mis-en-scène* is a group of hired dancers who perform traditional dances, complimenting the festive atmosphere of the moment. Inside, women from the neighbourhood are preparing food for the following day. Significantly, Mhlongo's daughter, Babazile, is inducted into marriage by local women. The inclusion of most of these traditional practices reflects a superficial functionary aspect, as they will be pushed to the background when the Western wedding is celebrated the following day. The Western-styled wedding celebration is marked by a helicopter and open convertibles that takes the bride and groom to the church, and a brass band to whose accompaniment the general populace

sing popular township wedding and religious songs. A choral wedding song, popularised by Zulu radio station, marks the conclusion of the church wedding service.

This admixture of traditional and popular perspective in **Hlala Kwabafileyo** is foregrounded and introduced by drawing from the genre of oral praises and praising and it provides a base for the sequence of events whose exploration is located within the nebulous and ever-shifting imperatives of township culture. Mhlongo's surname is a symbol: both his disappearance and reappearance are encapsulated and foregrounded in his extended surname, which is revealed in the clan praises, his lawyer friend, Ntshalintshali recites at the wedding:

*AbakwaMhlongo kaNdaba/*The people of Mhlongo, son of Ndaba
*AbakwaNjomane kaMgabi*/ The people of Njomane of Mgabi
*Eyaduka iminyakanyaka*/Who disappeared many years
*Yatholakala kowesine*/And was found on the fourth one

Mhlongo's praises are a signifying practice, indicative of the conflicts that are caused by inheritance politics. These praises point to significant aspects that occur in the secondary plane of the narrative and which are, within the context of the film's narrative, aligned with the imperatives and signifiers underpinning the plot. Not only does Zakhe disappear and reappear in the film narrative, but his brother, Bheseni also disappeared and reappeared. This appearance took place long after their father's death, and after Zakhe has been bequeathed all assets as a sole surviving son, which he used as seed money for the establishment of a modern business enterprise. The symbolic significance of these praises projects a traditional cultural ethos that has been imprinted with numerous influences. Zakhe's praises are set against Zuzumuzi's search for identity and a sense of belonging. In one of his escapades, he informs his mother that "*Mina angishongo ukuthi ngifuna ukukhuliswa uMhlongo. Mina nginabo abakithi kwaZungu, koManzini, koGwabela. Nguwe ongilethe kulomuzi*"/ (I did not say I wanted to be reared up by Mhlongo. I do have my family at the Zungus', people of Manzini, people of Gwabela). Zuzumuzi's rebellious nature is enhanced by the physical violence he suffers at the hands

of both of his parents. Zuzumuzi's definition of his identity, which resists the one that his mother has procured for him, as his name suggests,[54] points to deeply embedded traditional views governing a patriarchal sense of identity in Zulu culture. These patriarchal vestiges within the context of inheritance politics not only allude to complexities resulting from these arrangements, but also resuscitate traditional sanctions regarding illegitimacy. Zuzumuzi's illegitimate status is brought to bear on the respect he shows to his parents but particularly to his father and the politics of inheritance after Zakhe's disappearance.

Traditional cultural imperatives underlying Zuzumuzi's depiction are further manifested during the search the family established for Zakhe. Zuzumuzi fails to identify Zakhe after he is pointed out by a nurse who has seen him only once before at the wedding. On the surface, Zuzumuzi's failure to identify Zakhe stems from his callousness and his hatred for him, as he has attempted to kill him before. On a deeper level, however, the link that exists between Mkhonto Magwaza, a diviner, the only representative of the traditional institution of divination and healing, and Zuzumuzi in their failure to 'see', is indicative of the limits the traditional episteme has within contemporary forms of self-identity, lifestyles, norms, values and so on. The divination ritual performed in the search reflects this:

Mkhonto: *Makhosi! Makhosi! Makhosi! Vumani bo!*/ Makhosi! Makhosi! Makhosi!. Do you agree with me!
Jessie and Babazile: *Siyavuma!*/We do!
Mkhonto: *Ngibona isithunzi sikaMhlongo phakathi kwe…Vumani bo*!/I see Mhlongo's shadow amongst…. Do you agree with me!
Jessie and Babazile: *Siyavuma!*/We do!
Mkhonto: *Kumnyama, Nkosikazi! Kubi! Vumani bo!/*It is difficult Madam! It is bad! Do you agree with me!
Jessie: *Makhosi, amazwi akho ayangithusa*/Makhosi, your utterances are scaring me.

[54] His name implies the one who has acquired marriage or a home. For his mother the name points to her acquiring marriage and for Zuzumuzi, it implies for whom a home has been acquired. Therefore his mother has acquired a home for him and he is a benefactor of the assets of that home.

Mkhonto: *Kunjalo, Nkozikazi. Kumnyama*/It is so Madam. It is bad.
Jessie: *Pho, kusho ukuthi…/* So it means…
Mkhonto: *Angisho nokuthi ningabe nisafuna, kodwa kumnyama*/ I am not saying that you should stop searching, but it is difficult.
Jessie: *Usho ukuthi njengoba elahlekile, asiyobuye siphinde simthole*? / Are you saying that just as he missing, we will never find him.
Mkhonto: *Makhosi! Uzotholakala*/*Makhosi*! He will be found!
Jessie: *Pho-ke*?/ Now then?
Mkhonto: *Okunye-ke lokho. Uzotholakala. Mina sengiqedile. Makhosi*! *Angifuni ukuthi ungikhokhele. Yena uzotholakala. Makhosi! Thokoza!* /That is a different case altogether. He will be found. I am done now. *Makhosi*. I do not want any payment. But he will be found. *Makhosi Thokoza*!

The diviner sees only "isithunzi" (shadow/dignity) of Zakhe within a dark ominous presence he does not explain. The diviner's analysis either points to his inability to locate Zakhe's spiritual essence in the spiritual world, or alludes to his compromised dignity. In either interpretation, the analysis is befitting of Zakhe's disposition. He disappears on his way to a secret rendezvous to meet with his lover, who is the age of his daughter. His disposition comprises his standing within his community.

**The social gaze: individual and public life in *Hlala Kwabafileyo***

Tensions existing between the community and Mhlongo's family are alluded to in the expository scenes of the film narrative. The Mhlongo family is subjected to a running commentary, a constant social gaze that reflects on the ups and downs of the family. The social gaze is a deeply embedded traditional form of social surveillance. According to Yanga (1999), the social gaze functions as a critical source in African societies although underpinned by the philosophical views of *ubuntu*. The excesses of individuals in the society are aspects that bring about disequilibrium. In essence, *ubuntu* is a social lever that guards and curbs excesses in individuals subjected to similar forms of social organisation. Yanga's argument has elements of truth in it because there are proverbs and

idiomatic maxims that reflect disapproval of excess in individuals. One such proverb, "*isitsha esihle asidleli*/ a beautiful plate should not be used", comments on the excess of the attribute of kindness, which is also a psychological flaw more than a positive attribute. There are other culturally bound aspects that reflect the society's disapproval of excesses, and are seen operating within traditional epistemologies governed by *ubuntu*. The Mhlongo family, conforms to a petit bourgeoisie status and lifestyle, and is localised within a predominantly lower class environment - a condition that emerged from a historical reality of apartheid laws. In such a scenario the philosophy of *ubuntu* would imply that since the community emerged from the same historical conditions, members of the community should be accorded similar economic strategies that will result in their economic viability as well in order to achieve balance and equality.

In the film narrative, the social gaze presents a cross-section of the society. The streets, shebeens, print media, train station and private homes are localities where codes of behaviour, and the social outlook or orientation of the township are negotiated and proclaimed. The social view appropriated by these spaces exerts pressure and completely overwhelms the Mhlongo family, as rumours, truths and half-truths are generated about them. Their private lives become public knowledge and aspects of their private lives are brought to bear on the inheritance politics. **Hlala Kwabafileyo** exploits tensions existing between the social consciousness, which functions as a moral censor of the individual's right to an independent life. In the film, Jessie's individuality is constantly pitted against a social gaze, represented by a comic character, MaMgobhozi, a local gossip.

**Female sexuality and inheritance politics in Hlala Kwabafileyo**

The film is set in a township where a traditional hold on female gender has been defied and undermined, to such an extent that traditional claims are only coyly and shyly acknowledged. There is a view in feminist scholarship that certain cultural practices that are observed only by females in the society have been instituted by tradition to control

their sexuality.[55] In **Hlala Kwabafileyo** one such cultural observance is that of *ukungena* (the right of the surviving brothers of the deceased husband to claim his wife). This cultural practice does not only control female sexuality but it also ensures that the assets accumulated are returned and placed under the control of the deceased husband's family. Although the filmic narrative has introduced this custom as a base for the exploration of gender and inheritance, Bheseni is sceptical in asking Jessie's hand in marriage after his brother's 'death', because of the numerous changes that influence people's lifestyle, especially those who live in the urban centres. However according to cultural norms, Bheseni has a legitimate claim to his brother's wealth and assets. His claim to his brother's inheritance stems from the fact that Zakhe established his businesses through their father's livestock.

Acting on this knowledge he informs his friends that he will take back "*izinkomo zikababa*"/ (my father's cows). He vows that "*zobuya izinkomo zikababa, zobuya emasisweni*"/ (my father's cows will be back, they will be back from whence they been used as seed for wealth). His observation regarding the claim each member of the family has on Zakhe's inheritance, except for Babazile, points to deep seated reservations of Zulu tradition and culture to Zakhe's family set-up. He points out that "*uZuzumuzi akayena wakwaMhlongo, umlanjwana owafika nonina. Angadla kanjani ifa lwakwaMhlongo?*"/ (Zuzumuzi is not Mhlongo's offspring. He is a bastard that came along with his mother. How can he be apportioned Mhlongo's inheritance?). And as for Jessie, "*wathengwa ngezinkomo, uyefana negrosa*"/ (she was bought with cattle, she is like groceries). However, Bheseni is afraid to confront them about his reservation in respect of Zakhe's inheritance. Moreover, his claim to both the inheritance and Jessie as custom expects, is problematised by changing circumstances and a female consciousness popular in the townships.

Changing gender roles in African contemporary societies are reflected in his depiction. He comes across in the narrative as a compromised patriarch. His powerlessness is pitted

[55] See Green and Kahn (1985) **Making a Difference** and Bhavnani et. al (2003), **Feminist Futures: Re-imagining women, culture and development**.

against Jessie's assertiveness and incisiveness. She prevails as she subverts the custom of *ukungena*, throwing into disarray an old tradition of keeping asserts of the deceased within the family, to be dispensed by the surviving patriarch. When Jessie realises that Zakhe's brother, Bheseni, might ask for her hand in marriage as custom expects, she arranges for her spinster sister to come from KwaZulu to Soweto. She takes her to her trusted diviner, Mkhonto Magwaza, to be prepared for Bheseni. This scheme succeeds and Bheseni's claim is narrowed to their father's assets that Zakhe used for starting his business. Bheseni's role functions as signifying symbol: he represents a dying tradition, which Jessie manipulates to further strive for independence. Thus in the will Zakhe left with his lawyer, Bheseni is given the cows and the house in the rural area to which he returns. Zakhe's will accords financial power to Jessie. She inherits the chain of stores and a considerable lump sum of money. Within the context of the novel from which the film is adapted, her inheritance marked a significant move away from the past conventions for apportioning wealth, whereby the in-laws had an upper hand in bestowing the wealth of the deceased.

**Hlala Kwabafileyo**'s depiction of female independence proceeds from dominant stereotypes of such women. Their independence becomes associated with wanton expressions of sexuality. Jessie's defiance of tradition is juxtaposed with her illicit involvement with Sgwili, a married man, which has disastrous consequences for Sgwili's wife and makes a mockery of the family institution as a site for the instilling of traditional values, albeit modified. Jessie and Sgwili's affair creates tensions and conflicts in Sgwili's home and as a result Sgwili's wife is battered when she attempts to assert her influence as the wife and mother in her home. The dramatization of the violence and brutality she suffers at the hands of her adulterous and criminal husband is an indictment against societal tolerance of women like Jessie, who because of their financial standing, infringe on other women's rights and emotional well-beings. The film's narrative discourse seems to suggest that the causes of women's abuse is located within the promiscuity of their gender, because Sgwili's wife points out that Sgwili's violence started after his extra-marital affair. While Sgwili is in a dialectical opposition to Zakhe, they nonetheless share commonalties in their infidelity. Jessie's fight against patriarchal

members of her family in claiming the inheritance her husband left, is subverted by her involvement with Sgwili, whose intention is to siphon off her wealth and settle his financial debts.

Jessie's depiction is postulated dialectically to other female characters in the film. MaNdlovu, her friend, Babazile and Mafakude, Bheseni's landlord, all represent women who invariably conform to tradition. Although Mafakude's gender position is blurred by her free association with the men folk to whom she sells illicit beer, her knowledge of tradition positions her in a dialectic relation to Jessie. The same can be said of MaNdlovu, who although she calls her husband "*umlotha, umuntu ongenakungenzela lutho*"/ (the ash, that can never do anything for her), is however quick to disapprove of Jessie's unbridled sexuality and points out that involvement with Sgwili makes her a home wrecker. Perhaps Zuzumuzi articulates the most accurate view of Jessie's questionable sexuality, when in a drunken state he poignantly says to her,

> *Hhayi mama izono zakho lezo. Mina angizange ngisho kuwe ukuthi thanda laba ubuye ubashiye uyogana labaya. Ngangingekho ebusheni bakho*

(No Mother, those are your sins. I never said to you fall in love with these ones and leave them, and marry elsewhere. I did not live in your youth.)

Zuzumuzi's stance is in accordance with his search for identity, and it is through this spilt identity that he demands more inheritance from his mother while colluding with his biological father, Zungu, to reunite with Jessie. Zuzumuzi's insatiable personality projected in his involvement with a woman old enough to be his mother, functions on the same level as that of Zungu. Zungu uses his son as a vista to Jessie's wealth

Unlike other women characters in the film, Thembeni, Jessie's younger sister, is a crystallisation of pure womanhood. Like Babazile, their symbolic signification reifies a Zulu traditional conceptualisation of womanhood. Their innocence and purity are virtues that the filmic narrative foregrounds. In addition, their positive attributes are further

enhanced by the men folk with whom they are associated. Both Ben, Babazile's husband, and Bheseni are representation of true patriarchs. Babazile does not live a life of sheer opulence and luxury stemming from her part of the inheritance. Ben is cautious regarding money for which one has not earned, somehow prefiguring Zakhe's return, as they have to return what is left, as opposed to Zuzumuzi who squanders his share within six months.

The narrative signifiers and the structuring of prominent characters in the film narrative manifest complexities that neither a simple either Christian or African traditional philosophy can provide. Instead, the human psyche is explored in a capitalistic and hedonistic society and it is shown that innate human goodness emerges as a victor in such circumstances. **Hlala Kwabafileyo** shows Christian and African traditional philosophies as irrelevant to the events represented. The inclusion of these philosophies is peripheral. Christianity in the film serves as a facilitator of weddings, burial and tombstone unveiling ceremonies. Symbols associated with African traditions are used to highlight certain values. They facilitate the desires and aspirations of those who conform to it, and it is rendered impotent to those seeking a break with tradition. This is demonstrated during the divination ritual that made for Zakhe when his family searched for him. The institution of divination and healing as the only concrete symbol of tradition cannot locate or grasp Zakhe's dignity. His manhood as a true patriarch has since been lost within popular lifestyles engulfing contemporary society. The institution of divination is unable to provide Jessie with answers, for Magwaza Mkhonto dies before he can explain and interpret the bone throwing ritual he performed for Zakhe's search.

It is however ironic that the film's resolution to confusing changes besetting urbanised community suggests a back-to-the homeland resolution. After Bheseni has been given his father's cows, he marries Thembeni and both return to KwaZulu. Their symbolic return to eMabedlana, a rural area in KwaZulu, serves as a symbolic break with the urban and the decadent morality pervading its inhabitants, which can also be interpreted as going back to African tradition. This closure points to the problem raised by merging two traditions: the literature and the black television drama traditions. The back-to-the

homelands' theme betrays the literary tradition[56] from which the drama series was adapted. Furthermore, although the drama series was flighted in the mid-1990s, with a proliferation of different political sensibilities, the novel was written in the late 1980s when apartheid was still a reality in South Africa. Both Tomaselli (1986, 1989) and Davies (1996) point out that the theme was propagated earlier on in the last century by the Afrikaner government's policies which were intended to control African influx into the cities. This propaganda was achieved by projecting the city as an evil place not suitable for Africans. But by the beginning of the 1980s there was a reversal of this policy and it was markedly highlighted in the television dramas of the period as the government raced to win the hearts and minds of Africans.

**Conclusion**

**Hlala Kwabafileyo** and **Ifa LaKwaMthethwa** are also significant developments in terms of projecting the image of outlaws or the decadent township culture and the subversion of white power celebrated in **Mapantsula**. Both these films present images of black people who have successfully gained entry into the business world, whose sense of business acumen not only sees the expansion of their business locally but that also taps into international markets. However underlying these issues is the aspirational construction of blackness, which presents black people as bourgeois or petit bourgeois. These representations of a black bourgeois image have "image uplifting effects" and do not necessarily reflect or represent socio-political realities of the Africans. Attesting to this Monaco (1981:218) points out that filmmakers at times work without conceivable regard to the realities of the market place, bringing into the politics of film, debates about reality versus fantasy. Debates abound in film discourses whether films "reflect the national culture that already exist or whether they produce a fantasy of their own that eventually came to be accepted as real." This observation is true for the depiction of

[56] The discursive practices of isiZulu literature have always been implicated in the dominant discourses of the hegemon. Subtle ideological shifts in the hegemonic mainstream discourses were not immediately observed in latest production, thus by the end of the 1980s when the apartheid government had distanced itself from the 'back to the homelands' some isiZulu narratives still saw the move as a viable alternative.

"glamorized Dallas-Dynasty-style black images" in **Ifa LaKwaMthethwa** and of **Hlala Kwabafileyo**.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Thematic recycling in Gaz' Lam and isiZulu literature

Certain epochs, key historical moments, and currents in the culture of contemporary society provide source materials from which texts draw to construct seminal narratives, initiating a "vast progeny of literary and filmic descendants" (Stam, 2005: 1), that are further recycled in an infinite number of renditions. With every recycling, new twists and turns are introduced that reveal changing discursive practices and the prevailing ideologies at the moment of reinterpretation. By considering artistic expressions as an endless permutation of textual cross referencing, comparing seemingly diverse artistic traditions such as isiZulu literature with television drama series is made possible. The drama series, **Gaz' Lam I, II, III** and **IV** flighted on SABC One in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005 respectively, provide an instance of intertextual dialogism with isiZulu literature. These films, though addressing a post-apartheid African society, returned to well-established themes in isiZulu literature such as culture and change, urbanisation, modernity and popular culture that provide prisms of refraction of present day actualities. Key to the filmic narratives, however, is how they rework certain conventional, partisan, parochial and hegemonic discourses so that they resonate with evolving post-apartheid urban experiences.

This chapter focuses on three of these thematic re-engagements in **Gaz' Lam** which are also common to isiZulu literature, and demonstrate how the drama series in the post-apartheid context not only retrospectively reviews and dispels received meanings, but also offers fresh new readings in line with the socio-economic and political realities of the post-apartheid African society. These themes are forced marriage, youth migration and music. Within these broad thematic categories are other sub-themes such as love triangles, economic marginalization and popular culture that form trajectories which underscore this notion of intertextuality and at the same time help generate a strong impression of freshness and newness. The discussion will focus on **Gaz' Lam I** since the themes developed in subsequent seasons of the series, were further explorations of those

introduced in this first series. The chapter commences with a brief overview of the theoretical discourses underpinning the transformative power of cross-referencing and intertextuality in the generation of adaptive and evolving narratives. This discussion is followed by an in-depth reading of **Gaz' Lam**. Emphasis is placed on how its recreations bring freshness and newness informed by emergent cultural experiences.

**Narrating a mosaic**

According to the theory of intertextuality "a text cannot exist as a hermetic or self-sufficient whole, and so does not function as a closed system" (Worton and Still, 1990:1). Irwin (2004) explains intertextuality as a concept, postulating that 'no text, much as it might like to appear so, is original and unique-in-itself; rather it is a tissue of inevitable, and to an extent unwitting, references to and quotations from other texts.' This theory, as propounded by Bakhtin's dialogism and Kristeva's intertextuality, holds that any text is read through its relation to other texts (Childers and Hentzi, 1995:159). In particular, Kristeva is of the opinion that the work of art is shot through with references, quotations and influences of every kind (Worton and Still, 1990:1). Her perspectives are sourced from Bakhtin's views regarding human discourses in general. Bakhtin holds that human language is a mixture of appropriated discourses. When people speak, they use a specific mix of discourse, which they have appropriated in an attempt to communicate their intentions. However, they inevitably suffer interference from two sources: pre-existing meanings of words, and the alien intentions of a real interlocutor. Bakhtin maintains that every concrete utterance is intersected by both centrifugal and centripetal, unifying and disunifying sources (Bakhtin, 1981:272). Although these theories have both a linguistic and literary (particularly the novel) origin, Roland Barthes (1985), Genette Gérard (1999) and other scholars have since broadened the applicability of dialogic and intertextual discourses to other spheres of artistic expression.

Core to this theory is that texts are cultural interventions, and therefore the meaning of texts is conditioned, as they are dependent on existing social reference systems or social knowledge to make meaning. According to Childers and Hentzi (1995:195) the hidden

associations that are invoked during reading impact on readers' expectations about the content and form of the writing as well as its meaning. According to Kristeva the meaning in the text is attributable both to the life experiences, associations etc. brought by the reader into the text, and the fact that the writer of texts is first the reader and consumer of other texts. She refers to this pre-existing knowledge as "the cross-fertilization of packed textual material" and further points out that:

> A delicate allusion to a work unknown to the reader, which therefore goes unnoticed, will have a dormant existence in that reading, on the other hand, the reader's experience of some practice or theory unknown to the author may lead to a fresh interpretation (cited in Worton and Still, 1990:2).

Furthermore, the whole web of interconnectivity and referencing is realized through imitation, allusions, influences, translations, quotations, parody and other literary or fictional truths (Worton and Still, 1990). There are conflicting views amongst scholars regarding the use of these fictional truths as to whether their application leads to fresh interpretations, or to generalizations as Genette in the **Palmpsestes** argues. However, a key notion is that use of references, allusions, quotations, imitation, parody and so forth combines to create popular stereotypes (Horace, cited in Worton and Still, 1990:5) which invariably affects the meaning of a text. Walton (1990) points out that:

> A fictional world can be anything that is generated by a representation but also depends on it for its existence […] Ideological entities such as style and aesthetics (as in literature, music, and visual arts) are also fictional worlds because they stem from representations which are in turn generated by the conditions of reality projected through their fictions. This creates frames of reference to which a reader or audience connects in his own reality. Such referential content influences the success of the representative object to a significant degree as the function of an object often determine its sphere of reference (Walton, 1990:9-10).

Walton concurs with Kristeva on the dependency of the texts on outside influences and the role of the reader/audience/perceiver of an artistic form in creating meaning from the text. For him, the perceivers' associations form the largest sector in the frame of reference, and these associations come into the text as a web of intertextual networks or a collage of ideas or a mingled mosaic of quotations.

There are other conceptualizations and definitions of intertextuality. Leon S. Roudiez views it as the transference or transposition of one or more systems of signs into one another (cited in Hawthorn, 1992:86) and Roland Barthes perceives this concept as consisting of a text that is a "new tissue of past citations. Bits of code, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages etc. pass into the text and are redistributed within it, for there is always language before and around the text" (cited in Hawthorn, 1992:86). However a fascinating development on this theory is advanced by Byron Caminero-Santangelo (2005:11), who developed the Bloomian notion of the Oedipal interrelationship of narrative texts by exploring the notion of rewriting/revising history through a process of inserting oneself into that history. Citing earlier formulations, he points out that "Bakhtin situates the text within history and society, which are seen as texts read by the writer, and into which he inserts himself by rewriting them." He further maintains that the connections between literary texts and the broader cultural or social textuality not only suggest a notion of parodic revision, but also point to a transformative dialogue that occurs between the literary texts and the variety of the texts it appropriates.[57] His notion of appropriation resists binary oppositions, but explores the notion of re-inscriptions with an intention to revise and rewrite. This latter view is of interest to the objective of this chapter, as the sampled themes from **Gaz' Lam** are not entirely new: they have been a constant feature over the past century in IsiZulu literature. However, their treatment in the series offers new interpretations, while their re-inscription in a post-apartheid period offers refreshed readings of the complex interplay of competing vantages points and languages.

According to Fuery (2000:109),

[57] Ibid, 11.

> Films, like other narrative processes, establish social orders which are constructed from a variety of sources, including the social order of the created world, the socio-historical contexts which draw on the critical contexts of its reception, and the social contexts of the spectator." He points to three interplaying tiers in the production of meaning in film. These are the film's social world order, the social order it is derived from and the spectator's social order. Regarding the first tier, he points out that it is normally "set up in the diegetics of the film, most often paralleling in some way the historical and ideological order which produced it.[58]

The second tier is constituted by the familiar landscapes, over-familiarized social settings, overly familiar positioning of characters in the ordinary and everyday experiences which can be established through intertextuality, connotative reading, or how the contexts operate in the social domain since cultural orderings of things are crucial for the establishment of certain readings as legitimate.[59] In the last tier, he points out that "the spectator's own position within different, but ultimately interconnected cultural contexts has a bearing on filmic textual productions."[60] In addition, he says that even though interpretations are heavily influenced by other social and textual contexts, there must be a point where

> What the spectator sees, and how he or she reacts, is derived from the unique position of their subjectivity […] These unique positions allow deviation and difference, rather than the sense of identity figured in the Grand Narrative. These meta-narratives' unique positions challenge all narrating positions in their production of a multiplicity of positions and perspectives.[61]

Although Fuery's theory of intertextuality and film point to new trajectories, especially with regard to the social contexts making up the film's reality, and the multiple positionings of the spectators and their role in challenging mainstream ideologies in the filmic text, there is a fundamentally intertextual link between him and what Bakhtin and Kristeva said before. In many ways **Gaz' Lam** shares with Zulu fiction intertextual links

[58] Ibid, 110.
[59] Ibid, 110.
[60] Ibid, 113.
[61] Ibid, 113.

that depict disparities between the country and city life, and the youth question and identity in urban centres.

**Summary of Gaz' Lam**

**Gaz' Lam** explores a love triangle between S'fiso and Khethiwe both childhood sweethearts, and an old Chief. The youngsters' romantic relationship and dreams are disrupted by the polygamous Chief's request of Khethiwe's hand in marriage. Khethiwe, a young, respectful innocent girl is bounded by tradition and compelled by her patriarchal father to accept the Chief's request. At the same time, she is torn apart because of the feelings she has for S'fiso. Upon learning of Khethiwe's dilemma, S'fiso asks her to relocate with him to Johannesburg to avoid this arranged marriage. Khethiwe refuses. S'fiso leaves for Johannesburg alone to live with his cousin Welile, a migrant from rural KwaZulu and his wife, where he is introduced to the world of music, and a life of women and alcohol. S'fiso's life experiences in the city intersect with a newly found community of friends related to his cousin. He also makes new friends, and one of his friendships with an aspirant singer, Lerato, develops quickly into an illicit romance: Lerato is involved with a nightclub proprietor, who is also her music patron and sponsor. One day, Khethiwe decides to leave her rural home and reappear in S'fiso's life in the city. She discovers to her shock and disappointment that S'fiso has changed, and more significantly she is no longer sure of his love for her.

**Arranged marriages**

Although isiZulu fiction is conservative, with strong alignments to Christian morality and African traditionalism, one of the most dominant past practices persistently disparaged by authors throughout the century, is the customary practice of arranged marriages between chiefly rulers and young maidens from the commoners' class. **Gaz' Lam**'s appropriation of this theme not only joins the chorus of disapproval of the practice, it adds in issues of female sexuality, teenage rebellion, unemployment, HIV/AIDS and other challenges affecting post-apartheid African society. **Gaz' Lam** plays out the theme of arranged marriages by exploring the tensions between the rural areas, as localities of unbending

traditionalism, and the urban centres, as paradoxically progressive or retrogressively liberal areas where individuals can either discover themselves anew or bring destruction upon themselves. In addition, it draws on known gender relations in the Zulu patriarchal society, placing emphasis on stereotypical popular views about Zulu patriarchy, which is generally viewed as intransigent in its convictions about the position of women in the Zulu community. Furthermore, as in isiZulu fiction, it also explores internalized customs and observances which postulate that the traditional rulers - just as their divine right cannot be questioned - can never be called to account for decisions they take affecting their subjects. The underlying running commentary of this theme is based on the traditional observance that '*inkosi, umlomo ongathethi manga*' (the king/Chief's commandments are law). **Gaz' Lam,** while exploiting this theme to dramatize the absoluteness of this view, simultaneously explores various forms of women's resistance to arranged/forced marriages.[62] Both the filmic and the literary narratives seem to have as a basis the women's resistance proverbial maxim, '*ucu aluhlangani entanyeni*' (the necklace does not fit), a saying normally ascribed to women resisting unwanted love.

In the series, this underlying conceptualization is seemingly employed in Khethiwe's rebellious relocation to Johannesburg, which underscores her rejection of the Chief's proposal. As in isiZulu fiction, her rejection of the Chief's marriage proposal emphasizes the traditionally accepted form, and yet unlike in isiZulu fiction, her refusal to be part of the Chief's polygamous marriage setup allows for feminist discourses to creep into the filmic discourse. Her adoption of feminist sensibilities regarding her gender and sexuality allows her liberty to shape and control her destiny, and eventually realize her dreams. In view of the changing cultural context, her sentiments regarding her desire to pursue tertiary education and her aspirations to be a writer are sympathetically read and the Chief's intentions towards her are suspiciously perceived and justifiably abhorred.

[62] The most celebrated resistance by women to forced marriages is the one carried out by the *Ngcugce* female regiment against King Cetshwayo who had attempted to force a mismatched marriage between an old male regiment and a younger female one. The female regiment resisted and sent word to the king telling him '*ucu aluhlangani entanyeni*' (the necklace [normally mutually exchanged by lovers as token of their love] does not fit). The infuriated Cetshwayo ordered their execution, however their resilience is still celebrated and contributed to the view that no-one can dictate to a woman's heart.

The first novel in isiZulu literary tradition to explore arranged and forced marriages between chiefly personages and commoners was Dube's **Insila KaShaka** (1929). The theme was later returned to in **UNyambose noZinitha** (1965), by Bhengu, with its striking symmetrical structure to Dube's **Insila KaShaka**. The novels' emphasis is on the ridiculousness and callousness of the practice. Equally, Vilakazi's **Nje Nempela** (1944), whilst exploring the Bhambatha rebellion, introduced conflict and intrigue in the narrative by drawing in the theme of arranged/forced marriages. His displeasure with the practice is revealed in the annihilation of the chiefly house to which the heroine of the narrative would have been married. Perhaps the most heartwrenching and emotional stirring renditions of this theme are to be found in Mncwango's **Manhla Iyokwendela Egodini** (1951) and **Ngenzeni** (1959), where resistance to the practice is registered through the heroine' suicide, or where the hero/heroine's resistance is countered by their gruesome murder by the unrelenting fiercely angry chiefs or his right-hand men. The fact that this theme is still revisited with eagerness in the 1990's points to its resilience. Molefe, in **Ngiwafunge AmaBomvu** (1991) and Xulu in **Udwendwe LukaKoto** (1994) re-explore the issue and their renditions do not result in any notable newness in the treatment of the theme.

**Gaz' Lam**'s exploration of the theme, by contrast, takes on new levels of meaning through the depiction of contradictions, as the visualized representation of the spectral archaic vestiges of tradition are set against post-modernity; where the Chief contradictorily, as the symbolic representative of this tradition, practices modernity. The Chief displays a 'European' middle class disposition, which signals that he is progressive, and yet he intrudes into the life of Khethiwe, who is in turn also a progressive teenager. He resuscitates an abhorred cultural practice that, fittingly, belongs to primordial times. In one scene, which depicts the only public sighting of Khethiwe and the Chief, the ill-suitedness of the couple not only evokes sympathy for the teenaged Khethiwe, who is culturally expected to give up the best years of her youth to an old Chief, but the Chief's pretension to notions of being a 'cultured gentleman' is ridiculed and subverted by his depiction as a 'tradition-aided' sexual predator. His polygamy is sanctioned by tradition, and the continual intake of wives, even among young teen girls who are supposed to be in

school is one key area that underscores this sexual predatoriness. Furthermore, the Chief's orders that he barks into his mobile phone regarding his latest wife at home, whom he says gets sick only if she wants to, is also indicative of the suppression of women's tormented psychologies regarding this practice. The Chief's order indicates that the young jealous wife at home has to suppress her psychological eruptions regarding Khethiwe as a new incoming wife by taking pills.

The ridiculousness of Khethiwe and the Chief as a couple is brought under further scrutiny through its juxtaposition with a well-matched young couple seated in the background in this scene, and when the filmic narrative crosscuts to a scene in Johannesburg, where other young people are in a party living out their youthful experiences. The contrasting images foster and emphasize the youthful engagements of youngsters in postmodern times, as opposed to that which compel young people to fill out their futures and destinies with questionable practices that have lost relevance.

It seems that **Gaz' Lam**'s criticism of arranged marriages is informed by contradictions between the culture governing youth sexuality and the infringement by traditional authority on the private lives of individuals. In particular, the culturally permitted practice that gives certain persons with the traditional authority the right to interfere with the sexuality of young people comes under sharp criticism. The apparent sexual promiscuity associated with youth is equated with that of lascivious Chiefs, who take girls in their teens from school and keep them as wives for their sexual pleasure supported in this by an equally misguided cultural setup steeped in a patriarchal system whose heart provides a tacit permission for the abuse, suppression, humiliation and the manipulation of women. Despite a loving father-daughter relationship between Khethiwe and her father (as seen in episode one), when the marriage proposal is put to him as a patriarch, he does not decline, despite its effect on his daughter, and his wife's protestations. As far as Khethiwe's father is concerned, the proposed marriage will elevate his status considerably in his community and that is the perspective from which he prefers to see his daughter's matrimonial bond to the Chief regardless of Khethiwe's age and the umpteenth time this polygamous Chief is taking a wife. He allows his daughter to

undergo a most questionable ritual, virginity testing, to please and appease the Chief whose uncontrolled lecherousness contrasts with S'fiso, who has promised to wait for the consummation of their love relationship. The latter not only embodies the underlying HIV/AIDS message embedded in the series, but also follows past customary practice of *ukusoma (*thigh sex), hence allowing an alternative model for safer sex. Furthermore, the latter model places the onus on both lovers for their protection against sexually transmitted diseases, compared to the gendered virginity testing that places the onus on the girl child for protecting a future husband against venereal diseases. Despite the objection by both Khethiwe and her mother to the virginity testing, it is pointed out that Khethiwe must go through with it to protect the Chief against "*umkhonyovu okhona*" (the sexual disease scare) implying HIV/AIDS that is currently affecting all age groups.

This reading of **Gaz' Lam** suggests that the cultural code that governs girls' sexuality is insisted upon to privilege the powerful and influential individuals in society that subscribe to these cultural practices. In many instances, such individuals become ill-suited suitors who are not loved, while the true lovers are pining with unconsummated passion, as in the case of S'fiso. In the series, S'fiso's grief and anger over his loss of Khethiwe is brought into the filmic narrative through flashbacks, in black and white, of the romantic moments in the serenity and purity of the countryside, as both innocently and curiously engage issues of sexuality, and through the nightmarish recurrent dreams that leave him sweating profusely as his subconscious taunts him with the illusion of a consummated sexual relationship.

**Re-evaluation of youth migration**

In view of the inability of youth to change tradition and traditional authority, **Gaz Lam** seems to suggest that youth migration is inevitable. The filmic narrative seems to suggest that reasons for migration to the cities cannot be confined to conventional notions revolving around land dispossessions, adventure, searching for greener pastures and aspirations to social mobility. Through S'fiso's characterization there is a reading that suggests that emotional estrangement and despair resulting from inconsiderate traditional

practices and stereotypes can lead to relocation, which is tantamount to dislocation. S'fiso's symbolic dislocation is accentuated by the loss, not only of Khethiwe, but also of his father, a great Maskandi musician, who would have been his symbolic link to this rural place. As it is, this rural location has nothing to offer him, and has drained and emptied him of his zeal for continued existence in it. In spite of being ill-prepared for the harshness of the city, and fuelled only by his love and deep understanding of music, he journeys to it hoping that it might change his destiny.

S'fiso's journey recreates numerous social problems that are legacies of the past government. The most glaring of these social problems are structural unemployment and the economic marginalization of Africans. Through the narratives of each friend in this community a number of conventional discourses and counter-discourses regarding Africans in the city are replayed. One such dominant socio-political discourse has to do with the climate that created the impression that Africans are temporary sojourners in the cities. This perception contributed to the lack of key social infrastructure and amenities that would cater for their urban accommodation and existence. In the filmic narrative, S'fiso's accommodation crisis is reflective of this. He gets temporary accommodation with his cousin, Welile, and his family, and he is given a couch in the living room to sleep on. Equally, his later relocation to an overcrowded flat where his unemployed community of friends lives is also indicative of the crises of Africans' experiences in the city. Lack of employment, squalid living conditions, overcrowding and lack of privacy in particular made life difficult for Africans, and have often been persuasive reasons to dissuade Africans from entering the city.

**Gaz' Lam**'s depiction of these colonial and apartheid legacies, and social experiences of Africans in the city, are juxtaposed with counter-discourses fashioned by Africans about their experiences. These counter-discourses become progressively clearer as S'fiso gets to know and understand each friend. His friends are representative of the underclass, and their perceptions about the city are reflective of the popular imagination regarding city life experiences. Counter-discourses that surfaced with the depiction of each of S'fiso's friends not only attest to the defiant view that Africans are permanent dwellers in city, but

to the fact that they can eke out a living in the margins of mainstream economy.[63] The latter perception is another area in which **Gaz' Lam** differs from the conventional depictions of the theme of migration in isiZulu literature. **Gaz Lam**'s dialogism, rather than affirming received notions of the city as a decadent, evil infested location, questions these perceptions by raising close representations and characters whose psychological outlook has been informed by city life. For example, Welile's outlook on life is affected by his retrenchment. S'fiso's lumpen friends with whom he later squats, Ghetto Professor and Menzo are involved in crime due to enemployment.

The re-inscription of the village/city dialectics begins with the stance the film takes on the issue of migration, which varies radically from the established views created by isiZulu fiction. **Gaz' Lam** seems to support youth migration to the city, by postulating a notion that as long as the impact of cultural practices such as arranged marriages is not fully absorbed, and their consequences seen for what they are, then blame should not be apportioned to the youth, who finds the city and city life a viable alternative. Generally, isiZulu fiction seems to find it difficult to suggest that young people, let alone maidens, seeking to eschew traditional entrapment should migrate to the cities. **Gaz' Lam** adopts this stance despite the fact that S'fiso and Khethiwe's initial encounters with city life border on shattered dreams. The uncertainty of city life is an aspect that **Gaz' Lam** fully explores, with the depictions of Khethiwe and S'fiso as new migrant being precisely the imagery that influences isiZulu literature to take a stance against youth migration.

The treatment of the migration theme in isiZulu literature altered with the hegemonic ideals of different segregationist governments. The initial phases of migration in colonial times caused by the diamond and gold rush have been seemingly celebrated in isiZulu fiction although the literature produced through missionary presses noted with displeasure behavioural changes amongst some migrants. During colonialism migration to the city supplanted or substituted numerous traditional practices, such as the rites of passage for young boys to adulthood, or the heroic adventures provided by military expeditions. Thus numerous isiZulu texts that espoused modernity celebrated the

[63] On the debates about the margins, see, hooks, 1994. **Outlaw culture: Resisting Representations**.

exposure of young men to other cultures, after which they returned home and established a viable business, or raised enough money to take a wife, or cared for the polygamous family institutions. Equally, this initial phase, which was supported by the colonial government[64] as more unskilled labourers were recruited to work in the dangerous diamond and gold fields, was subsequently followed by attempts by the Pact government to stem the tide of mass migration to the city from the mid-1930's. IsiZulu literature added its own ideological discourse to this political bickering, lambasting young people for leaving the serene morally upright countryside for the violent, morally decadent crime-infested cities.

According to Coplan (1985) the emergence of youth subcultures around the second decade of the last century, and the political instability (Walshe, 1970) towards the close of that decade, created white hysteria about 'the Black Peril'. In response the Pact government instituted ideological controls that aimed at preventing massive influx into the cities. These measures took on a repressive turn from the 1950's when it was made illegal for Africans to be in the city unless they had permission. IsiZulu literature, which has conventionalized dominant ideologies, added its voice to this mainstream discourse through dramatizations of one-sided views that intimated that the young migrants eventually fall prey to crime due to endemic unemployment in the city. This perception orchestrated a view that emphasized the unsuitability of Africans for urban existence: Africans did not belong in the cities. Some of the texts that alluded to this view are Dhlomo's (1935) **Indlela Yababi**, Nyembezi's (1951) **Mntanami Mntanami** (1950)**, Ngavele Ngasho** (1983) by Mkhize, Nxumalo's (1960) **Ngisinga Empumalanga** (1969) and many other titles of note published between the 1950's and the late 1980's. Several characters in the series such as Welile and Foxy, a woman with whom both Welile and S'fiso have a sexual relationship, betray such undertones. Both are migrants from rural KwaZulu/Natal whose dreams were shattered, and who were subsequently forced into the underworld.

[64] D. Welsh, (1971) **The Roots of Segregation: Native Policy in Colonial Natal, 1845-1910** explores in considerable length the colonial administration's orchestration of massive migration to the city through the Shepstonian system.

Welile's migration, employment, marriage and other exploits occur outside the primary plane of the filmic narrative. His introduction in the filmic narrative is as a retrenched disappointed lumpen, who is embarrassed by his state of unemployment to the extent that no one at home in the rural areas knows about this, as he has continued living large in orfer to create an impression of his success in the city. However, the reality of his unemployment is discovered by S'fiso shortly after his arrival in the city, when he sees him exchanging dagga money with Foxy. His fall from a responsible father to a dagga trader not only depicts how elusive and uncertain city life is but also how its day to day demands slowly erode all moral values until individuals swim in a sea of disillusionment, despair and deprivation. Welile's lumpen state, like that of his friends such as Ghetto Professor, Menzo, and Foxy eventually becomes a pretext for engaging in criminal activities, an outlet for pent-up frustrations. Welile's fall also emasculates him: the reversal of gender roles resulting from his retrenchment deprives him of his status as a provider, and reduces him to be dependance on his verbally abusive wife for survival. Taking over other wifely chores such as child-minding, running errands, taking instructions or being called derogatory names takes its toll on his sense of manhood, as a Zulu man. However, key to Welile's crisis of masculinity is the 'ghetto survival syndrome', a state of inertia justified by a self-deluded sense of economic injustice, the internalization of debased lifestyles as a result of squalid conditions, and a newly emerging practice among black men, preferring to remain at home whilst their womenfolk work for them. When his wife, Thuli, phones him about her promotion and their impending move to Morningside, an up market suburb, all that he could do, is mock her on the other side of the phone in the presence of Foxy with whom he is having an extra-marital affair, dismissing any suggestions that he ought to seek work.

Foxy's characterisation can equally be read as postulating that Africans do not belong in the city. Foxy's migration is also located in the secondary plane of the filmic narrative and her reasons for being in the city are peripherally alluded to towards the climax of the filmic narrative. She has come to the city in search of an elusive dream: to become a full woman by being married and 'given a surname.' In her search for suitable partners, she indulges in impulsive, indiscreet casual sexual activities, including being involved with

Welile, a husband of one member of her circle of friends. In isiZulu literature representations of Foxy's archetype are dominant. Usually the vantage point from which they are depicted is always intended to produce catharsis dissuading deviance and socially deplorable behaviour in the womenfolk.

Whilst **Gaz' Lam** does not negate the established meanings of the city, and the personalities that it helps create, the series proceeds to explore how debased lifestyles in the city become in themselves survival strategies for individuals who choose a permanent abode there. The city provides a recluse from parental control where the youth can create a world that exists and functions without the authority of parents and the confines of traditions or religion. According to Watkins (1998:178), this rezoning of the existing cultural order is a common aspect in postindustrial societies, where a "new popular cultural landscape gave rise to the formation of an enlarged youth marketplace that further enabled youth to create and maintain a separate social world that existed outside immediate adult supervision." This world, according to Jeffries (1992:160) offers opportunities to "pursue many avenues to erase the pain associated with the elusive urban good life, and it has created its own profound and sometimes feeble semblances of good life."

Perhaps the most illustrious depiction of the pursuance of the elusive urban good life is depicted in S'fiso's metamorphosis. His metamorphosis, accompanied by Ghetto Ruff's kwaito sound, '*Abobani abakhumul' izinja la*' (a localized version of the African American popular rap song 'Who let dogs out'), goes beyond the physical adoption of city fashions, and takes on a psychological outlook which is marked by a loss of traditional morality. As far as he is concerned, this change is for the better as it places him firmly on a route to the good life. This is the life that his friends lead and is introduced to him in the first scene. He has been urged to "walk like you have money to impress girls…buy beer, dagga and smokes then the guys will like you". Eventually, this becomes the life S'fiso adopts after his transformation. The values he closely guarded in his early days in the city, symbolized by a worn out suitcase and Khethiwe's close up photo, worn at the edges and corners from constant handling, are discarded in favour of a

life that consists of narcissistic behaviour, urban fashion trends and a new urbanized identity. It is after this transformation that he loses his innocence to Foxy, a deed that is celebrated by his newly found friends and interpreted as if he were coming of age, a ritual that introduces him to a life of women, sex and alcohol. In isiZulu literature, the adoption of a city identity and the attendant loss of cultural values are associated with a slide to criminal life. One post-apartheid novel with a character closely resembling S'fiso's characterization is Sibiya's **Kuxolelwa Abanjani** (2002). In this narrative, the character's adoption of urban influences and identity pushes him into a life of crime.

The depictions of Ghetto Professor and Menzo reveal deep-seated convictions about good city life. Both are quasi-criminals, whose lifestyles consists of loud music accompanied by shouts of merriment in the evenings, and days spent hanging out on the veranda of the flat, puffing away dagga and sizing up passers-by. Their libertine behaviour, fashion styles and substance abuse are far from being perceived as atonement for the lack of a sound social base grounded in a sound family life, but are misconstrued as success and freedom. Ghetto Professor's dress style becomes a magnet for many women including materialistic, adventurous women such as Portia, and innocent girls, whom he infects with the HIV virus. Equally Welile and Foxy's life encounters in the city, their illicit activities and secret involvement create an illusion of a good meaningful life for them.

**Gaz' Lam**'s dramatization of migration and city life offers a balanced perspective, contrary to that of isiZulu literature which instills a one-sided view in *tandem* with the past government's influx control policies. IsiZulu fiction is seemingly unable to move beyond postulating the countryside and the city as mutually exclusive binaries. The post-apartheid novel that reflects on this is Mathenjwa's **Ithemba Lami** (1994). This novel explores HIV/AIDS within the context of the city/countryside oppositions. In this novel, the city is not only crime-infested but also a domain where innocent 'country bumpkins' are infected with life threatening diseases that traditional knowledge cannot even begin to comprehend, let alone cure. In Mathenjwa's text, there is a perception that promiscuity of both rural and urban dwellers is differentiated. The indiscreet sexual behaviour of rural dwellers (in Mathenjwa's case, in KwaZulu), since it feeds into the traditional

perceptions of *ubusoka* (a traditional practice where a young man courts numerous maidens), is regarded as of a lesser evil than the practices of urban dwellers.

Furthermore, there is commonality about the perceptions of the spiritual significance of the rural places in both **Gaz' Lam** and isiZulu fiction. Both the filmic narrative and isiZulu fiction regard the rural area as a site of perfection and human completion. Both maintain that a protracted sojourn in the city corrupts human morality and leads to a life of criminality and hedonism. In the series, there is a sense in which the latter view is embraced. In all **Gaz' Lam**'s serials, the rural areas have a special symbolism. It is not only Foxy who returns to the rural areas, when she realizes that her search for a husband who will give her a surname is futile as it also costs her both male and female friendships. Similarly, after Welile's death in the opening episodes of the second series his rural family comes to claim his corpse and take it back to Natal. Furthermore S'fiso, after his fall from stardom in the third series, also returns home to rediscover his music, and reconnects with traditional sounds. In the last series, the rural areas are where S'fiso and Khethiwe romantically reconnect after a long period of separation and misunderstanding.

Perhaps epitomizing the rural place in the life of black people is Ghetto Professor's utterances, when he is about to die from full-blown AIDS: he points out to S'fiso that at least he (S'fiso) has a rural home to return to when things have gone bad, unlike himself who has been "born, bred and buttered" in the urban centres and who has nowhere to turn to. Despite his penitence and supplication with each and every woman he has unwittingly infected with HIV, he finds no solace as they are either already dead, or bitterly vengeful and unforgiving. The reading of the rural locality as the only place for moral and cultural regeneration of Africans after horrible spells in the city prompts critics like Gugler (2003:76), to point out that the notion that Africans belong in the countryside and that the city is destructive and flawed fails to acknowledge that Africans have worked in the mines, in the industries and in the domestic services for generations, and that Africans are well-established in the cities.

**Jim comes to Jo'burg: celebrating a dream in the city through music**

Gugler's views are echoed illustriously in the motif 'Jim comes to Jo'burg.' This motif fully establishes counter-hegemonic discourses, in that it recreates and reaffirms Africans' abilities to carve out an economic niche, through the arts, in an environment that was designed to exclude them from all cultural and socio-economic participation.[65] The theme of 'Jim comes to Jo'burg' was introduced in the late 1940's with the film **Africa Jim**. S'fiso's character is modeled after Dan Odemwah's character, who also left the rural areas to look for employment in the city. His job as a sweeper at a social club exposed him to music talent scouts who noted his beautiful voice when he sang a duet with Dolly Rathebe, another leading character. Both were eventually given a recording contract. Like in **Africa Jim**, S'fiso gets a job as a sweeper at Ziyawa Night Club owned by Jerome, a proprietor who initially treats him with contempt and disdain. S'fiso's work is regarded as a dead-end job by his cousin and his friends, and he has to withstand constant mockery and abuse from them. It is through his work at this club that he meets up with Lerato, a beautiful young singer, who is looking for a break in the music industry. Lerato's character is played by Thembi Seete of Boom Shaka fame, a local kwaito music group whose dance style (a West African popular dance moves known as Kwasa Kwasa) took South Africa by storm in the early 1990s. Thembi Seete's casting, as Watkins (1998) observes with African American films' use of the hip hop musical genre and hip hop stars, is an intervention aimed at harnessing the commercial viability of these music genres, and it positions these films at the crossroads of the youth markets.

**Gaz' Lam**'s incorporation of this musical form invariably transposes all that which is perceived as its underlying imperatives. Kwaito emerged during the early 1990's and presents an admixture of local bubblegum music and international music sounds including hip hop, d'gong, house, ragga and other symbols such as clothing and language that negotiate youth identities. In particular, it is a reaction to the material conditions of

[65] S'fiso's characterization is also informed by the life experiences of one of South Africa's most successful jazz artist. Selaelo Selota also came from Limpopo to Johannesburg to seek employment. His first job was as a sweeper at Kippies in Newton, downtown Johannesburg. His talent as a guitarist was also discovered at this jazz club.

the black underclass youth in the post-apartheid democratic South Africa. Numerous definitions exist of kwaito. Impey (cited in Chrispo, 2003:94) defines kwaito as "the hottest contemporary music of black urban South Africa […] mediated by a complex music industry, the mass media, and by state-of-the-art and modeled images derived from South African and African American inner-city rap/hip hop styles. Furthermore, it is an encompassing term for a popular dance music that is associated with contemporary urban black youth style and identity." Fred Khumalo (1998:17) points out that kwaito "is angry, in-your-face music rooted in urban angst: it speaks of violence, drugs and sex through pared-down, repeated lyrics." He further points out that "over and above the violence, drugs and sex, it also features numbers/music that talk of development and positive issues, for example, urging the youth 'to get up and do it for themselves."[66] According to Watkins (1998:183) authorities in the United States view, the intensification of sexual and violent imagery in popular culture as largely responsible for what is broadly perceived as an erosion of traditional values and escalating youth crime and drug use. Like its rap and hip hop counterparts, kwaito has been singled out as an example of how popular culture allegedly promotes anti-social values and youth nihilism.[67]

In **Gaz' Lam**, the exploitation of this musical genre is devoid of this negativity. Instead, this musical genre is postulated as an imaginative solution to problems of unemployment, youth idleness and low youth self-esteem. Significantly the accessibility of the equipment used for its production not only provides the youth with a chance to actively participate in a cultural form that gives expression to its worldviews, but also gives them a sense of purpose in life. Like hip hop and gangsta rap music, Watkins points out that their initial breakthrough took place in the underground music cultures with entrepreneurial attempts of poor ghettoes and working-class black and Latino youth.[68] It is music associated with

[66] Sunday Times 9th August 1998, 17

[67] The controversy surrounding the composition of a very vulgar kwaito song Sister Bethina is a good example; see the Star of 29 October 2006. The song was a smash hit composed during moments drunken stupor in a night club, where the singer was hired as a DJ. However the song's popularity did not go without its share of criticism from the People Opposing Women Abuse Organization, who objected to the song because it epitomizes the problems of substance abuse, over-sexualization and objectification of women. Equally Love Life objected to the song because it seen as promoting the behaviour that they are trying to discourage. See also B. Peterson (2003) 'Kwaito, 'dawgs' and the antimonies of hustling' in **African Identities**, pp:200-201.

[68] Ibid, 183.

the ‘studio gangsta’. Relying on new technology for its production, it is capable of changing musical tastes and youth trends, it is grounded in the spirit of entrepreneurialship and it is practiced by small, independent rap labels. On comparing Watkins’ observation with Simon Stephen’s (2000) treatise on kwaito and its production and its depiction in the series, there are more commonalities. Stephen is also of a view that the accessibility of the equipment and the favourable conditions for the production of kwaito music allows for the spirit of entrepreneurialship. In the series, kwaito music is depicted as related to the underground music culture associated with clubbing and informal independent music studios. The processes of its production - reliance on music technologies,[69] a small inexperienced production team, its manipulation and eventual commoditization by the greater music industry - are reflective of the appropriation of global practices and are simulated in the series.

In the filmic narrative, the introduction of kwaito music happens as early as episode two, when Lerato visits a club manager, Jerome, in connection with the demo tape she had given him earlier. She wants a gig in Jerome’s bar. Eventually she gets the opportunity but on condition that she becomes Jerome’s lover. Lerato’s characterization explores a number of issues affecting women in show business: their exploitation, and how they also exploit and play influential people against one another in order to realize their aspirations. As soon as she discovers that S’fiso is a talented music producer, she develops feelings for him. These feelings are not given immediate expression while she remains dependant on Jerome, her sponsor and benefactor. She acts on her feelings once S’fiso has helped her record her first album financed by Jerome.

The series gives room for women to make conscious decisions regarding their exposure to exploitation. Lerato is dialectically juxtaposed with Maduvha, a local kwaito idol, who, within the context of the series, needs a breakthrough. Maduvha’s resolve and principled behaviour throughout the period when she seeks S’fiso’s help, contrast sharply with

[69] G. Boloka (2003) indicates that kwaito is an indigenized musical form, mainly produced with the help of technology, in particular the digital audiotapes (DAT) to combine various continental sounds from some of the genres, see ‘Cultural studies and the transformation of the music industry: some reflections on kwaito’ in **Shifting Selves: Post-apartheid Essays on Mass Media, Culture and Identity**, ed. H. Wasserman and S. Jacobs. Cape Town: Kwela Books, pp: 97-107.

Lerato's pretensions to firmness and principled behaviour with Jerome. When Lerato realizes the nature of the business and that her development depends on human and capital resources that she does not possess but which Jerome as an experienced and well-connected bar proprietor has, she radically changes. She even convinces her morally upright mother to allow her to move in with Jerome. Ironically, her smash hit underpins the contradictions of her character. The song's message emphasizes honesty and fidelity, attributes that she fails to display as she changes her affections in accordance with her musical needs and career development.

Kwaito, as portrayed in the series, also provides aesthetic solutions. The lumpen origins of kwaito invariably affect the aesthetic imperatives of this musical genre. According to Peterson (2003:197) "the accolades are for the intricate mix of players that produce and consume kwaito music in ways that ensure that its 'ridim an tings' continue to rule the swing in township across South Africa." Lerato's music exemplifies the aesthetic appeal of incorporating not only international but also traditional sounds that reflect what has been achieved through the Maskandi music genre. S'fiso's refining of Lerato's song is heavily dependant on the Maskandi music sounds that he has been socialized into by his late father. Through S'fiso's sampling of Maskandi music, he seems to affirm versatility of earlier urban identities in the construction of kwaito-lubricated contemporary identities. According to Boloka (2003) musical evolution from the Maskandi genre to kwaito indicates that the historical development of kwaito is a manifestation of a changing society.

Maskandi (also called Mazkande and Maskanda) according to Coplan (1985:186) and Nhlapho (1998:16) is a music form which comprises traditional tunes performed on Western instruments by proletarian guitarists. Furthermore, Nhlapho (1998) defines Maskandi music as a "Zulu musical genre that is the domain of Zulu strolling musicians." Crozier (1993) defines it "as musicians most often seen wandering along the road, plucking at the strings of the guitar and singing in a low mournful voice to no-one in particular" (cited in Nhlapho (1998), 17). Maskandi remains true to its lumpen origins, despite the incorporation of modern Western instruments. It has a broad popularity base

amongst a variety of linguistic groupings, and reaffirms a specifically African cultural identity and expressive mode. S'fiso's incorporation of Maskandi musical form is both an acknowledgement of the journey made by black urban music, as well as anchoring kwaito, seen as a highly fluid musical form susceptible to various international influences, to Afrocentric identity. Kwaito, like Maskandi music, is presented in the series as a means for constructing an urban African identity which, through its own narratives and images, addresses itself to the squalid, harsh and hostile urban landscapes.

Despite the fact that the Maskandi musical genre can be traced to the early times of African urbanization, isiZulu literature has given credence to this art form only after the 1994 democratic elections. IsiZulu literature has been indisposed to realize the centrality and the role of popular musical forms which, in composition and presentation, are not only cultural innovations by urbanized Africans but are also legitimate mouthpieces of the broader African society against socio-political and economic injustices. In isiZulu literature, throughout the cultural evolution of black modernity, this form of musical genre, like Marabi, was associated with the underclass and therefore dismissed as holding no cultural value, in spite of its logical connection with the oral verbal art form of traditional praise poetry.

It is ironic that the absence of narrative recreations in isiZulu literature of the Maskandi relevance in contemporary society in the last century occurs against a context where in academic debates, contemporary extensions of the praise poetry tradition received attention and many folklorists and culturalists remarked on the resilience with which oral verbal art forms continue to find expression in contemporary art forms. The dismissive attitudes occasioned by earlier isiZulu fiction of the Maskandi musical genre explain the failure of this literary tradition to engage with the cultural significance of musical forms such as kwaito in post-apartheid novels. IsiZulu literature acts as a self-appointed guardian of society, and kwaito, which gives vent to the ‘‘rough-sides of popular black youth culture (Boyd 1995: 314, cited in Peterson 2003: 200), definitely does not qualify as an exemplary virtuous cultural phenomenon for the instruction of African youth.

As mentioned earlier, the treatment of Maskandi as an imaginative and cultural solution that addressed itself to certain social disparities occurred only well into the democratic period. Both **Usumenyezelwe Umcebo** (2005) by Mngadi and Sibiya's **Ngidedele Ngife** (2006) explore different aspects of Maskandi music, ranging from composition to recording and performance. These are novels by seasoned progressive and budding Zulu authors respectively, who have been exposed to current debates about the role of oral verbal art forms in contemporary African society and have thus introduced these debates in through work. Although Sibiya's **Ngidedele Ngife** (2006), makes a peripheral remark about the kwaito genre, the text's focus is on the Maskandi genre. This occurs in spite of the fact that kwaito music is more realistic and inclusive of the experiences of the black people than the Maskandi's self-adulatory practice of the praise poetry tradition. The elitist celebration of Maskandi music in isiZulu fiction limits the capturing of diverse black social experiences often invoked in kwaito lyrics and imagery, and ironically glorifies individual experiences refracted in Maskandi music, often expanding them to be representative of the whole African experience. In view of this latter aspect, **Gaz' Lam**'s inclusion of kwaito as an evolving musical genre, incorporating both modern and traditional styles, is an area that marks it as different. **Gaz' Lam**'s view of kwaito as constitutive of some of the social and aesthetic dilemmas of black cultural expression reveal facets through which this musical genre can be salvaged from its earlier associations with the underworld and menacing youth subcultures.

**Articulating re-marginalisation through tsotsitaal**

Another black cultural expression regarded in mainstream debates as a menace of youth subcultures is tsotsitaal. The use of tsotsitaal in **Gaz' Lam** like the use kwaito music, underscores the locations of the counter-discourses of the re-marginalized youth post-1994 society. Tsotsitaal is also a vehicle for identity construction, and is representative of social classes and cultural spaces. **Gaz' Lam**'s inclusion of this language variety as discursive options for its youthful characters is reflective of the dominance of this contradictory linguistic variety in black urban cultural identity construction. Like kwaito, this linguistic variety has in the past, been associated with the underworld, the rebellious,

the uncouth and the black youth. Both Ntshangase (1995) and Makhudu (1995, 2002) point out that tsotsitaal developed as an argot, a criminal language. Although tsotsitaal's origins denotes resistance and defiance, over time this perspective changed to reflect a "spontaneous in-group outcome of social and linguistic interaction among equals or those sharing similar socio-cultural values and perspectives" (Makhudu 1995:298). The past South African socio-political order precipitated perceptions of a shared black social experience, and tsotsitaal transcended linguistic, political and ethnic boundaries**.** Glaser (1990) further adds that young black children growing up in Gauteng identified more with criminals than with professionals. This resulted in the increased use of languages associated with criminals. Thereafter tsotsitaal and iscamtho[70] no longer reflected "the life of the underworld but that of the young and urban-wise, assuming an urban identity, which distinguished itself from the rural identity of migrant workers" (Glaser cited in Ntshangase 1995:292 -293). Makhudu (1995:301) shares this opinion and emphasizes the popular perceptions of its users; that they definitely associate themselves with urban life and they are also superior to non-users, who are stigmatized as 'country bumpkins.'

The use of tsotsitaal as a preferred linguistic variety in **Gaz' Lam** not only underpins the street conscious identity of the characters, but, as Jeffries and Hall note, as with kwaito music, it is also a site for black popular styles which are capable of describing more fully the emotions and circumstances black urban residents encounter, as well as the site that defines what it is contemporary. The language is spoken for the black popular ear (Jeffries, 1992:159). Tsotsitaal in **Gaz Lami,** is no longer a language variety reflecting resistance to the hegemonic mainstream, but speaks fundamentally of the post-apartheid urban youth experience of re-marginalization and their disillusionment with the realities that structurally force them out of the economic mainstream. There have been attempts in isiZulu literature to incorporate this language variety. Novels like Sibiya's **Kuxolelwa Abanjani** (2004), Ngubo's **Yekanini Ukuzenza** (1994) and a number of Masondo's

[70] A criminal language that emerged in the early decades of the 20th century among the black youth gangs from which tsotsitaal developed. For a detailed discussion see Ntshangase (1995) 'Indaba yami i-straight: language and language practices of Soweto' in R. Mesthrie (ed.) **Language and Social History: Studies in South African Sociolinguistics**, pp. 291 – 297 and Ntshangase's (1993) unplublished MA Thesis, **The Social History of Iscamtho**.

post-1994 detective stories, appropriate tsotsitaal, but in all these texts, original dominant views regarding its users prevail. The characters are fixated in the underworld.

The stigma with which tsotsitaal and its speakers are associated generally and in isiZulu literary tradition in particular, operates on a gross oversight. Earlier research has fuelled certain stereotypical views which later permuted to its linguistic characteristics. Despite the fact that the tsotsitaal variety is an old form that can be traced to the turn of the twentieth century, interest in this language phenomenon only emerged from the 1980s. Around this time Language Boards tasked to oversee linguistic and literary issues of African languages had created dominant stultifying views regarding formal and standard languages. The exclusionist tendencies that resulted from isiZulu standardization processes and the outcry about the purity of the language that saw the ambiguous status of isiZulu spoken in the cities, particularly in Johannesburg, were equally responsible for the rejection of further urban linguistic varieties like *iscamtho* and tsotsitaal.

The linguistic aspects that make up this language variety were initially not of interest as it was seen as an urban language mix which was circumscribed to a few speakers mainly from the underworld. Both Slabbert (1994) and Makhudu (1995) initially were of the opinion that this language variety relied on Afrikaans for structure. However by the early 2000's some fascinating features of tsotsitaal were discovered by Mulaudzi and Paulos (2001). In their study of the Venda variety of tsotsitaal, they discovered that it developed from the isiZulu lexical structures used in tsotsitaal. Their conclusion suggested that isiZulu is the substratum and Afrikaans is the basilect. Perhaps the most illuminating finding about the nature of the linguistic characteristic of tsotsitaal and the view that it is one of the isiZulu varieties is the contribution of Rudwick (2005:307). She used a Fergusonian framework to unravel some of the intriguing dynamics at work regarding the relationship between the South African standard languages and urban variations. Her findings refute earlier perceptions about the linguistic attributes of tsotsitaal and prove that in spite of the ambiguous status of tsotsitaal among isiZulu speakers, "isiZulu is the matrix language and main lexifier of the tsotsi variety and hence the language is lexically more similar to what Ntshangase (1995, 2002) previously referred to as *iscamtho*."

Recent findings regarding the position and status of tsotsitaal help in situating films like **Gaz' Lam** and **Yizo Yizo** within the isiZulu literary domain. The interchangeable use of isiZulu language and tsotsitaal is reflective of linguistic trends in contemporary African society. This interchangeable use of language not only captures key moments in the social development of the urbanized African society but it is also a frank and honest depiction of the realities of their everyday existence in post-apartheid period which can be best articulated in a form that has come through history as non-mainstream.

**Conclusion**

The intertextual reading of certain thematic concerns in **Gaz' Lam** and isiZulu literature reflect certain modalities of thought in the public domain. The commonalities of popular discourses which these artistic forms have incorporated into their narratives not only attest to the contemporaneousness of the issues raised, but the responses of these artistic forms to black experiences in post-apartheid South Africa reveal differing standpoints. The filmic narrative reflects sensitivity to the contradictions that animated and shaped the history of South African cinema and thus endeavours in its representations, to correct and redirect dominant public debates about certain issues affecting black South Africans. IsiZulu literature, on the other hand, follows the terrain already laid down by its literary convention regarding similar issues.

The issues discussed relate to culture and change, migration and the musical motif. The historical emergence of change, which was a consequence of a clash of civilizations remains a remarkable source of inspiration for the composition of modern day narratives. The theatrical recasting of the clash of civilizations is intended to explore a variety of aspects about cultural change or resistance or resilience in contemporary African society. The treatment of arranged marriages in both the filmic narrative and numerous isiZulu novels dramatizes this aspect, and its treatment in the post-apartheid context reveals numerous transitions that the black society has undergone. This transition is more aptly captured in **Gaz' Lam** than in isiZulu fiction. In isiZulu fiction, the recasting of this

theme is circumscribed and limited to the tribal lands of antiquated pre-colonial society. This approach invariably compels a reading that does not transgress the colonial, postcolonial, apartheid and post-apartheid epochs that the African society has gone through. Furthermore, the rendition of this theme in isiZulu fiction fixates the African identity on past sensibilities that refuse to acknowledge that Africans have since colonial times responded to the Western modernizing influences which radically changed their identities. Their urban existence at the turn of the twentieth century forcefully inscribed an urbanized identity through cultural innovations. The latter aspect is recreated illuminatingly in **Gaz' Lam**. Its treatment of arranged marriages in a post-apartheid context gives testimony to the stubbornness of certain abhorred cultural practices, and at the same time depicts an array of contemporary strategies that Africans use to challenge them. Thus **Gaz' Lam** advances pro-feminist imperatives: the debates about the merits of education and relocation are suggested as strategies to deal with these antiquated tribal practices. Khethiwe's embodiment of these strategies gives her a chance to realize her aspirations. These strategies not only advance the discourses on the issue, since isiZulu fiction's rendition of the theme seems fixated, but they also bring about freshness as the context in which they are recreated in the filmic narrative is closer to the present reality.

Migration is another issue discussed in the chapter. **Gaz' Lam**'s approach to this form of economic movement is stripped of its past associations of land dispossession and labour recruitment to encompass often overlooked cultural issues; particularly frustrations with traditions. S'fiso's migration is necessitated by the unbending application of tradition to the private lives of people under traditional authority. Through recreations of social experiences that animate S'fiso's life in the city, the discussion has pointed out key features of the filmic narrative's renditions that are either similar or different to the renditions of the same issues in isiZulu fiction. Key similar features in both artistic traditions relate to the perceptions of the city in the public sphere, employment and survival. However, more significantly is how both artistic traditions perceive the city and the rural places as mutually exclusive binaries where the rural places are perceived as in a dialectical opposition to the city. In addition, the rural areas are postulated as localities of moral regeneration, cultural reconnection and a place of refuge. Although **Gaz' Lam**

offers a balanced view of these binaries as opposed to the one-sided representations by isiZulu fiction, there is a reading that constantly underlines the dominant perception that Africans cannot exist meaningfully, and therefore do not belong in the city.

In conclusion the structural use of the musical motif, to explore emerging musical forms such as kwaito, is a significant area which marks **Gaz' Lam** as different from isiZulu fiction. The representation of this urban musical form as holding key solutions to post-apartheid crises such as the youth problem, masculinity, employment and the aesthetics of black expressive art, is an area of the filmic narrative that gives credence to the role of black cultural innovations. By contrast, isiZulu fiction has only started to address these themes well into the post-apartheid context. Furthermore, **Gaz' Lam**'s referencing of the Maskandi musical genre as representing continuities as well as providing aesthetic dimensions to kwaito music not only emphasizes the connections of black urban musical forms to traditional oral verbal art forms, but also salvages its image from past associations as a musical form that celebrates the debased lifestyles of urban centres. Probably **Gaz' Lam**'s choice of the tsotsitaal language underscores this observation. Tsotsitaal, just like kwaito, has been perceived as the language of the underworld and criminal youth, but over time it has become the language of urban youth that has assisted them in expressing their urban experiences and in constructing their urban identities.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Narrativising crime in South Africa: Yizo Yizo and Kuyoqhuma Nhlamvana

One of the major issues perceived to be a direct threat to the newly attained democracy in post-apartheid South Africa is the swiftness with which crime emerged as a reality in the public domain, overriding other key socio-historical transformative factors. Crime generated debate, and a large body of scholarship emerged as attempts were made to dissect and understand its pathology in the post-apartheid context. Emerging views from these discourses began to build an ever-increasing picture into this ominous and historically rooted phenomenon. The spatiality and temporality of literature and film in society makes it inevitable that they also reflect on it. Thus the drama series **Yizo Yizo,** and the Zulu novel, **Kuyoqhuma Nhlamvana,** as part of the public discourse, are also insightful in examining this phenomenon in post-apartheid South African society. These texts enter into a dialogue with the existing scholarship and the public domain concerning the vantages points from which to explore and explain crime in the first ten years after the 1994 democratic elections. Significantly not only new insights in our understanding of crime are excavated from these texts but also contrasting the film and the novel opens up new departures in narrativizing crime in isiZulu fiction.

The chapter outlines recent scholarship on crime, a crucial undertaking for understanding youth identities and subjectivities in **Yizo Yizo**'s representations of the phenomenon. The next section focuses on **Yizo Yizo**'s examination of the crime question, and the final section reads the series with a view to evaluating **Yizo Yizo**'s influences in setting a trend for narrating crime in **Kuyoqhuma Nhlamvana**.

### Tracing criminal behaviour in South African society

Current research on the crime situation reveals that the crisis is in fact a sedimentation of a web of criminal interconnectivity that spans centuries. Gordon (2006) traces the 'criminogenetic' past of crime to the onset of the colonial period, focusing on activities,

such as the tot system, battering, and appropriation of Africans' land, all of which whilst viewed as non-criminal by the colonial mainstream community and the colonial administration were in fact criminal deeds that laid foundations for the complex criminal culture besieging the post-apartheid context. She points out that the injustices to which the subjugated black people were subjected, starting with the colonial period, crystallized during the apartheid Afrikaner period, cultivated a culture of vengeful retribution that laid the patterns of a culture of violence today.

The other side of her arguments relate to political processes in general. By comparing South Africa with other transforming Third World and some European countries, she is able to ascribe violent crime to the inevitability of political transformation. She notes that countries undergoing political transition – Poland, Hungary, Brazil – have often discovered that the costs of liberation may include the availability of new criminal opportunities and the weakening of social controls that might previously have operated to resist them. Democratizing countries are usually poor, and many have adopted economic policies that have increased unemployment and inequality. Countries emerging from conflict are particularly likely to have high levels of violence as former insurgents take up ordinary crime (Gordon, 2006: 94).[71] Most significant in her views is that the opening of national borders in South Africa in the 1990's saw a sharp increase in crime and violence as organized crime groups proliferated, seeing South Africa as a crime destination. This in turn internationalized South Africa as a hotbed of crime. The sophistication of syndicated crime, and the slow success in apprehending and prosecuting the culprits led to unprecedented crime levels in the country. The latter aspect is very important as **Kuyoqhuma Nhlamvana** has interwoven international organized crime into its plot structure.

Linked to organized crime that infiltrated the borders of the country is the analysis of gang culture and political violence within the country. According to Butchart et. al. (2000), Glaser (1990) and Gross (1992) industrialization, the criminalization of unemployed black youth, economic exclusion and many other injustices are also the root

[71] See also Schärf et. Al. (2001), **Crime Wave: The South African Underworld and Its Foes**.

cause of the evolution of gang culture in the 1930s, 1940s and the 1950s. Social and economic dead-ends faced by township youth created a lumpen class on the fringes of the economy, and their continued existence created an impression that survival in the urban centres can be possible outside the mainstream economy, a magnet for groups of youth brought up amid the chaos created through the disruption of African lives. Furthermore, the state's strategies to combat juvenile delinquency and gang culture failed according to Glaser (1990), as this

> created a massive population of influx-refugees who lived a shadowy illegal existence in the townships. Hounded by police and without any chance of finding legal employment, their best chances for urban survival lay in joining criminal street gangs (cited in Gordon, 2006: 106).

The face of criminal violence changed when political violence came to the fore from the 1960s onwards. According to Butchart et. al. (2000:36-37):

> The mark of a society in the grip of sovereign power is the strategic deployment – both by the state and by its opponents – of violence as a mechanism by which the informal centres of control and resistance display themselves to the public eye, asserting and confirming their might through their capacity to create spectacles of death and destruction.

In South Africa the 1960s marked and defined for the next three decades state and counter-state violence that was characterized by "[…] a time when violence was only nominally a crime, in violation of the law."[72] During this phase, both the state and the "armed struggle" activists regarded criminal violence as legitimate and saw no alternative.

In terms of the gang culture that has been steadily solidifying, 'the slide across the boundaries between political and criminal violence' (Simpson, 1997) marked a new wave

[72] Ibid, 37.

that was to characterize the political landscape of the 1980s and the 1990s. According to Gordon (2006:107), the politicized youth congresses reached out to mobilize gangs and they responded.[73] A number of destabilizing factors occurred: the call to make the country ungovernable, the culture of gun ownership and significantly, the long-established pattern of violence and counter-violence was spiralling out of control. Even more disturbing was the constituency of the student movement, as it comprised an admixture of political radicals and hoardes of unruly non-political youth who were spurred to join it by the chaos created by the call to make the country ungovernable. The latter swelled the ranks of the student movement and some had eventually infiltrated the student leadership by the turn of the 1990s. Lack of political direction and the exclusion of the activists' youth from political participation at leadership level facilitated a breakdown in a common vision that characterized the youth of the 1980s. This resulted in a schism between the visions of the ANC leadership, and the activities of the youth on the ground, initiating a formidable crime wave period just before and immediately after the elections.

**Yizo Yizo** and **Kuyoqhuma Nhlamvana**'s iconography of crime draws extensively from these socio-political realities, particularly of the early 1990s: the crisis in education (Sisulu and Everatt, 1992; Ramphele 1992; Mokwena 1992) the presence of criminal elements and the militarized youth activists as part of the student body, Gross (1992), calls this youth cultural evolvement, a crisis of youth resistance culture; the infiltration of the country by organized crime syndicates; economic policies that led to retrenchments sharply increasing unemployment. The inscriptions of the crises in the series and the novel are captured in a notion raised by Altbeker (2001:25) that:

> The institution of law is rooted shallowly in the consciousness of some of the citizens of South Africa […] In this context society in general and the police in

[73] Gross (1992) substantiates this view and further points out that the expansion of secondary schooling also had a contradictory effect in that it bridged the gap between street subcultures and student movements by bringing the mobs and surplus children from the streets to the classroom. This reason coupled with infrastructural and structural problems of black education facilitated the response of black youth who have always perceived themselves as having been imposed with a raw deal. For further discussion, see Gross (1992).

> particular, are not so much as dealing with criminals, they are dealing with the outlaws, people who are outside the reach of the law and whose identities have not been shaped by the law; people whose relationship with the world is not mediated by the social relations which the law is premised on, and seeks to guarantee and uphold.

Not only did the failings of political situations aggravate matters in the psychologies of some citizens, in such a scenario, but the complexities accompanying the evolution of youth subcultures took on even darker turns and chilling twists. Investigations by Segal, et. al.'s (2001) into incarcerated black youths reveal harrowing accounts that animate the psychologies of these youngsters: the gross desensitization to violence, killing and death; self-consciously fashioned criminal careers; materialism and hedonism; nihilistic attitudes; indifference to the consequences of crime: and the fact that crime is sometimes tolerated, celebrated, accepted and endorsed in post-apartheid society. The empirical evidence gathered by Segal et. al. underpins the characterization of the criminal elements in both **Yizo Yizo** and **Kuyoqhuma Nhlamvana**.

Observations by Marks (2001) relating to lack of recreational facilities, dysfunctional families, and structural unemployment which drew many youths into what Moller (1991) called 'semi-leisure activities' are evident in the representations in **Yizo Yizo** and **Kuyoqhuma Nhlamvana**. All of these are manifestations of social, economic and political deprivation, and in many ways contribute to socially mutilated life, social insecurity, idleness and marginalization. An analysis of crime representations in the texts reflects that social patterns localized in the broader society inevitably play themselves out in the school ground. The school is separated by an imaginary permeable boundary with the larger society. Yet in the South African context, since the late 1970's the black school grounds have seen a conflagration of mainstream and anti-mainstream youth culture: "school grounds became not just a battle field […] but also a melting point where a variety of youth subcultures (school cultures, student movements and street cultures, etc.)

combined to form a national resistance culture" (Gross, 1992:203).[74] There is constant osmosis between the societal relations at large and the school, breeding in its wake a vicious cycle of social relations, either desirable or undesirable.

Key to understanding the continuance of crime in the broader society and in schools is Schärf's observations regarding revolutionary change in civil societies. He points out that "history has shown that revolutions do not automatically eradicate all cultural styles that come to be seen as undesirable, outdated or incompatible with the new social order, even if profound structural changes take place" (cited in Gross, 209).[75] This view seems to be both the running commentary and point of departure for **Yizo Yizo** and **Kuyoqhuma Nhlamvana**. However, the driving impulse behind representations of crime seem to be diagnostic, and their interventionist strategies aimed at youth cultures in order to change them from within and from the ground up. Gross (1992:209) echoes this view when he points out that "efforts towards changing the structures and social relations should be dialectically linked to active intervention at the level of youth culture to counter the degenerating cultural forms which are becoming increasingly endemic in society; social crime, drugs and alcohol abuse." Both Mngadi and the creators of **Yizo Yizo** returned to this perspective in the late 1990s and early 2000s giving form to it by carefully laid out narratives which dramatizes criminal behaviour and different intervention strategies for dealing with it.

**Summary of Yizo Yizo**

**Yizo Yizo** is about the experiences of a school community of Supatsela High School and the general community of Daveyton where Supatsela High is located. Both the school and the general community are besieged by gangsters, who sell drugs to local school-going youth and subject the communities in general to acts of violence. **Yizo Yizo**

[74] See also Sisulu Elinor et. al. (eds.)' treatment of the issues in a CASE (Community Agency for Social Enquiry) conference organized by JEP (Joint Enrichment Project) in 1991 which was devoted to debates and discussions about marginalized youth or the 'lost generation,' in **Black Youth in Crisis: Facing the Future**.

[75] See also Simpson, (2001), 'Shock Troops and Bandits: youth, crime and politics', in **Crime Wave: The South African Underworld and Its Foes**. pp: 115-128.

presents two types of gangsters: hardcore ruthless gangsters and soft gangsters, the Robin hood-bandits who always mediate between hardcore gangsters and the community. Zakes, Thiza's brother falls into this latter category. On the first day of school, which is ghettoized in keeping with the township, the atmosphere of a crime-infested community is recreated through the depiction of school boys, Javas, Bobo and Sticks, having painted graffiti on the classrooms walls on the eve of the school's re-opening. In addition during the course of that day, gangsters, Chester and Papa Action drop in and harass little girls in full view of the school. Papa Action is also a school-going youth and Chester is a former student who has just returned from jail. The gangsters baptize Bobo in the toilet, an act that crystallizes this 'criminogenetic' atmosphere in this school. All of the gangsters' activities occur despite the sternness of the principal, Mr Mthembu, and some morally accountable teachers, like Edwin.

This black television series also depicts hopes, histories, romantic entanglements, and the aspiration of a cross-section of youth, both female and male. Young boys and girls such as Thiza, Javas, Nomsa and Hazel have dreams of successful careers, and yet some, like Mantwa, Bobo and Sticks, because of the influence of a truncated township life, are without dreams. Others, like Gunman and Thulas, attempt to atone for lost years in youth political activism by ingratiating themselves in schools, despite being aware that their dreams have been shattered by politics. Unemployment also forces such militarized youth back to school in fear of idleness in the township that can propel them towards crime. Not only has politics destroyed the future of youth in the context of **Yizo Yizo**, but scrupulous and morally dubious teachers are responsible for the futureless life of girl children like Snowy, Hazel's sister, who has been impregnated and dumped by Ken, a teacher.

The private lives of both teachers and students intermingle with school life. Javas, who has been paying undue attention to Nomsa steals her bag and gives it to a local hobo, Scavenger. Nomsa tries in vain to get it back from Scavenger and is late for school. She is severely punished by Mthembu. Mthembu's strict disciplinarian approach to education proves to be no match for the changing students' libertarian attitude, and that of his subordinates and parents. Once he gets embroiled in a case of heavy-handedness towards

the students and some teachers, instead of apologizing and assuring both the parents and the departmental officials that he will desist from corporal punishment, he offers to resign from his post. His departure marks the beginning of uncontrollable chaos in the school.

An unfit gangster-aligned teacher is appointed to act as principal, over-looking good, dedicated teachers such as Edwin, who would have been a better choice. The new acting principal, Ken, is heavily indebted to Bra Gibbs, the mafia king for whom Chester and Papa Action work. The gang activities intensify in the school, leading to the disruption of classes, destruction of the school building and the sexual molestation of Dudu by Papa Action. The school takes collective action and these gangsters are banished from school. Ken is dismissed and a new principal Grace Letsatsi is employed. However the gangster strike back with impunity. They initially concentrate their activities outside the school premises – such as selling drugs through the school fence, but thereafter engaging in sporadic disruption of the classes. Grace uses an approach that involves the whole communty to address the problem of gangsterism and drugs in the school. Eventually the community is spurred to act and these gangsters are apprehended and handed over to the police.

**Summary of Kuyoqhuma Nhlamvana**

The story paints the life of Nyathi, who, after being retrenched and subsequently divorced is forced to give up his middle class lifestyle for an underclass one in a township called Sobantu in Pietermaritzburg. He gets an RDP[76] house and befriends his neighbours, the Sokheles, who strongly advise him to start a transportation business in order to survive. Together with Sokhele, they transport school children with their vans. Nyathi's wife finds out about his new source of income and files for child maintenance. The maintenance of his two children becomes a problem: he is left with half of what he makes from the transportation business after paying maintenance. In order to augment his earnings, he gets involved with a gangster group transporting dagga (marijuana) from the rural areas

[76] These are the two or three roomed houses that were built during the Reconstruction and Development Programme after the elections to address the housing problem in South Africa.

to the city. He gets substantial sums from this deal and starts to extend his house. He invites Sokhele to join in. Sokhele, however, is arrested on the very first day he transports dagga back to the city, and is sentenced to twenty years in jail.

Sokhele's arrest and imprisonment does dot dissuade Nyathi from carrying on with these deals. Instead, together with his Indian dealer, Moodley, they decide to transport different types of chemical drugs such as Mandrax, cocaine and ecstasy. These drugs are from Colombia. Nyathi's mandate is to transport them from the harbour to the rural areas, where they are to be stashed until buyers from all over the continent come to buy them in bulk. Because of the nature of this new deal, he invites Sokhele's son, Jabulani, to be both a peddler to school boys and the transporter of these drugs. Jabulani, who is no novice to criminal activity, since he previously stole his father's dagga to sell to his school friends, executes his job with perfection.

The availability of drugs to schoolchildren brings about crime in the area. With the establishment of the gang culture that operates from gang corners and hide-outs, the escalation of drug-related problems compel the school, the community and the local councillors to invite social workers to address students about the problem of drugs in and drug addiction in the society. The crime rate soars further, and local police fail to deal with this problem, since Nyathi has corrupted the station commander. The community through their local councilors, writes to the National Prosecuting Authority and the Scorpions[77] are called in. They are able to uncover Nyathi's syndicate and he is arrested along with all the other members of his criminal chain.

**In the belly of the beast: Yizo Yizo's challenge to the underbelly**

Scholarship on **Yizo Yizo**, particularly by Smith (2000) and Andersson (2004) focuses extensively on the depictions of violent crime. The deep-rooted, complex nature of crime in black society conjures up an analogy of the belly of the beast. **Yizo Yizo**'s hard, in-your-face kind of representations of violent crime, evoked consternation in the public

[77] This is the term assigned to the National Prosecutor's detective wing.

domain when it was first flighted, prompting Smith to raise concerns about the centrality and glamorization of violence in it. Smith's concerns have since been explored by Peterson's (2003) who looks at how celebratory images that exalt misogyny and thuggish life, a phenomenon that has come to animate and shape post-apartheid youth subcultures, introduce ambiguity in the reading of **Yizo Yizo.** Smith's concerns are also taken up by Andersson (2004), who explores representations of different types of violence. These range from political violence, violence against women, to lifestyle violence. The reading of **Yizo Yizo** against its crime orientation is fuelled by the centrality of this thorny issue in the wider public domain.[78] Particularly during the second round of general elections in 1999, the question of crime featured prominently, although the government responses comprised contradictory, muted and almost acquiescing perceptions since the progenitors of crime comprised youth that was the engine behind the liberation struggle.[79] However, on considering past drama series churned out by black television, it must be noted that violent crime has been a constant feature in many of these films right from the 1980's. Crime was a standard feature adopted from South African Black Cinema and other film traditions the world over, but never has the topic elicited so much interest in the public domain as it has been demonstrated with **Yizo Yizo**. In spite of the claim by its creators of its ground breaking status, the series has built on images and representations that predate it. The shocking revelations of post-apartheid realities make it different because it has been able to ruffle consciences regarding the multitudes of black youth, whose lives were disrupted in the service of the armed struggle and the re-marginalization they experienced after the democratic dispensation, in the rush by the higher political echelons to self enrichment - a tapestry that illuminates the contours of the 'black diamond' political and economic life.

Like many films before it, **Yizo Yizo** offers a crime prevention philosophy, which Steinberg (2001:6) cynically calls a philosophy of telling youngsters how to be nice […] animated by the idea that problems can be solved before their symptoms erupt. **Yizo Yizo**

[78] According to the Mail and Guardian 12 February 2008, the crisis in crime control has become the major reason white collar and blue collar workers emigrate from South Africa to New Zealand and Australia.
[79] See also Laufer's (2001) analysis of Sidney Mofamadi's policies in transforming the South African Police Service institution and its capacity to combat and prevent crime, in the **Crime Wave** edited by Jonny Steinberg (2001).

dramatizes these interventionist strategies in social groups it believes are central to addressing the crime question in the country. The most disturbing category of youth that the series focus on is the one that came to be known as the 'lost generation'[80], a group consisting mainly of black students, who since the late 1970's, have been directly affected by the operations of the repressive state and the activities of the armed struggle. Remnants of this lost generation are brought into the series through being extrapolated against a new generation of school-going youth. This juxtaposition does not present itself as a rupture but points to continuities that also animate the near nihilistic psychologies of the younger generation whose philosophical outlook is complicated by even harsher socio-economic conditions of the post-apartheid scenario. The lost generation is further triangulated against the institution of the family. However, at this stage of South Africa black social life and political transition, according to Ramphele (1992:19-20), the family has seen numerous attacks from youth throughout the history of political struggle and has gone through various stages of weakening by poverty, overcrowding, migrant labour and the general sense of worthlessness experienced by some adults. As a result it is not adequately poised to cope with the politicized and rebellious youth. The triangulated representations of these generations; the new, the lost and the old serve to demonstrate overlaps responsible for the continuities or discontinuities of the culture of crime in South Africa.

## Confronting re-marginalization: the lost generation's hold on the new one

### Gangsters and schoolboys

Zakes, Thiza's gangster brother, conforms to a Robin hood-kind of banditry. Zakes and Thiza are reared by their grandmother and there is no mention of their parents. Although Zakes is a soft gangster, however he is a formidable operative in the underworld and is significantly influential over Thiza when he is contrasted with their grandmother. Thiza's

[80] I have used the term conscientiously as differing perceptions exist regarding the concept, with some African scholars using it with necessary qualifications that stressed youth alienation and marginalization, whilst others reject the term completely as they regard it as judgmental, masking the processes which have alienated black youth from the sources of wealth and power in the society.

brief spell with Chester and his gang is indicative of this contention and attests to the magnetic hold the gangster lifestyle has on him, which has inevitably been shaped by his exposure to the lifestyle that his elder brother leads. Even though Zakes is a good gangster, the Robinhood kind, that steals for the benefit of the suffering brethren, his connection to the underworld and his chosen lifestyle is the foundational magnet for his little brother, despite the moral intrigues underpinned by the responsibility he feels towards his family, and the responsibility he feels toward his community (episode one). Thiza's dalliance with a life of crime occurs because of misplaced authority, where Zakes' authority over him (Thiza) is not founded on proper traditional principles: he preaches what he does not practice. His actions are just as anti-social as that of Chester and his gang. He cannot provide proper guidance, since he is also a gangster operative. An observation made by Andersson (2004:92), who points out that although Zakes is a good gangster as we do not see him performing acts of violence, we do however see him receiving a stolen car and other goods from Chester, whose violence we witness from close up. Andersson's contention is illuminated in the series through a play out of conflicts and tensions between their piously Christian grandmother, and her grandsons/ attraction to gangsterism, and stems from the view that there are similarities between Zakes' form of gangsterism, and the ruthless violent anti-social type pursued by Chester and Papa Action. Zakes is as dangerous as the latter: he keeps a gun which he tucks under his pillows when asleep (episode one) and the authority he has over Chester and Papa Action in the car spinning scene (episode twelve), indicates that, at one point he was as infamous as Papa Action and Chester, and as such, he is a chip of the old block.

The juxtaposition of Chester and his criminal elements and their ambiance with the younger generation, especially parentless and homeless youngsters such as Bobo and Sticks, speaks of the broader re-marginalization experienced by youth in the post-apartheid scenario. Both these youngsters exhibit endemic degeneracy, some form of moral exile and a pariah status: Bobo's misogyny (episode one), veneration of the underworld, and Sticks delinquency, rebelliousness and attraction to Chester's corner are all indications of alienation. Furthermore their vacillations between the gangster culture

and that of youth militancy (episode thirteen), speak of a deeply embedded aspiration of finding a home and a sense of belonging.

Bobo's dilemma is evident from the expository scene (episode one), where he is torn between a life as a drug peddler, and, or as a schoolboy. His refusal to be Chester's drug pusher earns him the most humiliating experience, baptism in the toilet, where his soul is consecrated to Satan, forming a diabolic connection that dogs him throughout the series. His vacillation between a life of drug addiction and that of yearning to be a better person with money, fast cars, beautiful 'babes' and food blurs his perceptions of the realities of what truly constitutes a good and respectable lifestyle. However, within the context of his formative years as a drug addict, his view of life is circumscribed by visions of an illusionary lifestyle with overindulgence, wealth, power and sexual prowess with superstars, like the Boom Shaka girls or Hazel, the school beauty, whom he claims he would clone in order to produce a hundred copies and keep as sex slaves in his shack (episode one). Thus, while Bobo is part of Javas' group, a group constituted by morally upright boys who vow never to commit crime, a truncated family background as an AIDS orphan, severely reduces Bobo's choices as he has no moral authority over him. When Bra Gibbs' empire, (the mafia king pin for whom Chester and Papa Action work), crumbles he still finds working for him as a mule in the school (episode thirteen) the only viable option, despite the humiliating violent experiences he suffered at the hands of Bra Gibbs' side-kicks, Chester and Papa Action, which included Chester's urinating into his pants (episode seven).

Similar observations can be concluded for Sticks, a teenager enmeshed in a delinquent culture because of an apparent lack of parental authority. According to Albert Cohen (1955) delinquency is a collective, immediate and practical solution to structurally imposed problems (cited in Widdicombe et al, 1995:15). From the moment Sticks is introduced into the filmic narrative, he holds twisted notions of economic redistribution, which involves undercutting the school's drive for textbooks recycling. Sticks' ploy involves stealing and reselling these to negligent students, who are not allowed to register for the new school year unless they present the previous year's textbooks. He subscribes

to a philosophy which correctly assesses black subjectivity as his retort "why blacks have to beg to get things?" indicates, but fails to see that his own philosophy "I won't sacrifice, I'd rather steal", does not emancipate him. His psychological outlook dramatizes what Cloward and Ohlin (1960) describe: a delinquent culture subscribes to middle-class values, especially those related to hedonistic consumption and material status. However, since access to any institutionalized means of realizing these values is restricted, this culture advocates illegitimate means of acquisition (cited in Widdicombe et al., 1995:15). Sticks is representative of the delinquent culture that is informed by the rejection and inversion of middle-class values embedded in the school system and is inevitably poised for a confrontation with principal Mthembu, the gate-keeper and an enforcer of middle-class values.

The most revealing confrontation is epitomized in the brutal punishment he receives from the school principal, Mr Mthembu, because of his wild dreadlock hairdo, emulating a new lady teacher. In addition to being caned in the public school square and having his hairdo crudely cut out, he is made to go around to all the classes to apologize for bringing the school's name into disrepute. Sticks' punishment is not only the principal's preferred manner of instituting law and the attempt to salvage the school's image from future emulators of Sticks, but it is a stark warning to the new lady teacher, Miss Zoe Cele, because of her libertine, democratic views which the principal reads as projected in her dreadlocks. The principal reads the hairdo as reflecting insidious rebellious intentions on her part, and going against everything he knows in his thirty years of experience as a teacher, eight of which he served as a principal at Supatsela High School. The principal's concerns are read by one student, Javas who during the caning session rubs this observation in as he remarks, "*you are next mam, zishubile, yizo yizo*", a somewhat moderate exclamation compared to an earlier one made by Papa Action in the assembly when he insolently shouted: "Rasta Baby" as Miss Cele was introduced.

For Sticks, being surrounded by an adult community which is intolerant of his boyhood experiences, and indifferent to his worth as a person, contributes to the creation of a confused worldview, where the morality of the society he belongs to wafts in and out of

his consciousness, as epitomized by his stealing of a cool drink from the staff room and a school bell which he intends to sell to the Zionist church (episode six). Like Bobo, being envious of Thiza's easy acceptance into Chester's corner culture prompts similar aspirations from Sticks, but to his dismay, whilst Bobo became Chester's human toilet, Sticks is made to drink Chester's urine. The closest he gets to being part of Chester's inner circle of thugs is washing his red convertible BMW whilst enduring abuse (episode seven).

Significant in Chester and Papa Action's representation is the model that dominated the African-American ghetto action film cycle of the 1990s; the dramatization of their social and economic dislocations inevitably played out in their violent, gang culture and anti-social behaviour. In the United States, the commercial success of **New Jack City** and **Boyz 'N the Hood** fuelled an imitative cycle that eventually produced over twenty similarly packed feature-length films between 1991 and 1995 (Watkins, 1998:172). The flighting of **Yizo Yizo** in 1999 followed the US trend and the subsequent production of films like **Hijack Stories, Gaz' Lam, Tsha Tsha** and **Street Journal** continued well-established conventions of the gangster film genre. Some of these conceptions and misconceptions are treated at length by Watkins (1998). In addition, **Yizo Yizo** has drawn on fundamental classical elements constitutive of gang subcultures, as manifested in the British gangs of the 1950's. Chester's gang's activities in the expository scenes of the filmic narrative (episode one) draw on typical gangster visual vocabulary: Bobo's baptism in the toilet, Papa Action's outburst "the school is dead" and his subsequent molestation of a girl whom he kisses forcefully in the glare of other school children and teachers, symmetrically structured with that of Chester's kissing of a teenage girl just before hijacking a van carrying school books, underscore the intensity of the gang's anti-social behaviour.

Maybe the question concerns what makes such behaviour thrive in the society presented by **Yizo Yizo**. Why does no one seem bold enough to challenge them at this stage? The answer lies in what the series aims to expose as fertile conditions for the prevalence of this kind of behaviour. In the aforementioned scene, Chester strolls in and he is

admiringly accosted by Papa Action, who affectionately refers to him as "*my vader*" (my father) as he inquires about his long absence. Just then the principal walks in and calls him "Chesterfield" (a brand name for cigarettes) and casually asks him "what brings you to my school?", almost as if Chester has a right to be at the school, when in fact he is trespassing and has come to disrupt school activities. The principal is afraid of Chester even though he (the principal) is known for his austerity and strict discipline. He knows the boundaries with Chester and Papa Action, whom he merely tapped with his cane when he found him forcefully kissing the girl, as opposed to brutally caning him as he does with Sticks, for a very minor offence.

Furthermore, **Yizo Yizo** seems to project a view that it is not generally structured idleness that is responsible for gang culture in black society, but idleness that stems from lack of effective learning in the classroom that is responsible for breeding anti-social tendencies in the youth. Ken and Louisa are both disinterested teachers, who are interested only in positions and gossip in the school. In addition, Ken's sexually predatory behaviour towards schoolgirls has resulted in him impregnating a schoolgirl, in whom he shows no further interest, whilst Louisa's teaching allows for equally disinterested youths to take advantage of the chaotic situation. In two of her infrequent teaching sessions, Papa Action flies a paper plane with sexually loaded inscriptions at Louisa: "I want to have you for breakfast, lunch and supper" to which she replies: "Some filthy ghetto rat is dreaming. I say to you, you better wake up and go relieve yourself in the toilet", a recommendation which Papa Action acts on (episode three). Much later in the filmic narrative (episode eight), when the gang has fully established itself, Papa Action suddenly jumps on top of the desks and forces everyone to sing, claiming in the process that they have to respect him. He then takes a girl by force intending to rape her, simultaneously brandishing an opened condom at the astounded and helpless Louisa as he menacingly asks her if she wants it too. Papa Action nearly succeeds in raping her (the school girl), but Thulas, the militarized youth saves her.

Equally Papa Action's tyranny outside the classroom - from his disruption of the netball game (episode three), disruption of classes because of the party preparations (episode

six), to his raping Dudu in the chicken coop (episode seven) while Chester crows, claiming that Dudu should be let to die because of her sins - is part of the iconographic representations that underpin the gang's fearlessness and deliberate disregard for social codes because of double standards, truncated morality and the general decay underlying post-apartheid black society. There is an unresolved feeling of them being social scourges, which cannot easily be shrugged off due to societal complicity in their emergence and dominance.

**Sugar daddies and schoolgirls**

Sonnyboy represents another category of the lost generation who have an overwhelming influence on the younger generation, and attests to a newly observed phenomenon constituting girls' subcultures.[81] Girls' subcultural formations, as pointed out by Duck (1983) and Kutnick (1988), are based on trust, loyalty and the confiding of secrets and problems. Just as there are positive elements to their friendship formations, these can also be dogged by negative elements such as jealousy, conflict and emotional tension, an observation made by Susie Orbach (1987). In **Yizo Yizo**, both these propensities in girls' subcultural formations are explored and such exploration is within the politics of family structures. In the filmic narrative, the polarities are between Nomsa on the one hand and Hazel on the other hand. On Hazel's side there is also Mantwa, a girl experienced in the ways of the world and Dudu, an innocent dreamer, who is constantly making up stories to please the members of the group, and hide the fact that she is completely ignorant of the world around her. Just as in some of the boys' cases, the parents and family backgrounds of Mantwa and Dudu are not represented, not even at the times of Hazel and Dudu's rape crises. Hazel represents children who heads up their household, and as pointed out before, such children are susceptible to abuse and exploitation, as has been the case with her sister Snowy and later herself by her sugar daddy, Sonnyboy, a taxi driver.

[81] Throughout the history of the study of youth subcultures, according to Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995), only boys' patterns of behaviour and socializations were studied, totally excluding girls' subcultural formations. This view created a perception that girls' subcultures do not exist. Significant inroads to the study of girls' subcultures were made by Angela McRobbies (1977, 1978a), Griffin (1975), Duck 1983), Kutnick (1988), Tanmen (1991), Aapola (cited in Griffiths 1995). All these scholars' findings into the nature of girls' friendship formation and their networking conformed to subcultural configurations usually observed with boys.

Hazel's relationship with Sonnyboy constitutes one of the most devastating aspects of girls' subcultures. Such relationships do not emancipate them from the prescribed roles of women in the society, but locate them in that intricate position veering between prostitution and dependency on the adult male as a provider. The attraction of school girls to taxi drivers, migrant workers, industrial workers or their teachers, actually to anyone who can afford to provide for them reached epidemic proportions in the mid 1980's, during that critical period of social disintegration and political mayhem (Mabena, 1996)**.** **Yizo Yizo**'s revisiting of the theme is significant inasmuch as it highlights its persistence and how like gangsterism for boys, it remains an alluring alternative for the girls to live out the 'girls' spectacle'.

Hazel's relationship with Sonnyboy acts as a peg on which the narrative of girls' private yearnings and public manifestations of their aspirations for the future, their love lives, disappointments, fears and moments of triumph is staked out. The relationship also projects shortcomings of their own versions or perceptions of boys/men, romantic relationships, sexuality, and generally trappings of Western affluence as these relate to a hedonistic consumerist culture, leisure and material acquisitions. Whilst Nomsa holds views that are commensurate with social morality as pointed out before, the perceptions held by Mantwa, Dudu, and to a lesser extent, Hazel, foreground underlying issues that create conditions for their abuse, molestation and exploitation.

Hazel's representation projects two conflicting aspects about the world of girls attracted to the sugar daddy culture: their ignorance and innocence in their expectation of respectful treatment by the sugar daddies that provide materially for them, yet at the same time, the extent to which they fail to see the moral revulsion attended by this relationship as they flaunt the material gains procured. Before her rape encounter, Hazel has been picked up and dropped at school and after school collected and taken around the township including eating out at flamed chicken restaurants (episode four) or being taken shopping for clothes (episode five). The moral angst attending such display of twisted notions of courtship and material gains presupposes that she understands the nature of the sugar daddy game, and what is expected of her in return of all the gifts and attention showered

on her (episode four). However, her private recollections, which she confides to Mantwa, indicate that she and Sonnyboy do not share a common understanding. Hers is a girlish attraction but when boys of her age and stage in life approach her, she dismisses them because they lack material acquisitions and life experience, as is the case with her dismissal of Thiza (episode five). When Sonnyboy demands sex from her in return for all the gifts he has given to her, she cannot understand and more significantly she is not ready for a sexual relationship, a stance she has taken since the expository scenes of the filmic narrative. Her choice to abstain becomes even more pronounced after her rape, when she grows closer to Thiza. The structural juxtaposition of this relationship with the one she has had with Sonnyboy proves that the latter relationship is tied to the underpinnings of the filmic narrative. This is because Thiza's humble position elicits a sense of mutual respect devoid of objectification and commoditization, an identity she has never had with either the gang members who called her "*is'theshana*" (a girl of no consequence) or "*le nto*" (this thing) who can be possessed by anyone who has the will and power as shown in Papa Action's retort, "Take her she is yours" (episode three) or in Sonnyboy's attitude that mostly surfaced during the rape scene. It is because of Thiza's gentlemanly disposition towards her that a bond of mutual affection and reverence develops between them and she is able to win him back from the gangsters and gang culture.

But what exactly does her relationship with Sonnyboy mean for girls like Mantwa and Dudu. For these girls, their centralization of Hazel's involvement with Sonnyboy in their world explores their models of fantasy life and Mantwa's reckless pursuit of it. This fantasy emerges from the expository scene of the series. Their girl talk in the first episode is about their dream lovers, leisure activities during the December vacations, fashions, house parties and so on. Fantasy underpins their worldview of gangsters, legitimate and illegitimate boyhood experiences of delinquency. An instance of the latter assertion occurs when Chester's introduction is glamorously presented: it is only because of Nomsa's sound values that his glamour is exposed for what it is, "rotten". However to Mantwa, the "rotten" in Chester is what she must have, thus she points out if Chester is "rotten" she "must have a bite" (episode one), and this retort links up with an enactment

of literally biting Chester's apple (episode six). According to Andersson (2004), certain symbols associated with Chester, such as guns, apples, the BMW convertible, clothes and style, function as his personal identity markers on a symbolic level, and sharing these markers with him exposes conscious or subconscious desires of identification with him. Mantwa's biting of Chester's apple functions in a similar way to Thiza's getting into Chester's BMW or carrying his gun, for they underline how close their values have come to Chester's.

Mantwa's perceptions of all types of gangster elements are contradictory. There seems to be no connection between her sexual desires for these chauvinistic misogynistic masculine identities, and the harm they cause to people closest to her. After Dudu's rape, she does not establish links in her fantasies between her dangerous aspirations, and their effects on Dudu's trauma. Her lusting after Zakes and his possessions (episode twelve), is structurally symmetrical to that of lusting after Chester, crystallized in her retort "*ngiyamrhalela yazi*" (I yearn for him you know), a statement that not only reflects yearning for association, but also holds connotations of sexually devouring, underlining the hedonistic consumerist culture and demonstrates that this consumerism lurks as a constant threat to girls' aspirations as it ensures a cycle of violence.

**The youth militants and their hold over the school community**

Even when the members of the older generation are well meaning, as in the case of Thulas and Gunman, the effects of their received cultures are almost nihilistic. The latter two use excessive violence, a residue of the culture of resistance, to bring about change in the school. The chaotic scenes that characterize and accompany their temporary hold over the school almost bring it down. Thulas' age causes Mthembu concern (episode one). From his many years of experience, older boys pose disciplinary problems, and in his view, the school should have not admitted Thulas. Thulas' position ironically exposes the mentality of authoritarian disciplinarians, who endeavor to instil a unilateral militaristic disciplinary system, fail to acknowledge the significant contributions made by youths like

Thulas and Gunman, who revolutionalised the political processes at significant cost to their own lives.

Whilst Thulas is introduced to the filmic narrative early on in the expository scenes, Gunman's introduction comes later, and again his introduction underlines the effects of inconsiderate brutality imposed as discipline in the school. Although the conscientization of these militarized youth is punctuated with a violent culture because of their activism, they share commonality in their response to the criminal elements running the school, and how corrective violence can still be applied in a changed environment underlined by forces other than apartheid. As such, they present a formidable balancing force to the ravages of Chester and Papa Action, and are significant in turning the school around. This is observed in a the episode where Papa Action and Chester sexually assaulted Dudu. Gunman's response to Dudu's rape, symbolized in a tattooed AK47 on his head, momentarily brings mayhem reminiscent of the students' revolt that began with the Soweto Uprising and continued through the turbulent eighties. Outdated as his methods are, he is able to uproot the corrupt deputy principal and the gangsters' base from the school, initiating a series of events that ends with the dramatic hostage-taking of the deputy principal by Thulas, forcing the district office commissioner to intervene in favour of the school community and the general community at large.

Although Gunman and Thulas' response to the gangsters' violence and drugs is couched in violent retaliation, their methods are based on hard, tried and tested procedures that included torture, necklacing of suspected victims, annihilation of the enemy and so forth as indicated in Thulas' horrific drawings of dead mutilated bodies of the victims of apartheid and anti-apartheid violence. These methods are shown to be able to galvanise the community around similar objectives. Following the banishment of Chester's gang from the school, the gang's activities are transported to the community. The community devises means to apprehend the culprits and hand them to the police. Chester, who by this time has maimed Thiza's brother, is cornered, stripped naked and paraded in the community in the most humiliating way and eventually presented to the police by the

vigilantes. It is through the initiatives of these militarized youths that the school community and the community at large are restored to some semblance of normalcy.

**Representations of organized crime and corruption in Kuyoqhuma Nhlamvana**

By assessing and comparing representations of gangster narratives in **Kuyoqhuma Nhlamvana** with those of **Yizo Yizo**, it is apparent that the former text's narrativization about crime is heavily influenced by the latter. However **Kuyoqhuma Nhlamvana** includes new insights, which are either omitted or not central to **Yizo Yizo**'s themes. These omissions include retrenchments, corruption and complete disregard for the law by government institutions such as the traffic department, police institutions and the correctional services. The generational criminal influence discussed in **Yizo Yizo** is given credence in the novel by being contextualized within events that affected the African society as it approached the second decade after the 1994 elections. Changing South African socio-economic policies affected the face of crime, as the ranks of the re-marginalized were swelled by youth, disaffected Mkhonto Wesizwe operatives, international foreigners, other South African racial categories, ex-convicts and some educated Africans affected by restructuring in the corporate business and other economic institutions.

Whereas **Yizo Yizo** places no significant emphasis on drug syndicates and organised crime, **Kuyoqhuma Nhlamvana** represents a broad spectrum of these activities. The novel also explores how these connections and their successes are dependant on the corruption of police officials. Furthermore, certain central concerns such as engineered structural idleness, social fragmentation, family disintegration, economic dislocation, and general social decadence are some of the thematic repertories of **Kuyoqhuma Nhlamvana** which seems to proceed from **Yizo Yizo**. However, the manner in which the novel approaches these issues is different. There is a sense in which it attempts to correct the ambiguous readings of the crime culture in **Yizo Yizo**. In the novel there is only one overwhelming comeuppance of gangsterism. Mngadi's approach to the crime question seems to proceed from certain focus areas - the family, economic policies that lead to

retrenchments, criminal syndicates, exploitation of delinquent youth and a network of criminal behaviour between those imprisoned and those outside prison.

**Family crises, social stratification and racial relations**

**Kuyoqhuma Nhlamvana**'s take on the family crisis goes beyond the parochial view that tends to postulate dysfunctionality as the root source of youth problems and the crime crisis in South Africa. This novel not only ruptures received ideas about the progenitors and the location of crime in the South African society but also situates the crime question within a broader framework, a transboundary context that takes cognizance of the fact that there is an upsurge of criminal networking that cannot be explained by simply attributing it to family dysfunctionality. Mngadi in fact looks at a fully functional family and situates it against socio-economic factors that families cannot manipulate to their advantage. The fundamental issues for Mngadi, it seems, are values that can form a basis for good moral fibre in the society. Both the families of Sokhele and Nyathi are looked at in this way, and these families' activities are postulated against a social conscience, a social gaze, that serves as a moral censure, which serves as a matrix that assesses how far these families have veered off from social morality.

Ironically, this social gaze socializes individuals to certain expectations with regard to social mobility or Western trappings, which are lived out by being displayed and exhibited. Before being retrenched, Nyathi's lifestyle was couched in middleclass comforts, privileges and affluence. His family lived in the suburbs. His children attended mixed race schools. He owned expensive vehicles and had a careered middle class wife. His retrenchment and subsequent loss of family and social status not only propels him to eke out a subclass living, but also in his psychology, he interprets this as a 'great fall' from which he needs to rise again (Mngadi,27,32). Obviously, Nyathi's change of fortunes has been brought about by circumstances that are beyond his control. Seemingly for Mngadi, that is not a burning issue, but what is core is the moral mantle that makes up Nyathi's conscience as he attempts to deal with unemployment, survival strategies and parental responsibilities.

Equally, the Sokheles, Nyathi's new neighbours and partners in crime, are a stable and functional family. Sokhele's family is very traditional, and, therefore unavoidably patriarchal, and seems very stable in spite of its underclass living standards. Sokhele's entrepreneurial job of transporting school children from the township of Sobantu to town schools in Pietermaritzburg sees them through and he is able to keep his over-aged son, Jabulani, in school. However, key to the depiction of Sokhele is his simplicity of mind. Together with his family, they immediately take to Nyathi when he comes to live amongst them in the RDP section of Sobantu and out of concern for Nyathi's economic hardships: Sokhele introduces him to the school children transportation business. Mngadi seems to suggest that although Nyathi's attraction to crime stems from genuine economic hardships that reduced him to a lumpen state, a lifestyle that somehow emasculates and dehumanizes him, he has a choice not to pursue a life of crime. His moral degradation from being a responsible middleclass family man, to being a hardened affluent criminal is depicted as far worse than his economic downfall.

Nyathi's involvement in crime is shown to be propelled by ambition and a desire for immediate gratification (Mngadi,27). The informal entrepreneurial job of transporting schoolchildren from Sobantu to town is shown to be adequate for his subsistence. He views maintenance of his children as an unfair demand spurred by his ex-wife's greed. However, he uses the issue of child support is used as a pretext for engaging in crime (Mngadi,7). Nyathi's views of child support are reflective of the trends seen amongst many men, where child support is seen not as their duty, but as that of mothers or the state. Furthermore, he contrasts radically with Sokhele who, in spite of economic hardships, maintains his over-aged son, and puts him through school. Nyathi's shedding of his responsibilities is the first indication of his self-centredness. He laments paying maintenance for his children because he wants to extend his two-roomed RDP home. He would rather spend money on traditional doctors whom he believes can strengthen him against his enemies such as his ex-wife (Mngadi,6). His view of child maintenance as irksome is not only misplaced, but also reflective of deep seated resentment and alienation, caused by the government's economic policies that led to downsizing of

companies and its inability to create employment. He thus blames the courts and the government for unfulfilled electoral promises,

> *Kanti isondlo sifuneka nasebanwtini abangasebenzi? Inkantolo iyadakwa phela ngoba yona kufanele ibuze ukuthi maphi lawa mathuba omsebenzi athi uyowavula uma eseqhoqhobele izintambo zombuso*

(How can the court demand maintenance from people who are unemployed? The court is inconsiderate because it has to ask the government about the job opportunities it promised to create for the people once it gets into power (Mngadi,5).

This remark is significant and points to his deep-seated confusion and despair, caused by the failure of the new government to fulfil its electoral promises. Or, it could be that Nyathi's remark feigns ignorance as he attempts to eschew his responsibilities. The outburst exposes a self-delusional psychology that justifies inertia through apportioning blame to far-fetched entities for his predicaments.

Along with unemployment Nyathi's loss of all the material acquisitions he had enjoyed before his retrenchment compels him towards a life of crime (Mngadi,11). This, together with his desire to emulate other criminals who have amassed wealth within a short space of time, makes him consider crime as an alternative,

> *Phela kuyenzeka ukuthi umuntu ophila impilo eqondile nengenabo ubugebengu kodwa axhumane ngomoya nomuntu abathi abanye ungcolile*

(It is possible that an individual who leads a responsible life to be in spiritual contact with individuals regarded as criminals (Mngadi,10).

His justification for adopting a life of crime reflects the changing nature of societal values, where traditional notions of good citizenship, honesty and Protestant values of hard work are no longer positively viewed, but are ironically perceived to contribute to a

life of poverty, humiliation and exclusion. Nyathi's views speak of an emerging culture that celebrates anti-social lifestyles, where subversive behaviour is a magnet that draw criminals together in a 'criminal brotherhood' typical of the Mafioso culture "*Sengifundile ukuthi ukugaba ngezandla ezihlanzekile ube uphilisa okwengulube. Awusikazali*" (I have learn that keeping to clean work leads to an inconsequential life like that of a pig, and you cannot be helped (Mngadi,13). He considers this type of criminal culture to be a brotherly act of mutual assistance, where the criminal that has acquired most materially is bound by the 'criminal fraternity' to help a fellow criminal seeking a quick break as well.

Crimes of property[82] are not a new phenomenon; before the new political dispensation, this crime phenomenon was linked to ritual murders for 'wealth making medicine', popularly known as '*muthi* murders'. The first novel to explore this phenomenon is Kenneth Bhengu's **Uphuya WaseMshwathi** in the 1940s. And RRR Dhlomo also explores the phenomenon in **Izwi Nesithunzi.** According to such beliefs, the individual for whom medicine is made must be committed to murder continually for the ritual sacrifice and for his wealth to continue expanding, otherwise his blood, or that of his family members, will be demanded as a substitute, failing which the individual will suddenly become bankrupt. Maake, in his article "Murder they cried" explores this phenomenon in Lesotho during political transitions, when new Chiefs are to be installed. His conclusion suggests that people with specific characteristics and attributes were murdered to help make medicines to strengthen the Chief. While the medicine murders still continue in the post-apartheid society[83] crimes of property dealing with international drug syndicates, car theft syndicates and human trafficking syndicates have taken centre stage.

[82]Current scholarship on crimes committed solely for acquiring wealth has been termed acquisitive crime. See Gordon (2006), Steinberg (2001), Segal et al (2001).

[83] There are numerous media reports on nurses selling body parts and the murder of children and adults alike for their private organs for *muthi* purposes. The newspaper reports of 13 November 2007 carry an article about the decapitated torso of a boy that was discovered the previous week. It is believed that the head of the boy was needed for muthi purposes.

The belief and role of medicine in the execution of criminal acts also comes under the spotlight in this novel. In the novel, Nyathi's syndicate believes in traditional medicine, although the novel does not delve into the procurement and the type of medicine Nyathi and his syndicate use. It is, however, a potent sort that they believe protects them against arrest (Mngadi,14,17,34-36,58) and once arrested it can also swing the court of law in their favour during the trial (Mngadi,77). This belief in medicine is projected to go beyond racial boundaries. One of Nyathi's syndicate members, Moodley, is an Indian. He also places trust in the power of medicine just as much as his black counterparts in the syndicate (Mngadi,34). The novel's reading of the use of medicine seems to suggest that this belief is not only far-fetched but also based on ignorance and people's gullibility. Two instances are shown where their medicine is overpowered by the law; Nyathi loses his case contesting child maintenance despite having consulted a traditional doctor, (Mngadi,8), and Sokhele is arrested on the first day of transporting dagga despite having consulted an even 'better' and more 'effective' medicine man (Mngadi,54).

Sokhele's involvement in crime is spurred on by Nyathi's sudden success. Although both hold a conviction that their criminal involvement will stop as soon as they have realised their dreams (Mngadi,44-45), the narrative intimates that leaving criminal life is not easy. The first syndicated crime they deal with is the transportation of dagga in coffins. The centrality of dagga in black South Africa has a historical dimension. Traditionally, it was an accepted stimulant that was not only used on a daily basis by men folk in the society but was also very central in a ritual for preparing regiments on the eve of battle. With modernity and urbanization, it became criminalized. It is from the latter perspective that the use and centrality of the dagga trade is viewed in the novel. Sokhele not only smokes it, but also keeps large quantities of it in his house, which is secretly stolen by his son, Jabulani, to sell to his school friends and local boys (Mngadi,43). The narrative explicitly intimates that Sokhele is unaware of the trouble he courts,

> *Naye uyise wayenganakile ukuthi ukwenza kwakhe kunomthelela omubi enganeni yakhe. Wayengazi ukuthi uzigwaza ngowakhe. Futhi-ke lo ayezigwaza ngawo unesihlungu esimbi*

(His father did not know that his actions had a bad influence on his son. He did not know that he was killing himself with his own spear. In addition the spear that he used was laced with a fatal poison (Mngadi,34).

The depiction of Sokhele's family points to consciously or unconsciously overlooked activities and values that lay fertile ground for complicated and serious criminal activities later on. As the head of the family, he is blissfully ignorant of the culture of crime he helps establish by being a bad example to his own offspring. Not only is Sokhele faulted but also his wife is too, who, though morally upright, is tolerant of and understands Sokhele's habit. This is shown the moment Sokhele is arrested. As soon as she finds out he is being arrested for dagga related crimes, she attempts to hide the stock that Sokhele keeps in the house (Mngadi,66) and interestingly, she does not call it dagga, but 'Sokhele's tobacco' (*ugwayi kaSokhele*) in an effort to hide its reality from her son. Jabulani as well is equally tolerant of his father's habits and therefore part of the criminal culture in this family. As soon as he has gathered from a radio news bulletin that his father is in jail for possessing large quantities of dagga, he removes evidence of his father's misdemeanours and hides it with one of his delinquent friends. Jabulani's act is symbolic, because the culture of crime, especially withholding incriminating evidence, permeates from a close private family unit to the society, particularly to its younger members (Mngadi,63).

Defeating the ends of justice becomes problematic when brutish violent criminals are protected from the law, as Sokhele has done. His testimony during the trial hides the syndicate's operation and the identity of its members (Mngadi,77,88-89). Sokhele, together with the members of the syndicate, conform to a pledge that vows to keep the activities of the syndicate secret. More significantly, Sokhele's act of protecting the syndicate allows for the emergence of more complex and sophisticated crimes which inevitably become harder to solve, because the syndicate progresses to international drug trafficking which has intensified trafficking connections, and deep secrecy with regard to the identities of the criminal chain (96-115). The syndicate deals with an assortment of

chemical drugs from Colombia and these are transported to the rural areas where they are kept safe until bulk buyers come to fetch them.

**Criminal syndicates and the exploitation of delinquent youth**

Sokhele's imprisonment creates a vacuum in his family and exposes his son, who already indicates that a criminal life is an alluring spectacle, to exploitation by Nyathi and his criminal gang. In his absence, Nyathi courts Jabulani into a life of hardcore and organized crime (Mngadi,119ff). He creates an illusion of equality between himself and Jabulani, where the generational gap between them, and the responsibilities each has toward the other are non-existent (Mngadi,104,119-126 ). For Jabulani, this symbolic rite of passage establishes him as a full adult who can participate in all adult activities including keeping an under-aged live-in partner in his out-room. Yet this creates confusion because as a school-going youth, he is still bound and subjected both to school authority and that of his mother, yet as an adult he is answerable to no one. This confusion is played out in the resentment and contempt he shows towards a lady teacher, Miss Mthiya, a disciplinarian, who does not regard Jabulani as an adult but as a schoolchild who should be subjected to strict disciplinary measures for his misdemeanours. Jabulani's interpretation of her actions holds twisted convoluted notions of being persecuted, and he vows revenge of the most brutal kind. He waylays her with the intention of murdering her in cold blood but he is eventually dissuaded by Nyathi who refocuses him on his criminal duties that promise even better rewards than the murder of a school lady teacher (Mngadi,178-181).

Through Jabulani's criminal duties as a drug transporter and middleman, he acquires quick cash and gives large sums to his mother for the family upkeep (Mngadi,129), while he also makes home-related purchases (Mngadi,146). Some of the most embarrassing outcomes of his father's imprisonment have been the repossession of furniture and the kitchen appliances, which, in the township gossip mongering culture did not go unnoticed. For Jabulani and his mother, the shame of being the talk of the neighbourhood had to be reversed, thus he makes these acquisitions with the money he earned from Nyathi's criminal activities (Mngadi 146). However, he does not reveal the source of his

income to his mother. He lies about it, claiming that it is the money he saved from his Saturday part-time work as a gardener (Mngadi,129). Jabulani, just like the gangsters studied by Segal et al (2001), evinces a dual identity - that of a provider for his destitute family and that of being a ruthless operative. Furthermore, Jabulani's continued participation in crime supports a hedonistic fashionista lifestyle (Mngadi,98,104). Although he sells the drugs (that Nyathi steals from the consignment Jabulani transports from Nyathi's home to be stored in the rural areas) and gives his customers hands-on practice on how to take these drugs, he does not take the drugs himself, as Nyathi has sternly warned him never to take drugs (Mngadi,139,143,62). Steinberg (2001:4) comments that crime is "animated by far more than the exigencies of earning a living", which could equally apply to both Jabulani and Nyathi.

Furthermore Jabulani's participation in criminal activities indicates that he has absorbed values that underlie a gangster culture: bravery, fearlessness, strength, courage and defiance. Like the gangsters described by Segal et. al., Altbeker (2001) and Steinberg (2001), he has been "seduced into crime by a richly imagined world of masculine virtues: fearlessness, bravery, the capacity to wield power" (Altbeker, 2001: 6). Therefore, as a middleman, he protects Nyathi's hierarchy of criminals from the law and his operational title is a 'dog'. As a 'dog', he is an inconsequential individual in the hierarchy of the gang; he may be murdered if the activities of the syndicate are threatened (Mngadi:108). Jabulani's operational name is also symbolic, since as a dog he becomes non-human in terms of his ruthless activities at school, and in the community. His activities as an 'unleashed dog' are symbolic of the power he wields: intimidation, harassment, murder, induction of school boys into hardcore drugs (which usually occurs in the boys' toilet), womanizing, statutory rape and rebellion become his criminal signature in his community in Sobantu (Mngadi,138-181). Despite Jabulani's notoriety in his community, he evades arrest for a long time.

Paradoxically underlying Jabulani's power is a deep loss of innocent youthful experiences, which he cannot realize because of the world he has fashioned for himself with Nyathi's assistance. His school work suffers as he is called at odd hours to perform

his duties and he eventually fails his matric exams (Mngadi,177). He is constantly exposed to violence in the streets as he pushes drugs for Nyathi, who is forever lounging in his expensively remade home with a new expectant wife, and in turn he gets a pittance for his labour, all of which he does not realize to be a form of exploitation. His mother gets to know the kind of activities that he is involved in and has a stroke resulting in her being taken away to the frail care home (Mngadi,166-167). His mother's sickness, caused by a deep feeling of shame because of her family's complicity in destroying the Sobantu youth and community, proves and attests to the weight wielded by the social conscience and constant gaze on individual actions. Although Nyathi is subjected to this social sanction, he hides behind the high walls of his lavishly decorated home, closing himself up from prying eyes and keeping all rumours at bay. For Jabulani, however, who has to walk the streets of Sobantu as he runs errands for Nyathi, the social conscience becomes overwhelming. Although he displays indifference to it, it affects the only person who matters, his mother, and his father is devastated to learn what has happened to his family (Mngadi,167,205). He suffers from cardiac-related illness and a form of psychosis (Mngadi,213-214).

**Criminal networks in prisons and in the community**

The novel postulates that it is not Sokhele's vowed secrecy that gives longer reign to Nyathi's syndicated criminal activities, but also police institutions. Nyathi and his syndicate are only arrested when the Scorpions have been called in to investigate the failure of Sobantu police to crack the case, and this necessitates an investigation of a whole network of activities that included Captain Sibisi, Nyathi's cousin, Nyathi and Jabulani's activities (Mngadi,134-137). The novel's re-narrativization of this plot explores this phenomenon by triangulating the efforts of the local police, the community and the Scorpions in dealing with Nyathi's criminal activities. **Yizo Yizo** only projected attempts by the new principal, Grace Letsatsi, in galvanizing the community to action, and the community involvement almost veered towards vigilantism, whereas the novel's exploration looks into establishment of a Community Policing Forum, spearheaded by the ward councillor in collaboration with trusted local police officials. It is through the

combined efforts of the police and the Community Policing Forum that the Scorpions are called in to investigate (Mngadi,159,161,164,168). The novel's representation of the efforts made by the community to deal with crime are given credence, because it draws on the vocabulary of political protests, such as caucus meetings, community protection units, pickets and demonstrations against crime by both the community at large and women's groups (Mngadi,173-175).

Mngadi does not romanticize the involvement of the community in addressing crime. He indicates that forms of adult vigilantism, a phenomenon that also emerged in the late 1980s called the 'fathers' which acted as a counterweight to the intimidation politics of the comrades (Everett and Sisulu, 1992), can take the law into their hands. In the novel, a youngster is suspected of stealing two taxis. The taxi people subject him to a kangaroo court, decide that he is guilty and seriously assault him (Mngadi,175-176). Mngadi seems to suggest that the responsibility of dealing with crime cannot be placed solely on the community policing forums, as at times the community is overtaken by anger which easily translates into mob justice. This invariably propagates violence and criminality in a society resulting in complicated irresolvable cases, such as in this case, where no one is arrested for brutally assaulting the youngster (Mngadi,175).

Historically, the South African police have not earned the trust and the respect of black South Africa, because among other things they have been viewed as security agents of the apartheid government. After the elections, these lingering sentiments remained whilst the police force attempted to change its image. This entailed more solved cases and arrests, effective detective methods and visible policing. In the text, the engagement of such police work is evident. Sergeant Gumede, whose partner has been killed by youth addicted to drugs, is a dedicated, diligent and vigorous policeman. His representation follows the trend adopted after elections, where effectiveness, competency and expediency are central to resolving cases. However, his efforts are thwarted by the station commander, who is on Nyathi's payroll. The narrative suggests that corrupt police officials not only perpetuate crime, but also bring the whole image of the police force into

disrepute. Furthermore, they also project hardworking policeman or policewomen as incompetent.

In the narrative, this outcry and charge against the police force has been one of the major reasons to write to the National Prosecuting Office after a failed attempt to plead with the station commander. This suggests that, in South Africa, hope and trust is placed more on this elite force with its effective but at times underhand investigative methods. Mngadi seems to celebrate the Scorpions' approach to investigating crime, and he asserts that it is through their rigorous undercover investigative tactics that the syndicate and its link to the corrupt station commander is discovered (Mngadi, 201- 217).

According to Mngadi, crime in post-apartheid South Africa is a staggered structure with links between criminals in the community, law enforcement agencies and imprisoned criminals (Mngadi,205). The fact that criminals or individuals who are sympathetic to criminal activities are at varying levels in institutions in the society makes crime fighting in the country a very difficult and dangerous task. The webs of network through which criminals operate involve widespread interconnected groups in all corners of the country, including rural areas. In spite of the narrative's credible representation of crime, it fails to suggest a solution. The removal of criminals from society is insufficient in dealing with the scourge of crime, as Mngadi has correctly pointed that inmates can control activities outside prison through a web of criminal contacts (Mngadi,205). Furthermore, repeat offenders recommit crimes, as is the case with Thekwane, one member of the syndicate. In addition, the contacts and planning of horrendous criminal activities are established from inside the prisons (Mngadi,98-103).

**Conclusion**

In an attempt to explain the rise of urban crime in the United States in the 1960's, Irvin Walker used an analogy of the crocodile pond: 'if you want to get rid of crocodiles, you can either try to club them all to death or you can drain the pond" (cited in Steinberg, 2000:5-6). Irvin Walker was convinced that incarceration of criminals alone cannot solve

the problem of crime. However, beginning to deal with structures that allow crime to fester, i.e. dealing with the pond will go a long way toward combating crime. For Walker the pond may be structural unemployment, the erosion of nuclear families (extended families in the South African context) and the perspectives of youth on the culture of crime and violence, which beckon them to crime. Unless you tackle these […] the pond will keep breeding crocodiles, no matter how many you club (cited in Steinberg, 2000: 6).

Reading **Yizo Yizo** and **Kuyoqhuma Nhlamvana**'s representations of crime and the suggested solutions against Walker's salutary observations indicate that the diagnoses of these texts are profound. Mngadi's approach to crime as a socio-psychological problem is inadequate as a strategy to deal with the rampant crime besetting post-apartheid society. Mngadi demonstrates that there is osmosis of criminality between criminals, ex-convicts and the corrupt government officials, making incarcerations a mere waste of resources. Steinberg (2000) asserts that incarcerations are effective "only if going to jail, or indeed, dying while committing an armed robbery, brings stigma and shame" but in the world described by **Yizo Yizo** and **Kuyoqhuma Nhlamvana**, though stigma and shame underlie the punishment of culprits, greater socio-economic issues that breed a culture of crime remain. This is observed in **Yizo Yizo**'s approach, although it explores crime from a socio-historical angle, its suggested solution is also inadequate. The removal of gangsters from the society does begin to address the emergence and the continual regeneration of gangsters in society. Fascinatingly with **Yizo Yizo**, the third series repeats representations of gangsters. However its solution, the imprisonment of these social misfits, works in a similar way with the one envisaged in the first series. Left out is the other alienated youth, who have shown a predisposition to a life of crime. The representations of Sticks and Bobo show that the crime is only addressed on the surface. Equally militarized youths, who have given the best of their years in political struggle, remain outside of the power and economy that have compelled them to take up arms against the previous state in the first place.

## CONCLUSION

The period that marks the literary boundaries of this study spans the year of the first democratic elections and the first ten years into the new dispensation. The revisionist discourses, particularly around 2004,[84] that articulated the view that political, social and economic policy frameworks and programmes be reviewed and reflected upon to ascertain the achievements and challenges of the past ten years spilled over to all spheres of South African public and cultural life including literary discourses of African indigenous language writing. With regard to indigenous language writing the dominant articulations centred on literary productions since the major conditions that shaped its content and thrust have been removed. The emphasis has been on the assessment of the successes of indigenous language writing in unshackling itself from the legacies of apartheid. However, most critics maintained that much of the literary production that came through during this period continued to address itself to the school market, with weak plots that reflect lack of depth in thematic exploration and artistry.

This thesis has taken an opposing view. This view has been informed by a deep consideration, firstly, of the nature of the thematic thrusts of isiZulu literature generally and the overlaps with the natures of other productions like those in popular culture and the broadcast media, secondly, the problematic literary approaches that have been used throughout its history, and thirdly, issues of aesthetics regarding black expressive art in this literary tradition and in the Diaspora. It has been postulated that there is continuity in the use of literary approaches that are fundamentally mismatched to the basic imperatives for narrativization and articulation of modern experiences in indigenous language writing. These approaches predetermined the literary output in terms of content and form. This observation became apparent by the early 1980s and 1990s where the use of structuralism and new criticism in isiZulu fiction reached a critical stage. These

[84] Some of these reflective discourses are seen in the arts, see **Freedom spring: ten years on: a celebration and commemoration of ten years of freedom in South Africa**, by Suhaly Saadi and Catherine McInerney (eds.) (2005). See also **10 years 100 artists: art in a democratic South Africa**, by Bedford, E. et. al. (2004) which is anthology aimed at celebrating the Glasgow legacy of the ten years of freedom in South Africa and many years of struggle against apartheid.

approaches helped generate literary productions that were mechanical in composition.[85] Reflection on the literary critical approaches adopted in the post-apartheid context it demonstrates that Western bourgeoisie models continue to be applied. Equally the blanket application of postcolonial theories alienates and decentralizes the significance of the historicity and the distinctive literary praxis that indigenous language writing has come to embody.

In an attempt to forge new directions, this thesis proposes that Barber's model (2000) of popular culture be used as a new theoretical paradigm that best suits the foundational narrativizational needs of isiZulu literature and by extension of the indigenous language expressive art. This model is a result of extensive research that explored the nature of orality and popular culture in modern urbanizing Africans. It is mainly based on generative materialism which is premised on a sociologically inclined model of literary approach to the arts. It is founded on dialectical relationships between the economic, social and cultural levels of text production. Barber's model allows for the exploration of African everyday culture focusing on the inner pulse responsible for cultural dynamism. Although her studies focus on Yoruba society, the nature of the 'African traditional framework of thought' (Irele, 2001), which is orality, allows for its application to Zulu literature which by and large is premised on orality as the basic framework of expressing everyday life experiences in contemporary African society.

The basic tenets of Barber's model of popular culture revolve around firstly the interplay between global/international/transnational and local popular culture. Artistic products whilst drawing from international popular culture are able to edify their recipients through the demonstration of moral messages flavoured and coloured by local interpretation. These local interpretations produce a living colour in further productions and interpretations of new texts and also dictate the manner in which international and transnational images are consumed and appropriated. Secondly this model postulates that

[85] The dominance of these criticisms in isiZulu fiction is seen in the short story and poetry writings of the 1980s and the early 1990s. With the short story writings, writers follow simplified versions of structuralist tenets that have been greatly influenced by the matric syllabus demands. Equally the instistance on the external and internal structure of the poems in the current syllabus requirements is an indication of the prevailing outcomes of structuralism and new criticism approaches in isiZulu literature.

the origin of narratives is in the quotidian life, thus there is regeneration and recycling of past themes, plot structures, lessons and styles of characterization. Similarities in modalities of thought and extensive overlaps in artistic products come about because "real life is narratized and circulated in the form of anecdotes while real stories become templates by which real experience is apprehended" (Barber, 2000, 133). However, the regeneration of these stories does not necessarily point to stagnation, but each rendition enable the inscription of newness in the old theme. And thirdly Barber's model offers a renewed looked into the presence of "metalinguistic consciousness" such as proverbs and epithets in artistic productions. These paralinguistic aspects are not only inherently aesthetic, but are also fundamental seeds for great genres, they are mental archeological sites that have been repeatedly cited through time and space and they are encapsulated in a discourse of the axiom. Barber postulates that these proverbial sayings constantly acts as the authoritative moral codes that always explain similar situations in different contexts and they constitute generations of folk wisdom from the traditional world.

These basic tenets are what this thesis drew upon to study post-apartheid isiZulu fiction and the black television drama series. With the study of post-apartheid isiZulu narratives, the study focused on the relevance of certain oral genres in exploring strategies post-apartheid Zulu writers employed in narrativizing contemporary African everyday life. With black television dramas, the study further drew from the readings of the Black Film Theory and Third cinema to establish broader issues that affect black film production politics, aesthetic issues, the depiction of African life experiences and identity politics, and certain continuities provided by folklore. The affinities between the Black Film Theory, Third Cinema and Barber's model of popular culture exemplified contentions of numerous black cultural scholars about black expressive art both in the continent and across the Diaspora. One of these contentions concerns the realization that at the level of the black experience, black people from all over the world share commonalities regarding racial, cultural, aesthetics, identity, class politics and so forth. Fundamental to these black film theories is that they explore paradigms that account for the historical, socio-economic and cultural issues affecting black expressive tradition. The tenets of these black film theories were used to explore the intertextual elements of the black tradition,

the construction of the black image on screen, the grand black experience, with its transAfrican aesthetic ideals, the rejection of the social realist depiction of black life and the creation of discursive spaces for the articulation of rural and working-class experiences.

Peterson (1997:220) indicates that recourse to African culture and the valorization of orature and dance in the area of performance have been the central position adopted by colonial subjects as "crucial bulwarks against the demise of the Zulus as a nation in the face of the 'polluting' threats of modernization and assimilation" around the turn of the twentieth century. Equally Zulu literary output at the turn of the twenty first century is still heavily dotted with oral residues. The intervening hundred years have seen literature writing drawing in folkloric materials in varying degrees. I have been able to show this continuity through tracing three types of oral forms in selected post-apartheid novels. I have assessed the use of proverbs, folk narrative and naming as crucial strategies for plotting, characterization and thematic emphasis in six post-apartheid novels.

Following the above trend I have shown that proverbs as titles of narratives can be used for numerous reasons. However the basic use of proverbs relates to the fact that they can be employed as discursive practices that underpin African value systems, thereby perpetuating and reaffirming the authority of the traditional world. As in the case of **Aphelile Agambaqa**, the use of proverbs and axioms derived from them firmly establish an ideological view point steeped in the traditional episteme. In terms of structuring of the narrative, the proverbs used as titles influence the reading of the plot while the placement of secondary proverbs throughout the narrative add resonance in the articulation of imperatives encapsulated in the main proverb used as a title of the narrative.

In instances where contemporary lifestyles seem to outpace the authority encapsulated in the proverbs, an array of interrelated proverbs, and other forms of cultural beliefs are employed to emphasize the moral authority of the proverb-title. In **Aphelile**, a cultural belief in the *inkwankwa* (python), a symbolic representative of the ancestors in issues

related to acknowledgement of male children in the *Mpondomise* tradition is invoked to reinforce the traditional view of what constitutes a true African family.

I have also shown that proverbs are able to improvise, and they are fluid and flexible which allows them to incorporate new materials and migrate to other genres. Proverbs are also capable of reserving aspects that are recognizably archaic while processing and incorporating new ones. In instances where there are limitations with the timeless truthfulness of the proverbs then it is extended. As the title of the novel **Impi YabomDabu Isethunjini** (the war of the Africans is in the intestines) is an extension of the proverb *impi yomndeni isesendeni* (the war of the family is in the testicles). Through the extension, the author creates a discursive space that allows him to include socio-economic, racial politics, issues of national education, social development, etc. which are aspects which the original formulation of the proverb could not have allowed him to include.

The folktale motif is another oral form discussed in this thesis. I have argued that the folktale motifs continue to provide structural, aesthetic and traditional discourses for modern isiZulu novels. The folktale influence is not limited to content and form but includes organizational thought whereby outlooks established from the folktale tradition continue to shape and animate modern written forms in isiZulu literature. In particular gendered didactics in terms of love relations, disposition and behaviour, matrimonial bonds are viewed through gendered prisms and the myriad intertextual references about gender issues attest to the truthfulness the traditional episteme prefers and has re-iterated on numerous occasions in tales, anecdotes, songs, rumours and so forth circulating in quotidian everyday life.

In the novels studied I have demonstrated that the folktale motifs have been relied upon to construct didactic outcomes which have been played out in gender relations and urban families as crucial sites for instilling traditional hegemony. I have argued that the authors' understanding of these sites is aimed at exalting traditionalism, since their objectives are to challenge contemporary practices seen to be responsible for the disintegration of the

moral fibre of African societies. Furthermore, I have demonstrated that in instances where adaptations such as Christian morality and education are explored, the tendency is for the traditional values to infuse and integrate themselves fully with these emergent forms so that they also articulate traditional sensibilities because the aims are to achieve sense and consensus on all aspects in the society that are perceived to be vital for the continued balance and sustenance of the community.

Although naming may appear to have come to modern isiZulu literary practice as a crucial longstanding literary device from dominant European literature, it is in actual fact a foundational personality and identity description in oral culture. IsiZulu authors have long realised the centrality of names in the society and have always added praises as another dimension through which an understanding of their characterization strategies is enhanced and reached. In this thesis I have explored the use of names as a general literary trope as well as cultural practice in Masondo's detective stories. By looking at a large corpus of Masondo's detective works, I formulated assertions regarding his naming praxis. On a broader view, naming remains one of those sites where high levels of literary artistry can be realised in isiZulu fiction as it has been the case with Masondo's detective stories. Masondo's naming stylistics disrupts expectations through the techniques of stock-typing and de-stereotyping characters. Such angles of character portrayals are unconventional and yet refreshingly unique. Through the use of a compendium, I have demonstrated the spread of similar names in all his detective stories and also argued that though the names have been recycled, they denote different personages with different emotional and psychological outlooks.

As mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, isiZulu novels are not the only sites wherein African discourses are invoked and reiterated in addressing life experiences of contemporary African society. Black television dramas are also an important terrain where African mores are recreated and played out against Western influences. Black television dramas which emerged in the early 1980s drew extensively on black popular culture discourses. The politics around the emergence of black television especially those relating to the attempts by the Afrikaner government to ensure continued Afrikaner

domination in South Africa, introduced a number of problematic filmic practices which by the second and third phases of black television film production became conventional and were difficult to uproot successfully. These filmic practices related firstly to the construction of an "all black spectacle", a strategy of creating films where other racial categories which are a constituent of the South African body polity are excluded. Secondly, the production of black films depended on white finance, thus creating problems for the representations of the black experience and black image construction. Thirdly this film practice employed problematic cinematographic styles like the ethnographic filmic gaze, which brought into the film questionable traditional practices. Fourthly class politics in African societies were played out along preferred middle-class aspirations resulting in the suppression of the interests and outlooks of the under classes.

Significant improvement began to be observed with black targeted films when at the most African scriptwriters began to enter filmmaking. The presence of African scriptwriters was immediately felt as the films began to address African audiences in familiar concrete discourses even though in many instances these discourses were couched in middle-class terms. With the two films, **Ifa LaKwaMthethwa** and **Hlala Kwabafileyo**, the politics of inheritance are sheathed in middle-class imperatives. Although tradition is invoked in the significations of the film, it is made to sanction middle-class aspirations. However at times tradition is invoked to align urban/rural contemporary behaviour and lifestyle seen to be problematic and poised against middle-class sensibilities.

Whilst **Ifa LaKwaMthethwa** and **Hlala Kwabafileyo** were flighted shortly after the new dispensation, in terms of construction they reflect that they are at a border line between the first and second phases of black television film production. The first and second phases between early 1980s and early 990s lobbied for the adoption and incorporation of black middle-class sensibilities and equally the influences of oral traditions were clearly marked out. However, **Gaz' Lam** and **Yizo Yizo** were flighted much later into the new dispensation and much of the romanticisation of middle-class politics gave way to profound national realities such as unemployment, a failed education system, poverty, diseases, crime and many socially endemic ills in contemporary urban and rural spaces.

Significantly, a new phenomenon also became observable in the construction of the discourses in **Gaz' Lam** and **Yizo Yizo**; the phenomenon slightly shifted debates of oral continuity to a new paradigm where oral progression is not necessarily viewed as an automatically archaic vestiges of the past. This paradigm shift refocused attention to emergent popular forms like urban music, topical songs, popular stories, jokes, urban myths and black urban culture as offshoots from orality, and they incorporate and appropriate international and transnational popular cultures. This view is further elaborated by Finnegan (2007:180) who points out that the overall study in orality "looks very different. Oral texts are no longer automatically assumed to belong to the past with deep roots in traditional culture, fit objects to be scripturalised into written texts. Scholars now look for their examples to young people as well as old, to industrial workers and broadcast performers, and to disruptive or innovative forms, not just the old guards. Change and contemporaneity are now part of the picture." Finnegan's observations are a crystallization of Barber's view raised as early as the late 1990s, when black urban popular cultures were subjected to systematic study and were found to have logical linkages with the oral tradition.

My readings of **Gaz' Lam** and **Yizo Yizo** are premised on similar views. Whilst these drama series are not constituted by overt allusions to oral forms that can be ring-fenced as 'oral tradition', certain elements of orality are however conspicuous. Both these media texts are reflective of modern popular culture which is:

> a scene of metamorphosis and mutations, in which written texts are performed, performed texts can be given a written recension, and a network of allusions and cross-references enables audiences in whatever state of literacy to access texts in one way or another (Barber, 1995b:12).

I have argued that **Gaz' Lam** evinces strong intertextual elements with isiZulu fiction. Focusing on three major themes such as arranged marriages, youth migration and urban music, I have demonstrated how these themes are reworkings of older themes that animated and shaped ideological discourses in isiZulu fiction. The re-inscription of these

themes in **Gaz' Lam**, is scripted against a canvas that is heavily dotted with popular culture which reflect popular imagination on issues such as social politics, youth cultures, HIV/AIDS, traditional culture and economic survival in the urban areas.

Cross-referencing in **Gaz' Lam** crisscrosses the porous boundary between isiZulu fiction, orality, local experiences and broadcast media. The seismic shifts observed in **Gaz' Lam** are occasioned by the nature of the post-apartheid political economy which allows for the re-interrogation of some of the ideological stances isiZulu literature adhered to and some legacies in the public domain which are from the apartheid era. Such shifts not only operate from the maxim of the intertext but also from the perspective that bring newness and changed perceptions which in turn provide the evolving debates about arranged marriages, youth migration and music in urban localities and contemporary identities.

With **Yizo Yizo**, the movement of popular discourses from the broadcast media to print media is equally observable. The dominant theme of crime in **Yizo Yizo** is recreated with vigour and there are numerous symmetrical affinities with a novel, **Kuyoqhuma Nhlamvana**. As in the reading of **Gaz' Lam**, the recycling of the crime issue operates within the general practices of popular culture, where topical matters are explored perhaps using the same type of story line but for different purposes. The plot structure of the novel in certain instances has marked semblances with that of **Yizo Yizo**. The novel adds to **Yizo Yizo**'s story line current happenings and momentous events, and provides a new overlay to earlier observations that **Yizo Yizo** raised. This dynamism substantiate Finnegan's observation (2007:183) that "oral texts, insofar as they can be envisaged as having some kind of distinctive status at all, are now conceived not as essentially belonging to some old and somehow autochthonous shared tradition but as created and changed and manipulated for many purposes and through many media by active participants in the world, present no less than past."

Finally, both **Gaz' Lam** and **Yizo Yizo** use an emergent linguistic medium, tsotsitaal, as a dominant discourse both for communication and for emphasizing cultural change and the negotiation of urban identities. Finnegan (2007:182) asserts that this linguistic

development is within the broader popular culture dynamism, where the focus should be aimed at drawing on this mix of languages to search for deep-seated psychological reactions of its adherents to the grotesque absurdities, hopes and aspirations underlying post-apartheid life experiences for the majority of alienated and marginalized Africans. Thus she warns that this linguistic variant should never be "brushed aside as somehow hybrid or un-African, an untoward departure from the pure and authentic genres of the past" but should be studied as occupying the crossroads that capture key moments in the evolution of black popular culture.

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