

TRAGIC INSIGHT IN L L J. MNCWANGO'S PLAYS

BY

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SOWETO

DECLARATION

I declare that, TRAGIC INSIGHT IN L L J MNCWANGO'S PLAYS, is my own work, that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and that this dissertation was not previously submitted by me for a degree at another university.

Signature 

S. G. MSELEKU

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DEDICATION

THIS DISSERTATION IS DEDICATED TO MY LATE FATHER - REVEREND
MIZRIAM DANIEL MSELEKU

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"BY WATCHING TRAGEDY WE CAN WISH, AND THEREBY HELP CREATE, OUR OWN PSYCHIC HEALTH. IT IS THE MIRACLE OF TRAGEDY THAT FAILURE BELONGS TO THE FICTITIOUS CHARACTERS AND HEALTH TO THE CREATORS, THE ARTIST AND HIS AUDIENCE".

E EHRLICH, HAMLEY'S ABSENT FATHER

LEONARD LJ MNCWANGO (1926 - 1979) : LIFE AND WORKS

Born and grew up at Nongoma, he received his education at Nongoma Primary School, and later at Christ King School and Inkamana High School, in KwaZulu. He also attended St Francis School at Mariannhill, and studied at University College in Lesotho and at the University of Natal. He practised as a Librarian in KwaZulu-Natal. He has written three plays, Manhla Iyokwendela Egodini (Pietermaritzburg 1959, She will marry into the Grave); Ngenzeni? (Pietermaritzburg, 1959, What Have I Done?) and Kusasa Umngcwabo Wakho Nami (Pietermaritzburg, 1959, Tomorrow, Your Burial and Mine).

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a Thematic exploration of Leonard Mncwango's plays (dramas) Within each play a collision of two anti-thetical worlds is presented - the old, represented by the traditional Zulu society - ruled by kings and chiefs and the new represented by the new generation of younger people who are independent thinkers and who do not follow the traditional way of doing things - like the blind acceptance of king's orders despite its consequence, is challenged by these actors. Within this framework the tragedies of Mncwango's protagonist are played out. A central theme in each play is the need for compromise between the two worlds -lest all good should be destroyed. Ngenzeni? and Manhla Iyokwendela Egodini are traditional plays located during the reign of the kings in the historical Zulu society and the emphasis of this dissertation will be on these two texts. The third text - Kusasa Umngcwabo Wakho Nami is a modern play - dealing with modern problems and power relations in the "private domain" that is in the family environment. The problem of patriarchy is raised and challenged by the dramatist in the play.

The first chapter is an examination of the traditional society during the reign of king Menziwa as it is revealed in Ngenzeni? It is concerned with the king's isolation from that society (his chiefs and advisors are more in touch with reality than he does) hence they warn him against marrying both the twin girls -

Zenzile and Zenzisile, to make them queens as this will cause problems if they both gave birth to sons. The king's advisors argue that this will cause division and civil war among the people.

Menziwa's isolation is brought about by external and internal pressures and by his failure to find a meaningful compromise in the face of the inevitable change.

The second chapter will look at the tragedy of Nontula in Manhla Iyokwendela Egodini - she suffers not because of her own wrongdoing but because of Muzwa's personal pride and rigidity in a situation which demands greater flexibility. Remember that Muzwa was in the same position as King Menziwa in Ngenzeni? - since he was of the royal household. The person Manhla - which Muzwa swears by, in the text, that if he does not get Nontula to be his wife no one will, - that is he will rather die -, was the grandson of Zibhebhu KaMaphitha, a king who fought with King Dinizulu of the Zulus. Instead of appreciating that times have changed, things no longer happen as they used to in the past - Muzwa refuses to appreciate this, he believes that because he is born in the Royal family he must automatically get any woman he wants.

Essentially, Mncwango's plays explore the difficulties of transition from old to new and suggest a solution to these difficulties. So far none of Mncwango's antagonists, that is, both Menziwa and Muzwa - has been able to prevail in a world of

shifting social values. But Mncwago's vision is not bleak, for him tolerance and flexibility contain the promise for the future.

We therefore need to appreciate that on the one hand, there is the dignified and meaningful past, a past rich in a sophisticated and sensitive indigenous culture; on the other hand, there is the socially and morally chaotic picture of a disoriented people whose traditional way of life has been eroded and disturbed by the values and mores of a modern world. We will therefore need to synthesise the two worlds both traditional and modern and appreciate that culture is dynamic and not static.

In this dissertation, I propose to examine each of the two plays: to show how Mncwango presents in each a central conflict between individual and society, which is common to contemporary fiction and to illustrate how possibly, he suggests a solution to this conflict, - one of compromise and adaptation to change, that is born of experience and integrity.

The plays, like Achebe's protagonists⁽¹⁾, are all involved in a failure to adapt, a failure to find or attempt the honourable compromise. This irrelative solitariness often springs directly from the individual's emotional reaction to the change and instability he sees around him, and the classical psychological and sociological concepts for this effect - "alienation".

But there is a central paradox in the dilemma, as Leventhal realises in Bellow's The Victim:

"... if you shut yourself up, not wanting to be there, then you were a bear in a winter hole, or like a mirror wrapped in a piece of flannel. And like such a mirror you were less in danger of being broken but you did not flash either"⁽²⁾.

On the other hand, if the alienated individual submits "self" to a society which he feels is morally or aesthetically unsympathetic to his own vision of life, he runs the risk of an annihilation of his personality and may be in the frightening position of Bellows Joseph who sings a piece to loss of identity.

"I am in other hands, relieved of self determination, freedom cancelled"⁽³⁾.

Total subjugation of self to society destroys one's right and ability to flash to think for oneself. The similar tragedy occurs in Chinua Achebe's novels. Committed and with indigenous perspectives and fresh insights, Achebe's realistic novels of tension within communities are as firmly in the mainstream of the English novel as they are also in the vanguard of the African novel. Similarly, the central human situation is a familiar literary one, but it is one which arises organically from Mncwango's unique presentation of his own society, past and present, a presentation which is unmarked - poised by his controlled objectivity and careful detachment.

Since traditional society was more structured and less fluid than modern society, the breaking down of such a structure is irreversable. In the face of inevitable change one cannot remain constant or unyielding - the odds must be weighed and the balance achieved.

I propose to show how Mncwango reveals the beginnings of his society's disintegration in Ngenzeni? and in Manhla Iyokwendela Egodini and how he demonstrates that the traditional system of values has become both eroded and irrelevant in a rapidly changing society. In his final play Kusasa Umngcwabo Wakho Nami, the structured, traditional society is almost non-existent, and I believe that Mncwango shows how the danger for the antagonist does not lie in an over-rigidity in clinging to the past and a refusal to attempt a compromise as it did not with Menziwa and Muzwa, but in finding a flexible moral stance which can survive honourably with the fluidity of modern society.

There are three basic aspects which must be considered in each play:

1. Firstly - Mncwango's presentation of traditional society.
2. Secondly, his portrayal of the antagonists and how they relate to society.

3. Thirdly, how he puts forward the solution of compromise that I believe he offers to the conflict of the individual alienated from his society.

Mncwango's conception of a meaningful compromise between the traditional and modern values is a combination of idealism and common sense which can be complementary and that this conception is situated in Mncwango's plays, explicitly and implicitly. He (Mncwango) like Achebe's conception moves towards a vision of the best of African and modern values contributing to a new synthesised culture, but:

"We must first set the scene which is authentically African; then what follows will be meaningful and deep. This, I think, is what Aimé Césaire meant when he said the short cut to the future is via the past"⁽⁴⁾.

The problem of adjustment from tradition to modern values and offering compromise solution is painful. It is primary for these reasons that you find many innocent characters suffering or dying in the texts - they become victims of the dominant order because "change is painful". Change and adaptation to modern values unsettles those in power, threatens the security of the state and they see it as the usurpation of their "Divine powers" which they claim were given to them by God or their ancestors. It is this conflict that results to some tragic elements in the play - it is the fear of the unknown, the fear of adaptation to modern values and the problem of selfishness, abuse of power by those

having authority as the results of the wrong precedent, that had been laid by the king's predecessors.

The third chapter will deal extensively with the depoliticisation of the African texts, plays in particular in that the role of the kings and those in authority in our texts have always been portrayed as the prime power, not deserving to be challenged by their underlings or subjects. In most of our plays, kings and queens or people with authority are portrayed as heroes and those who seem to challenge their power are portrayed as deviant and deserving of punishment and to die. In most of our historical plays it is very rare that you find, for example, King Shaka's subjects or any other king's subjects surviving after attempting to voice their opinions which are markedly different from that of the king. It was known that this would be a deviation from the norm and the punishment was death. The monarch's word was final - there were no negotiations on the matter after the king had made his decision. This was the form of oppression and suppression of opponents' dissenting opinion. In the modern world we would call it the violation of our people's fundamental rights as enshrined in the current constitution of the country and in the universal declaration of human rights. This kind of behaviour would be labelled inhuman and degrading treatment which violate the very human existence. What is the human being without the freedom of thought, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of choice. All these freedoms were utterly violated by our old traditional leaders. For instance Hilwayo's choice to marry his beloved fiancée Zenzile - is

violated by the King, Menziwa - who insists despite the fact that he knows that Zenzile is Hilwayo's fiancé, and knows that Zenzile loves Hilwayo dearly, but he insists that he will marry both girls (the twins Zenzile and Zenzisile) - contrary to their will. He is prepared to send the whole army to go search for Hilwayo and Zenzile so that Hilwayo may be killed in order that he may be able to marry Zenzile by force. The same thing happens in Manhla Iyokwendela Egodini, where Muzwa, who is of royal descent from the line of Zibhebhu KaMaphitha, also uses whatever devious means available to him to destroy his opponents Nontula and Siphango. He has for instance tremendous influence over a number of people - firstly the gang he used to beat and kill Siphango, he is the friend to the witchdoctor who prescribed and gave him some herbs so that he can give them to Nontula in order that Nontula may fall in love with him. He has an influence over the woman who is in charge of young girls, "iqhikiza", and who young girls respect.

The fourth chapter will briefly deal with the problem of stageability in the play written in African languages. It is very rare that we find a Zulu play written in such a manner that all acts and scene fit well on stage or in any modern theatre as we know it. It is perhaps theatre and modern drama of western origin and owe little allegiance to Africa. But the question we need to ask ourselves is what did our dramatists have in mind when they wrote their plays? What sort of stage did they envisage - a modern theatre or an open area or any place be it a house, street, church, battlefield - where the actual events

in real life take place. This will be demonstrated with plays written in English by African writers such as Wole Soyinka, Kobina Sekyi, Maishe Maponya, Zakes Mda and other white South African writers such as Athol Fugard.

Finally, one will try and summarise the essential issues raised in the four chapters of the dissertation and where possible suggest some source compromise solution to the arguments raised in my analysis of the problem.

NGENZENI?: SOME TRAGIC ELEMENTS IN THE PLAY

It is quite appropriate for me to first attempt to define what a play is so as to be able to paint a picture of what one is trying to argue in this dissertation. One should loosely define a play in this way:

"A play is a game about that which is not a game"⁽⁵⁾.

One defines it this way because when you say a play is a game one means that it is not real, it is the figment creation of the dramatist, it is artificial and one means that people playing the roles of the characters in the play are merely imitating real characters but are not portraying what is actually happening to themselves. Therefore, a play is just a game which may be used to entertain or used to educate and used for cultural and language advancement. However, this game is not about playing but it is about real issues. What characters do when imitating others on stage they imitate real human beings, real events in that things or events they play about are real, true and genuine in that they actually happen in real life even if such experience never happened to them. For that reason we say the play is a game because characters are openly acting, about that which is not a game (subject of the game is to raise social concerns, real issues that affect human beings in real life. To illustrate my point let us take the play Julius Caesar - when Shakespeare wrote

the play his intention was to show people about the way Roman citizens lived, he explored his themes about hunger - for power, hunger, for revenge and the final destruction of those responsible. The play is about the tragedy of Brutus. But he merely used actors of his day (16th century) to portray what happened in real life during the reign of Julius Caesar, the Emperor of Rome in 44 Before Christ (BC). The play Julius Caesar is therefore based on the real life of Julius Caesar the Emperor which took place many centuries ago. But some characters like Casca, Decius Brutus and many more never existed in real life - they were merely Shakespeare's own creation to develop his themes. Therefore, to come to the text in question we agree that a play is a game about social concerns, social issues and values. It explores issues that may be social, political, economic, emotional and educative. Since the play explores all these issues it can therefore explore good and bad issues, memorable fine occasions and bitter painful experiences and this is emblematic of the real life situations. In our literary terms we have classified this as tragedy and comedy - because real life is either good or bad, it is either tragic or joyful.

The important features of the play is that it has to be performed by actors, on stage in front of the audience. In the modern world this is performed at a specially designed area called the theatre. The same procedure was used since Shakespeare's plays were also performed at the Globe Theatre where he was a shareholder. This means that the concept of an enclosed theatre for European plays has existed for countries whilst there is no

place of an enclosed area or theatre exposed or discussed by the African dramatists who write in African languages.

Now to come a little closer to the play, *Ngenzeni?*, a play to be discussed in this chapter - we have to look as I suggested at the title of the dissertation which says "some tragic insights or elements in the play". We will look at how Mncwago explores this in this text and now he attempts to deal with it or to resolve it in the text. Before we delve on the issues explored in the text it is appropriate to understand what tragedy is. Tragedy is associated with suffering, pity, fear, death and catharsis. Let us look at some views on what tragedy is.

Aristotle argues that

"A tragedy then, is the imitation of an action that is serious ... with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis"⁽⁶⁾.

Tragedy is said by Aristotle to be of power "by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and such like passions", i.e. is to temper and ridicule them to just measure with a kind of delight, stirred up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated.

Therefore it seems clear that tragedy is a play that evokes pity and fear. We feel pity for the tragic hero because he is miserable, he is suffering. We pity him because he is not suffering as the result of his own wrongdoing but because he is

merely a victim of circumstances. He suffers as a result of other people's fault and interference with his/her life. We fear for ourselves because since our tragic hero is not at fault - the same tragic event can happen to us and we may be victims of similar circumstances. It seems to me that elements of a tragedy will not be met if one suffers as the result of his own wrongdoing. For example, let us take the play Ntombazi who sought good ends by bad means. She sought to see her son Zwibe as the most powerful king in the entire nation. To achieve her goals she used witchcraft and killed many kings including the powerful king Dingiswayo the close ally to King Shaka, the King of the Zulus. She had also planned to kill Shaka but before she could implement her plan she was arrested by Shaka's soldiers and tortured and killed. Can we then say because the play ends painfully because of the torture and murder of Ntombazi the play is a tragedy. It would be naive to accept that Ntombazi is a tragic hero because she had dug her own grave. We do not sympathise with her. We do not feel pity for her and we do not fear anything because we will guard against doing wrong, evil things to avoid punishment. Ntombazi's life is without meaning or substance and we reject her because her life, the unexamined life, is not worth living. Ntombazi's self-destruction is not like Othello's, an atonement and redress of balance by the figure who emerges from her torture of experience with ideally bought wisdom, it is the ill-considered act of selfishness and greed. If we reject Ntombazi, it is because she is potentially a hero. She never grows to full size since though she has something of the heroic spirit, she only vaguely comprehends that her life is

without meaning and substance. Even though some people suffer and die as a result, the play is not a tragedy and those minor characters who suffer and die are not tragic heroes. The play may be said to have some tragic elements which are melodramatic in order to enhance the theme of the author. The second example can be extracted from Mkhize's play - Ngavele Ngasho, where Dambuza who is depicted as a son spoiled by his mother. He refuses to work at home but attempts to join the group of young men who were hard workers working in Durban (in the cities). When he finds work he is lazy to work and is then when loses his job and joins the gang which misbehaves, he gets arrested because he is not working and does not have a permit to be in Durban and involved himself in some criminal activities. Can we really sympathise with Dambuza who was so disrespectful to his father, who left his home contrary to the wishes of his father that he suffers and gets arrested in Durban as the result of his own wrongdoing? It would be very inappropriate to label such a character a tragic hero. Even though some people may sympathise with him, he deserves to suffer and there is no reason for us to feel pity and fear for him. The tragic vision is not focused on the situation or status of a person, but on the motives of his soul. The stature of Othello and Oedipus and Leonardo comes not from their places and situation in life but from their intensity of their living. They have had knowledge that life is good; in them a human potential has been reached and in the face of destruction, their manhood affirmed. It will, therefore, solve our problem if in our analysis of the texts we look at our tragic

heroes - not from the point of view which determines their place and position in society.

Contrary to the above scenario is the play Manhla Iyokwendela Egodini, where our tragic heroes Nontula and Siphango suffer as a result not of their own fault but of another person's (Muzwa's) wrongdoing. We feel pity for Nontula for losing her parents, for losing her fiancé and for her miseries, sufferings and for losing her life finally. She does not contribute towards her downfall, she is merely a foil, she is an innocent victim who suffers because of the situation beyond her control. She suffers because Muzwa would not accept that Nontula does not love him but loves his rival Siphango which Muzwa undermines. She suffers because of her own moral convictions. The same thing happens to Siphango, her fiancé. Therefore the play is a tragedy because it has all the tragic elements.

Tillick in his article the "Tragic Form" called tragedy "A mixture of guilt and necessity". If tragic man could say, "I sinned; therefore I suffer" then they are not tragic heroes, but if they say - "he sinned; therefore I suffer", his problem is resolved, and our sympathy is deserved - and such a person would deserve a title of a tragic hero.

Unlike the dramas by Sophocles, Shakespeare and Locra, Mncwago's Ngenzeni? is a tragedy set in our own times, played out of our own scene, by characters who, however, we regard the quality of their thought, speak in our own language and with our own

peculiar accents. In one sense, therefore, we cannot claim that the play is foreign to us. For what we lose of Oedipus because we are not Athenians and of Othello because we are not Elizabethans, and of Blood Wedding by not being Spaniards, that much, at least, is ours because we are Mncwango's contemporaries. Even were we to reject his assumptions and deny his conclusions, we would still know the world Mncwango creates.

In the first scene of act one we are introduced by Mncwango to the problem that will affect our heroes throughout the play. The scene reveals a dialogue between the twin sisters Zenzile and Zenzisile. Zenzisile is strongly opposed to the idea that she and her twin sister, Zenzisile should prepare themselves to marry King Menziwa. This idea of marrying the king unsettles Zenzile, - and she is portrayed as complaining and crying because she has the man she loves, Hilwayo. She has chosen him to be her prospective husband. In the play she says:

*"Kodwa ngenzeni nje? Ngenzeni ngingaze ngiphoqwe?
Ngenzeni nkosi yami? (Act 1 Scene 1, 7)*

She refuses to marry the king and she rejects his proposal despite its consequence. She later tells her sister that even if her sister is prepared to marry the king she is not prepared and she feels her fundamental rights of choosing whoever she wants to marry, have been violated.

This is evident where she says:

"Kumnandi kuwe, kimi kubuhlungu kuyiva ukuqhutshwa njengemvu ngiphophelelwe ukwenza into ngokungemthetho"
(Act 1 Scene 1, 7).

On the other hand we are shown Zenzisile in the same scene to be happy and willing to marry the king. The reason could be perhaps, she loves the king genuinely, or she does not have a fiancée, that is a person she loves like her sister Zenzile. It could also be that she believes or succumbs to the traditional way of doing things - she may firmly believe that nobody can oppose the king's words despite her feelings and intentions -, she may be a character who blindly accepts whatever is said to her because she believes in the hierarchy or the status quo and does not believe challenging the status quo because of fear of the consequences. However, Mncwango has left that to our own speculation because she does not reveal what motivates her decision. The passage which might give clarity on Zenzisile's motivation could be one where she persuades her sister not to waste time complaining but to marry Menziwa, as that is also the wishes of their parents.

She says:

"Angiqonde kukuphoqa, angifuni futhi ukuba wenze into ongayithandiyo. Kodwa ngiyadabuka uma ngikubona ukhala uzisakaza ngento efana nalena. Inkosi isilikhiphile elokuthi ifuna ukuba siyoba umdlunkulu wayo, nobaba, ngokuhlonipha izwi lesilo, usevumile. Pho wena uyini uma uthi ungase uphikise izwi labadala

ungenzenjani ukuze uziphephise kulokhu? Akusikho ukuchitha isikhathi, nokuzibulala inhliziyi ukukhala imini nobusuku ukhalela into ongenakwenza lutho ngayo? Ngimfung' ubaba, uyaganga wena! Uganga impela!" (Act 1, Scene 1, 7).

The paragraph clearly illustrates to us the time and era in which Mncwango's characters are located. They lived at the time where kings had authority over their subjects. Subjects of the king were there to fulfil not their own desires but those of the king. Zenzisile is portrayed here as conforming to the traditional way of doing things, that of satisfying the king and her parents' wishes. What motivates her decision more is that even their father who is the head of the family and thus has authority over them has conformed to the king's wishes - "Nobaba, ngokuhlonipha izwi lenkosi, usevumile". Zenzile and Zenzisile had no say on the issue and even their father, Mthembu, saw no reason even to consult them and canvass their opinions and feelings on the matter. Zenzisile, therefore, marries the king not because she loves him, but because she has no choice and no say on the matter and she does not see any problem with the way things are done. She also chooses to marry the king because she knows that opposing the wishes of the king could result in death and she says about Hilwayo to Zenzile towards the end of the same paragraph:

"Nalomfana waseMangadini oyilokhu ephehlelele ukuthi wena uzogana yena, uzibizela ukufa! Inkosi ayiphikiswa, futhi ayinqunyelwa" (Act 1, Scene 1, 7).

It is quite interesting that Mncwango in scene one decides to make Zenzile and Zenzisile identical twins, who live in the same environment, same culture and household - but to contrast them so immensely in their beliefs, attitudes, principles and values. It is this conflict presented in the first scene of the play that permeates throughout the play. In Zenzile and Zenzisile - we see the opposite of what was supposed to be a union, representing unity in value system and beliefs. They are not just twins, they are identical twins, in that they shared the same umbilical cord, same proteins and vitamins whilst in their mother's womb. They are the product of the fertilization of one egg cell by one sperm cell. Being identical twins, brought up and socialised in the same way could mean they supposed to represent unity in the family, in society and in the nation as the whole. Yet this unity is fragmented. The twins who differ in opinion are a microcosm of the entire society which is changing and can no longer hold the traditional way of doing things. The twins represents the healthy human relations. That people are different and cannot think alike and believe in the same values. Zenzisile represents the orthodox discourse or school of thought that the way things are done is the correct way and there is no alternative to it, it is immaterial that people suffer or die as the result. Whilst Zenzile represents the alternative discourse - she believes she must fight for what she believes so that her happiness could be true and genuine and not be based on false assumptions. She and Hilwayo challenge the traditional way of doing things and they both represent a dissenting voice of the

silent oppressed majority as represented by many other characters in the text.

The other character in the play who whilst acknowledging that she does not like Menziwa's (the king) decision, but, however, has to accept it because nobody can oppose the king is KaMajola- the mother to Zenzile and Zenzisile:

"Noma bengingakuthandi lokhu okwenziwe yinkosi ukuba inithathe nobabili iyonifaka esigodlweni, akukho engingakwenzwa" (Act I, Scene I, 19).

KaMajola acknowledges the existence of the conflict between her wishes as the mother of the twins and the king as the ruler of the nation and she accepts that the king's decision must prevail as is traditionally expected.

The Zenzile-Zenzisile contradictory characteristics are analogous to the relationship of Hilwayo, Zenzile's fiancé and the leader of the regiment (*ibutho*) and Ndabeni, his friend and loyal supporter. The contrast in their attitudes and beliefs towards the king and the world order is revealed in Act One Scene Two. Hilwayo insists that Zenzile will marry him despite Ndabeni's persuasion that he must forget about her, - in one of the lines he says:

*"Hilwayo:- Kanti ithanda uba? Ayithandi mina?
Ayisingethembisile ukuthi izongigana?
Dadewethu, ngifuna ukuba ingigane noma ningasathandi".*

Ndabeni:- Musa ukuba uyilokhu uphinda lelo, wena bo!
Kanti uqondeni? Ufuna ukubonani? Futhi
ungakwenza kanjani lokho usebuthweni,
ungaqonywa kanjani yintombazana esikhethwe
yinkosi? Ungaganwa yiyo kuliphi lona?"
(Act 1, Scene II, 12).

Ndabeni in the above lines persuades his friend to leave Zenzile to the king. He honestly believes that the king has final authority over the life and death of his subjects. He insists that Hilwayo should be grateful because the king did not punish him for falling in love with Zenzile but instead the king has promoted Hilwayo and made him the chief of the regiment (*induna yempi*) despite the fact that the king was aware of Hilwayo and Zenzile's relationship.

Ndabeni:- "... Bonga lokhu iNkosi esikwenzele khona ukuthi ithi isizwile ukuthi lentombazana ibisizogana wena, ithi noma isizikhethela yona wena ikuyeke ingakubeki cala, ikuse kwankatha kodwa idlule ikubeke ube yinduna yebutho layo. Uma wena uthi usazodlulela phambili uyeke inhlanhla yakho, igodi lakho lelo. Nawe awazi ukuthi usafunani kulengane yabantu" (Act 1, Scene II, p.13).

Ndabeni is depicted as a person who is very short-sighted, if he was in Hilwayo's position he would willingly appreciate the promotion given to him by the king and easily forget about the woman he loves. He seems to lack substance and well grounded principles, he lacks vision, courage and strength to fight for what belongs to him. On the contrary Hilwayo makes it clear that

he will not accept promotion if it is done to 'blind' him so that he may forget about Zenzile.

Hilwayo:- "Ukuzigwaza ngowami uma ngithi ngifuna ukuganwa ngumuntu engimthandayo ... Bengingathekele buduna benkosi mina! Uma lobo buduna nginikwa bona ukuba bube yisithunzi sokungisitha, ngingaboni kuthathwa umfazi wami, ningabupheka nibuhlome ethala" (Act 1, Scene II, 13).

Hilwayo's beliefs are firm and wellgrounded, he will not compromise his beliefs, principles, values and promises he made to Zenzile. He is willing to face up to his convictions despite the consequences of death.

Late in the scene he says:

1. "... Ukufa sengivele ngikuqomile!" (Act 1, Scene II, 16).
2. "... ukufa ngikuzwa kulula kabi kanokuba ngephucwe umfazi wami ngalendlela. Noma bengingakamloboli ngichanguze naye, angicabangi ukuganwa ngomunye ngaphandle kukaZenzile" (Act I, Scene II, 16).

When Hilwayo makes it clear to Ndabeni that he is prepared to die for his convictions, Ndabeni, who thought he wishes to support his friend, feels unsafe and unsecured because he is a traditionalist and persuades Hilwayo to drop the subject lest

other people, like the king's spies hear them and be forced to face death. Ndabeni says finally:

"Asithule manje, wethu. Asazi okungase kusivelele uma silokhu sicubungulana nodaba olufana nalolu" (Act 1, Scene II, 17).

A striking character in the play is Sibiya the Chief Minister of the King. Sibiya's job is to advise the king on the best decisions the king should take, taking into consideration the moral convictions of the society they live in and the traditional beliefs in which they adhere to. Firstly, we are exposed to Sibiya giving advice to Menziwa. He suggests that Hilwayo needs to be killed since he poses tremendous threat to the king. This is evident from their dialogue with the king in Act One Scene Three. King Menziwa asks him this question:

"Usho njalo Sibiya! Uthi angimchithe lomfana waseMangadini uma ngingafuni kubekhona umonakalo phakathi kwesigodlo sami? Monakalo wani angase awenze?"

Sibiya responded to the question by saying the king's life could be in danger since nobody knows what is going on in Hilwayo's mind.

"Akekho owazi izinhliziyi zabantu ababili bethandana, silo sezwe. Oggayinyanga bese bebikile ukuthi lomfana usebonakele izikhathi eziningi ephuma ephulukundlela edlangaleni lakhe ephikelele kubo kwalentombazana

yakaMthembu, iSilo esizikhethela yona ukuba ingene esigodlweni. Akwaziwa-ke abakwenza esitha.

Impilo yeNkosi ingubucayi. Lokhukwenza kwalomfana kungase kudale ingozi kuwe Yise wesizwe sohlanga. Njengesihlangu senkosi ngingeyeke ukuvikele inkosi yami ebubini engibubona buza ngendlela" (Act 1, Scene III, 17).

"Sibiya's above statement seems to locate him well within the traditionalist's framework. It is his duty to protect the king and his entire kingdom. He is portrayed here as responsible for the preservation of the existing norms and practices. He must be seen and must in fact protect the status quo.

However, later in the act Sibiya tells the king that it would be inappropriate for the king to directly kill Hilwayo since people have started complaining about the King's behaviour. (This suggestion puts Sibiya in a compromising position before the king).

Sibiya:- "Bayakhononda (abantu), Ngonyama. Lesisenzo sibenza badabukele lomfana waseMangadini. Bathi iNkosi iyona ngokuthatha sengathi yenzela emoneni. Bathi njengoba iNkosi ibisimkhethile umnawabo walentombazana yakwaMthembu, ayeneliswe. Bathi ithandelani ukuba iNkosi ididiyele izingane zomfazi munye esigodlweni? Inamona muni uma le ntombazana igana lomfana waseMangadini?"

*Qha, Ngonyama, bahalalisile lapho iNkosi
ikhweza lomfana imenza induna yebutho layo.
Bathi iNkosi yelula ubuhlobo, ihloniphisa
umnakwabo" (Act 1, Scene III, 18).*

Whilst Sibiya has earlier on been depicted as a traditionalist, in the above passage he is shown to be challenging the very same notions that the king cannot be opposed. Sibiya raises his concerns about the feelings of the nation that people seem unhappy about the king's decision to marry both the Mthembu girls. The people's concerns are genuine and based on the belief that whilst it is expected for the king to marry whoever he chooses and make her a queen, it is unwise to marry both Zenzile and Zenzisile (twin girls) from the same family since it is expected that the king's chosen wife to be a queen of a nation will give birth to a future king. The problem in this scenario would be a civil war that could arise if both Zenzile and Zenzisile were to give birth to first born sons - because the king would be unable to decide who should rule between the two sons. Even if he does choose, conflict, strife and even war that would divide the nation could result. The same argument raised by Sibiya here was also raised by kaMajola to her daughters earlier in the play.

*"Noma kuyintando yeNkosi leyo, ningakhohlwa ukuthi
lokhu ekwenzile kuhlokomise izwe lonke ngoba lithi
kungase kudaleke umbango ongadabula izwe uma nobabili
ningayizalela abafana ngoba nobabili izonifaka
endlunkulu" (Act 1, Scene I, 9).*

Sibiya seems to be in touch with reality and with popular public opinion. He, therefore, pleads with the king to abandon the plan to marry Zenzile and seems to be criticising the king that if he does not accept criticism from its people the nation will fall apart and disintegrate and finally there would be no one to rule. He says to the king:

"Zithele ngamanzi sithuli sezwe, uthambise inhliziyo. Inkosi iyinkosi ngabantu bayo. Uma inkosi ingasasolwa ingacwilisa izwe, ilibulale libhubhe life liphele nya"
(Act 1, Scene II, 18).

Sibiya's objectivity and divided loyalty made him to be viewed in bad light by the king. Sibiya was expected to keep his views to himself and uphold tradition but his belief that there might be some merit in the public's opinion on the matter made King Menziwa to be very angry and to punish Sibiya for such behaviour. The king's anger is revealed clearly in the passages that follow:

1. *"Bathini? Bathi lomfokazana umnakwethu? Inhlamba leyo Sibiya! Inhlamba impela"* (Act I, Scene II, 18).
2. *"Uthini Sibiya na? Kanti uhlezi unginyonyobela ngemuva? Usunabantu bakho bokukwelulela ukuba ungishayele imithetho? Kwelikabani izwe? Kulo leli likaMbhekwa? Ngimfunge uMboza, kungonakala okaningi! Kungakhothama amakhanda amadoda!"*
(Act 1, Scene III, 18).
3. *"Kanti ngokukunika isikhundla sengikwenze waba yinyoka engiphakamisela ikhanda? Imihlola le!"*
(Act 1, Scene III, 18).

The above passages illustrate clearly King Menziwa's anger and his striking belief in his powers as a king. He reiterates the point that he expects his subjects to be loyal to him and if they fail to obey his orders and to do as he wishes they will face death.

"Kungonakala okuningi, Kungakhothama amakhanda amadoda".

Though Sibiya reveals clearly the tension that exists within himself, this tension is emblematic of the conflict that exists in the society and the nation as a whole. It seems clear to me that this tension exists not only in relation to the younger generation but exists even amongst the old guards, those who are in power such as Sibiya and Simelane. This conflict symbolises the tension that exists in every changing society. It is not a negative tension, it is a healthy one which is supposed to inculcate dialogue and to foster the spirit of understanding and compromise between the two schools of thought, that is the traditional school of thought represented by the king and his belief in his supreme power on the other hand, and the modern school of thought represented by Hilwayo and Zenzile and many people whose views are suppressed in their struggle to curb the abuse of power by those in authority so that every human being can be free and experience true happiness.

King Menziwa towards the end of Scene Three make it clear who is the ruler of his people. He assigns Sibiya to lead the group of young men who will be responsible for killing Hilwayo and his

friend Ndabeni. The king uses some unconventional methods to plot the murder of his opponent. He assigns Sibiya and Hilwayo to go and steal cattle of a neighbouring King Mzimba from Ngwavuma. His plan is that Hilwayo must be killed on the way and never return back to disturb the king and Zenzile. He plans that his death should seem a natural death and must not be seen as orchestrated by the king himself.

1. "Kusasa lomfana waseMangadini ngizomkhipha nedlanzana lezinsizwa azolihola ahambe ayophanga izinkomo zika Mzimba, uMnumzane waseNgwavuma. Kufuneka ziphangwe ebusuku belele".
2. "Ukhethe izinsizwa ozethembileyo Sibiya, izinsizwa ezinesifuba, ezingaphahlukiyo!"
3. "Lomfana waseMangadini kufuneka afe!"
4. "Kulesi sithokothoko sehlanze yilapho lomfana eyosala khona. Uyangizwa ukuthi ngithini Sibiya na?" (Act 1, Scene III, 19).

The above passages illustrate to the great extent how Menziwa intends to implement his plan to deal with those who oppose his view and his beliefs. He intends to demonstrate his immense power as the king. He does this by delegating the very same Sibiya who was attempting to dissuade him from marrying Zenzile. This task is a delicate one for Sibiya and needs to be handled with care. Sibiya's life would be at stake if the king's plan fails. He did however, lose his life after he failed to execute the king's plan as instructed. He was seen as a deviant who

violated all the traditional norms and who abused his power as the chief minister of the king.

Sibiya failed to explain to the king how Hilwayo and Ndabeni escaped from the forest in which they were to hide themselves for the night because of heavy rains and the fear of wild animals. When he failed to give satisfactory explanation Menziwa became furious and said:

"Mthatheni nimsuse lapha phambi kwami nimuse kwankatha! Mboza! Ayikho inja engakhuluma amanga phambi kwami ibuye iphile!" (Act IV, Scene I, 83).

The death of Sibiya frightened everybody in that it appeared as the king's reiteration of the supremacy of his power and that those who are deviant and violent to his orders will die. To Menziwa it is immaterial whether you are his friend, his chief minister or an ordinary citizen. Any person who deviates from the norm irrespective of his status, position or class, is punished. This same concern was raised by Mthembu, the father to Zenzile and Zenzisile, and who also became the king's new chief minister, when he said in Act IV, Scene IV:

"Lentombazana (uZenzile) yenze into embi kabi. Izwe lonke liyalila ngalesisenzo sayo. USibiya ufile, kwafa abaningi abantu empini esuke phakathi kwebutho ebelizoshisa umuzi wakhe namadodana akhe.

Izwe lonke lishaqekele ngendlela uSibiya abulewe ngayo. Ubulawisiwe okomfokazana eyinduna enkulu yenkosi" (Act IV, Scene IV, 87).

Despite the argument raised above about the choices that people face in their everyday life -the choice of compromising to all the traditional way of life in order to live, no matter how oppressive it may be or the choice of violating the king's orders and therefore die, we still find people like Zenzile and Hilwayo who choose the least taken route. They are ordinary citizens, with no status and power but they chose to stand by their principles and beliefs. It is the choice which carries in itself the risk of their life.

When Hilwayo escaped from Sibiya's group which went to rob Mzimba's cattle Hilwayo went to fetch Zenzile so that they may escape and become refugee in KwaZulu - under the most powerful king of the Zulu's - Shaka. It is when they meet before they escape that we find them committing themselves to their principles, they reassert their love for each other and indicate that if being together or choosing each other as husband and wife means death -so be it. This couple was prepared to die for its principles rather than succumb to Menziwa's pressures. In the dialogue below, we find Zenzile and Hilwayo talking about the choice they have to make.

Hilwayo:- "Ukufa sengivele ngizinikele kukho. Uma wena usangabaza, usenovalo lokuba uhambe nami khona manje, vele uphindele kwabakini uyohlala ulindele umendo ozowuzuza khona kusasa lokhu okusayo. Kodwa mina uyobe ugcinile ukungibona ngisaphila".

Zenzile:- "Ukhulumelani kanje wazi kahle ukuthi noma nini ngizimisele ukwenza lokho ongitshela khona? Okusho ukuthi awuze ungakholwa ukuthi ngisuke ngikhuluma iqiniso uma ngithi lapho oya khona, nami ngiyoba nawo amandla okufinyelela? Lapho oyofela khona nelami igodi liyoba khona? Kanti wenza konke lokhu nje, awangethemi, awangikholwa Hilwayo?"

Hilwayo:- "Noma singabulawa, besivele sizokufa. Mina sengivele ngibalwe nabafuleyo ngoba iNkosi bese ilikhiphile elokuthi angibulawe, kodwa amadlozi akithi angiphephisile ekufeni. Uma ngingafa manje, ngingafela into engiyayizo. Uma wena usazimisele ukunqamula nami imifula nezintaba namagquma, kulungile ... kodwa uma uzisola ngalokhu kwenza kwami, cabanga kahle kusemanje ungazilingi ngokufa".

Zenzile:- "Noma ungangigcona, anginandaba. Ngiyindlela uma nginje. Angisoze ngiphindele emuva. Ukuyogana iNkosi angiyi mina. Uwena oyinkosi enhliziyweni yami" (Act III, Scene III, 64).

The above dialogue indicates clearly Hilwayo and Zenzile's commitments to each other, to their ideals and principles. Because they are so optimistic they have strength and courage to choose death if it comes. They see death as inevitable and as a necessary end but they prefer not to die in vain but to die for a legitimate course like soldiers who die having fought their country and ideals. Because of love, trust and friendship, they hope that they will live long and have a happy family, that is why Hilwayo has a vision that they will seek refuge under King

King Shaka in KwaZulu. It is quite interesting that their dream became true, they live to see themselves living together as husband and wife without any disturbance. After they had been presented to Shaka by his spies we find Shaka welcoming them without question.

Shaka:- *"Basuseni lapha phambi kwami niyobanika
izinkomo zokukleza, nibabhekele nenxiwa
lokwakha bahlale, bazinze, bangizalele
amabutho"* (Act V, Scene VI, 121).

Shaka showed mercy on them in that he did not only welcome them, but he also gave them shelter, cattle and freedom to live in KwaZulu as they wish. Mncwango's hero and heroine are ordinary people who against all odds, and against the king's and his most powerful state machinery supported by the loyal supporters fail to win the war he has started. The war between these people is the war of values, principles and ideals. It is the war which is emblematic of the changing values and perception of society of the role of the king's and those in authority. It is the struggle against dictatorship, against the abuse of power by those in authority and it is the struggle for emotional and physical liberation. Such struggles have been waged throughout the world over the centuries and were characterised by the merciless killing of innocent people, and the king's and those in authority emerged being the heroes. Mncwango in this play deviated from the trend of many plays where the kings, because of their power and influence and equipped with all resources at their disposal intimidate the lives of the ordinary people and

emerge heroes. Our old critic would then say there is a moral lesson from such victory - that those who rebel and fight those in authority (the status quo) deserve to be punished. These critics would emphasise the necessity to conform to the old traditional values to conform to abuse, exploitation and oppression.

It is also quite interesting how Mncwango makes his hero and heroine succeed despite their rebellious and deviant behaviour but make loyal and innocent people die, including the high ranking officials of Menziwa - Sibiya and Simelane who both die cruelly at the hands of the king himself. Does this mean perhaps that it is better to be bold and firmly grounded in your principles irrespective of whether they differ fundamentally with those of the king - hence Zenzile and Hilwayo succeed and Sibiya, Simelane and Ndabeni because of their shaky grounds, because they lack substance and identity deserve to die. These victims of death lived to satisfy and please the king and did not live for themselves and therefore because their life was determined by the king, he extinguished it. Hilwayo and Zenzile lived for themselves, they took upon themselves to take control of their lives so as to determine their destiny in life and they emerged victorious.

Ndabeni's life could have been saved if he had heeded Hilwayo's call that they should escape. But because he was not firm in his beliefs and convictions and because he lived his life for the king and not for himself, he refused to determine his destiny

instead when persuaded to escape by Hilwayo, he made it clear that he would rather die rather than escape. His choice of remaining behind, choosing to be a loyal citizen, made him a victim. He remained behind and he was interrogated, tortured and humiliated by Simelane and his whole hand was put on fire and burnt until it became ashes. He was tortured because he refused to disclose where Hilwayo and Zenzile were. This humiliating and degrading treatment would not have occurred if he had escaped. He chose death long before it could come.

Ndabeni:- *"Angiboni ukuthi ukubaleka kungangiphephisa kanjani ekufeni uma ukufa sekungithumbile. Uma ngibaleka, ngingabaleka ngishonephi? ... Kungcono ukuba ngife kube kanye ngomkhonto kunokuba ngiqale ukubulawa luvalo ngisayobhoklwabhoklwa izilwane ngamazinyo".*

Hilwayo:- *"Yiba nesibindi, wethu, musa ukuzithambisa! ... Musa ukuzinikela ekufeni ubhekile".*

Ndabeni:- *"Ukufa ukuphumula. Kungcono ukuba ngife kube kanye, kunokuba ngiphilele ukuhlupheka, ngiphilele ukuba ngiyilokhu ngabanjelwa amagqubu ngizingelwe njengenyamazane.*

Uma ufuna ukubalekela ukufa, kulungile, baleka uziphephise, kodwa mina ngizosala lapha ngikulinde". (Act II, Scene V, 55).

This passage illustrates clearly that the extent to which Ndabeni was prepared to conform and as the result face death if the king so determines. Ngenzeni? the play, unlike Manhla Iyokwendela Egodini, is not a tragedy - because our hero and heroine come up

as the victors at the end of the play - but the play has some tragic elements in itself in that people's choices are manipulated by the harsh and the cruel environment. Their views are suppressed but moreover many innocent people die in the process. They die not as a result of their own fault but because of the situation beyond their control. The way things operated at the time of their death is depicted as normal justifiable death and is seen as a just punishment to those who disobey the king. Viewed from the opposite angle - that is from the alternative discourse or school of thought, the one which Hilwayo and Zenzile belong, their death is tragic because these characters did not deserve to die. Death sentence is the violation of the most fundamental and precious right - "the right to life". We therefore feel pity for these characters for their suffering and their sudden death and we fear that what happened to them, may happen to any other person who finds himself in the same predicament. Because these characters are minor characters, even though they are essential for the development of the plot and theme, we cannot label the play tragedy - because our sympathies lie mainly with the main characters, the hero and heroine who set out and struggle to achieve certain ideals and when they achieved them we rejoice with them. The play, though, viewed from the point of view of the hero and the heroine is not tragic even though there are a lot of tragic elements and events in the play - which evoke pity and fear. Our main focus throughout the play are on the main characters.

In this play, Menziwa seems to be losing the battle in that when he kills his chief minister, Sibiya and his main loyal assistant, Simelane, he is left alone, except with the choice of choosing other people to assist him, who will in turn inevitable face the same predicament which was faced by Sibiya and Simelane. The struggle is for change in the way the kings rule their people. Menziwa experiences pressures externally from the ordinary people in general - and internally from within his advisors - Sibiya and Simelane - and his failure to find a meaningful compromise in the face of inevitable change leads to many tragic events. Mncwango's main appeal in the play is that there should be tolerance and flexibility in the way people's lives are governed. He says whilst our traditional way of life had many good things about it but it also had many bad traditions, values and beliefs which need to change and adapt to the modern values of democracy, freedom, transparency, accountability, tolerance and open-mindedness.

THE TRAGEDY OF NONTULA - IN MANHLA IYOKWENZELA EGODINI

1. "To share in the tragic world is to engage ourselves to a design drawing us towards death".
(G Bush, Shakespeare and the Natural Condition).
2. "As Shakespeare's comic vision moves towards the moment of marriage, Shakespearean tragedy moves towards the moment of death or dying, the event that gives final shape to the encounter between character and things in themselves ...

Death in the fact that makes human life dramatic, it is in the face of death that character announces itself and undertakes the rashness of acting and believing: the moment where we win a measure of honour through the words by which we report our defeat".

(G Bush - Shakespeare and the Natural Condition).

In the play at issue - it is our main characters' death that intensify the tragic theme and social concerns as raised by Bush in the two quotations above. Like Ngenzeni?, this play also has many tragic events surrounding the characters in the play - but unlike Ngenzeni?, the tragic events in this play revolve around our heroine, Nontula and our hero, Siphango (I hope to explain later why I refer to Nontula as a heroine and Siphango a hero despite the fact that they die in the play). The two characters are very central to the development of the theme and plot in the play all the tragic events in the play surround - these two main

characters and the miseries occurring in the play - lead to their tragic death whilst the minor characters merely become spectators and have nothing to do with their misfortune.

The play qualifies to be labelled a tragedy because all the tragic events that happen to our heroine Nontula are events beyond her control. Nontula does not in any way contribute towards her sorrow, miseries and finally to her death. She is merely a victim of Muzwa's frustrations, stubbornness, inflexibility and lack of understanding that Nontula is in love with Siphango despite his humble origin and that she does not love Muzwa despite the fact that he is a prince born from the royal family.

The play like Ngenzeni? concentrates on the abuse of power by those in traditional authority -like kings, princes and chiefs. In this play, Muzwa Zulu, the Zulu prince assumes the same role which was played by King Menziwa in Ngenzeni?. He believes he has power and influence over many people such as the regiment or group of young men constituting his gang, the witchdoctor who is his friend and 'Iqhikiza' - the lady in charge of all the young women who are about to fall in love. Muzwa, the antagonist in the play manipulates many people in order to achieve his goals. On the other hand Nontula and Siphango, are ordinary people, who like Zenzile and Hilwayo, were brought together by the mutual feeling of love, trust and respect. The two plays by Mncwango have striking similarities and both plays are based on the actual events that took place in life some time in the past. Both plays

are therefore historical in that they record events and practical experiences of many people in the past. Our heroes and heroine in both plays therefore represent the actual miseries, sorrows and tragedies of many of our people in history and serve to educate us on what possible compromise can those people in power offer in the face of the inevitable change in order to avoid conflicts, strife, war and the death of innocent people.

In this play, we are exposed to Muzwa's intention to get Nontula in order to make her his wife, despite Nontula's wishes. He has vowed to himself that if Nontula does not fall in love with him, she would rather die so that no other man can have her.

"UMuzwa-ke wabe esongele intombazana abe eyithanda, wathi uma ingathandi yena uyifungela abaphansi oyisemkhulu, uthi iyomane ife ingawadli amabele. Wabe efungile kakhulu kabi wathi nakanjani iyomqoma, uma ingaqomi yena iyoqoma igodi, ithuna phela" (Mncwango, 1951 - Preface).

Muzwa's plans and ambitions of getting married to Nontula contrary to Nontula's wishes indicate that he is prepared to exert whatever influence he has as the prince in order to get what he wants. His status and power is further confirmed by Siphango's sister, Tozi, when she tells Siphango that it may be difficult for him to get the woman he loves since she has admirers in the royal household.

Tozi:- *"Suka lapha, mfowethu, ungazikhohlisi, uthi uyazi ukuthi uNontula uthandwa abantwana, uthandwa ebukhosini, uthandwa inkosana yomntwana uShoba? Lapha uyini ke wena ongase uthathe ufunge uqede uthi uzoyithatha lengane? Ngimfunge ubaba, ufuna ukufa ushunqe ungavuthelwanga"* (Act II, Scene III, 12).

In this passage, Tozi warns his brother about the consequence of his decision. She advises him that if he wants to get Nontula, there will be a strike or a war and that his decision will make him an adversary of Muzwa who has been described as cruel. It is also interesting that Tozi acknowledges the class distinction that exists between the two family hence that is why she asks Muzwa as to who does he think he is to compete with Muzwa Zulu, the prince:

"Lapho uyini ke wena ungaze ufunge uqede uthi uzoyi thatha lengane?"

The main focus therefore is on the struggle between Siphango and Muzwa, both having the intentions to woo and marry Nontula. However, their characters differ significantly and the schemes and strategies they use to get Nontula are very divergent. These different characters are described briefly by the author in his preface. Mncwango describes Siphango as a weak, kind, yet brave and strong. He is a helpful and courageous person. On the contrary Muzwa is described as cruel, shrewd, spiteful, boastful and full of hatred and jealousy.

1. "UMuzwa wabelibhungu elabe linenkani eyesabekayo, wayezichwensa izinsizwa ayengakaze alwe nazo, kanye nalezo ayengazesabi. Umuntu ayemesaba kwakunguSiphango, wabe eyisiqhwaga esikhulu, futhi wakhula eyingqwele esigodini sakubo. Lokhu ke, kwenza uMuzwa aze amzonde uSiphango afune nesu lokumshaya amxoshe, ukuze aqede akumesaba kwakhe".

On the contrary, Mncwango describes Siphango as this:

2. "... USiphango wabe eyisilomo kwaMphanza esibizwa nasemadilini asekhaya afike asikelwe esakhe isitho enyameni. Futhi uNontula wabe esemthanda uSiphango ngenxa yenhliziyo yakhe eyabe ihlala yesese sengathi imhlophe, nangenxa yobuqotho bakhe. Emva kokuba uNontula akhumule inzilo washeshe waqoma uSiphango" (Mncwango, 1951 - Preface).

These two rivals in the play, are depicted like two rivals Hilwayo and Menziwa in Ngenzeni? In this play Siphango is associated with Hilwayo because both their mission is to protect what they have - their fiancée's or future wives. They are both of humble origins and both choose death if need be, rather than sacrifice their principles. Siphango had never voluntarily gave up his fiancée Nontula to Muzwa, he stuck to his idea of marrying Nontula until his death. His death therefore though tragic, is emblematic of the importance of being firm in your belief as long as they are genuine, moral and justifiable. On the other hand Prince Muzwa is associated with King Menziwa. They are both of royal origin and they both have some form of power in one way or another. Both of them are depicted as cruel, merciless, selfish,

greedy, self-centred, unsympathetic and inflexible despite the changing times and the pressures that they get from the society as a whole. Both Menziwa and Muzwa are the source of tragic events in Mncwango's plays. Their abuse of power and their insistence are wanting to have other people's prospective wives causes instability and chaos in society.

The first tragic event in the play Manhla Iyokwendela Egodini is the death of Nontula's parents from the floods that took them and threw them into the sea after heavy rains when they attempted to cross the rivulet not far from their home. Nontula and her younger brother, Ndabayakhe became orphans after the death of their parents. Though this is the natural disaster and therefore free from human intervention it is however a very tragic event. This tragic event makes Nontula and Ndabayakhe to suffer and hence when Nontula realise that she cannot help her parents who were drowning in front of her, she attempted suicide by attempting to throw herself into the floods. Mncwango tells us what happened before Nontula's parents died.

"Kusuke isidumo uNontula noMaNdwandwe baphoseka emnyango; kukhala izingane. Bathi lapho bethi bayaphuthuma sebonike ukuthi uyise nonima kaNontula, amanzi eze ngamandla. Bathi bayazabalaza emanzini oMaZungu benoCijimpi, ayesebakhukhula amuka nabo"
(Act II, Scene II, 11).

Nontula:- "Ngane yakwethu, Ndabayakhe, sisele sodwa emhlabeni, sezintandane sizosala sihlupheka singenabani" (Act IV, Scene III, 17).

Nontula communicates the effect of this tragic event to her brother, Ndabayakhe, that from that day they are orphans.

The second tragic event that happened to Nontula is that after falling in love with Siphango, and after the feast celebrating their relationship, so that their relationship can be known by everybody in the neighbourhood, her fiancé Siphango is beaten by Muzwa and his gang. His injuries are so severe and mortal in that they eventually result in his death. Nontula could not handle this in that she fainted several times and nearly lost her mind. We are told of Siphango's injuries by a man who went to report the incident at Siphango's home where Tozi and Nontula were.

Indoda:-

"Sekwenzeke ingozi lapha, asazi ukuthi ubani oyenzileyo. Sizwe umuntu ekhala ehlathini ekungeneni kwalensunguzi ebhobokela lapha ekhaya. Thina-ke besiphuza kulomuzi wakwaMabasa ongale kwehlathi. Sithe siqambe sithi siyaphuthuma nesihlonti somlilo ngoba sizwa ukuthi umuntu uyafa impela, sithi kumbe udliwa isilwane, safica yena lomfana esebomvu esebhonga okwenkomo, nalaba abakade bemshaya bengasekho sebalekile.

Awulethe amanzi dadewethu simgeze kesibone ukuthi ulimale kanjani ngoba nakhu izingozi zigcwele ikhanda" (Act IV, Scene III, 39).

This tragic event which happened to Siphango was a fatal blow to Nontula since Siphango was her only last hope. Siphango was her future husband and were planning to live together and start their

own family, so that Nontula may forget that she lost both her parents the previous year.

Even if nobody knows who killed Siphango, towards the end of the play, when Nontula herself is about to die, she confesses after having recollected all the past events and says it boldly that it is Muzwa who killed Siphango and who is now trying to bewitch her.

"Mina sengiyazi sengibonile futhi lapha kungiyisa khona lokhu. Okokuqala ngiyaqonda kahle kamhlophe ukuthi uSiphango wabulawa uMuzwa, futhi angimhlebi; uye yedwa isitha sakhe ekade kwasa sifuna ukumshaya, ngisho nangomsindo wakwaMabasa owayeni nedlanzana lezinsizwa ezabe zifuna ukumkaka zimshaye. Ngiyesaba ikuhamba ngingena ezinkantolo ngabe ngamchaza" (Act IV, Scene V, 48).

Nontula in this passage seems to have known all along as to who killed Siphango but she did not reveal this because she was afraid of going to courts to testify. Her fear was based on the fact that she was a young woman who was going to face old men who might well be connected to Muzwa because of his influence and in this way justice would be miscarried. Besides if she had done so and lost her case by not producing evidence which supports her allegations then there would be endless hostilities that would exist between her family and Muzwa's family.

In the play we are also shown Muzwa talking to his witchdoctor blaming him for prescribing deadly herbs. He reveals to the witchdoctor that it is the herbs that he got from him that killed Siphango.

"Nguwe lona owanginika lesisibiba esenza umuntu engimshayile angaphili kahle agule abe isishosha uma engafanga. Uthi mangenzenjani lokhu uwe owangenza ngaba umthakathi, noma ngingunywa nginganqunywa ngendaba yalento owangenza yona. Angazi ukuthi ngizoshonaphi mina kababa! Awa! Kwangizonda ukuhlupheka" (Act IV, Scene IV, 42).

Muzwa in the above scene admits liability for the death of Siphango but insists that the witchdoctor is partly to blame because he is the one who through his herbs made him to be violent and very insensitive to other people. It is therefore clear that Muzwa is the cause of Nontula's tragedy. Our hero Siphango dies as a result of Muzwa's stubbornness and selfishness.

The last tragic event which occurs in the play is the death of our heroine Nontula. Muzwa is still implicated in her death in that despite that Siphango who is his rival is dead, he still doubts if Nontula will marry him, and therefore he still wants to administer traditional herbs to Nontula, so that she may love him.

Muzwa's conversation with his friend, the witchdoctor, reveals to us the kind of plan Muzwa has about his future with Nontula.

Inyanga:- "Manje, wazi muphi umuntu ongayinika kahle yonke imithi yakho?"

Muzwa:- "Ngazi iqhikiza layo elizwana kakhulu nami, libuye futhi libe umngane wayo. Lake lasho kimi lathi yini ngingayifaki isipoliyane ikhulume iqiniso ngami ize kimi igijima, ngala mina. Manje imuphi umuthi ongenza ukuba ingithande?" (Act IV, Scene IV, 43).

This passage shows how well connected Muzwa is. He is a man of tremendous influence. He has his key people in every sphere of his life who will always be there to execute his plans. In this passage he is quick to suggest to his witchdoctor that since he cannot administer the herbs himself to Nontula, he has somebody who has authority over Nontula and this person - 'iqhikiza' - is also trusted by Nontula and all the young women she is in charge of - in their area. For this reason it will be easy to execute Muzwa's plans.

It is quite interesting to observe what the witchdoctor says about Muzwa after he has prescribed to him herbs to be given to Nontula. Immediately after Muzwa left the witchdoctor speaks to himself and comments about the cruelty of Muzwa.

"Lomfana kaShoba ungumuntu wemikhuba impela, futhi inhliziyo yakhe yimbi ifana nenhliziyo yebhubesi. Ukhona umuntu othi eqeda ukubulala umuntu abese eyilokhu ephikelele ukuthatha intombi yakhe? Uthi izoba nenhlanhla nje yona lentombi?"

Kodwa lentombazana eneshwa eliyinqaba. Khona ngawo lonyaka owendlule kade ibona abazali bayo bemuka nomfula, manje isibona isoka layo lifa libulawa izinsizwa ezingombangi kuyo. Nami sengiyizwela ubuhlungu ngingenakuyi siza" (Act IV, Scene IV, 46).

The same sentiments about the cruelty and his hostility is revealed by 'iqhikiza', the woman in charge of Nontula who also is Muzwa's friend. After she administered the medicines to Nontula, Nontula became very ill and later died. On learning about Nontula's death 'iqhikiza' confronted Muzwa about using her for promoting his selfish goals.

Qhikiza:- "Awu Muzwa, ungenza umthakathi, unginika umuthi uthi angiyobulala umntwana wabantu?"

Muzwa:- "Kanti wenzenjani? Usefile impela? Uthi usefile uNontula?"

Qhikiza:- "Uthini mthakathi ndini? Uthini Sigilamkhuba? Uthi ngenzenjani? Kanti wena uthe angenzenjani? Akuwena owanginika umuthi owathi yintando, wathi angibowuthela emanzini azowaphuza, wanginika nomunye wathi angibowugcoba okhezweni adla ngalo, kanti unginika ubuthi? Uthini manje?"

Muzwa:- "Musa ukuthetha uklabalase kangaka ngoba kuzo thathe kuzwe abantu?"

Qhikiza:- "Kanti kuyafihlwa ukuthi ubulele umuntu?
Kuyafihlwa?" (Act IV, Scene V, 51).

This confrontational dialogue between Muzwa and 'iqhikiza', even though it takes place too late when much damage had been done, reveals to us the cruelty in which Muzwa is viewed both by his enemies and friends alike. Muzwa because he is a prince, he has abused his status and power, he knew that all the people he recruits to his scheme would fall for it because they have no power to oppose him, instead because of his royal connection they will try to please him in order to win his trust and loyalty. This suggests to me that the nature of their friendship is not a mutual, genuine and reciprocal friendship, but it is a sham, a friendship based on convenience so that Muzwa may get what he wants. Both the witchdoctor and 'iqhikiza' regret their involvement with Muzwa but it is difficult to pull out. This gross abuse of power persists even today in the modern world where we find those in authority refusing to compromise and accommodate the views of their subjects.

Even 'iqhikiza' abused her power over Nontula by collaborating with Muzwa in his evil schemes. This woman was supposed to have refused to administer any herbs to Nontula. It is, however, sad and painful that Nontula discovers the shrewd and evil schemes about 'iqhikiza' when she was on her death bed. She realises too late that the cause of her illness is 'iqhikiza' and Muzwa.

"... sengibonile ukuthi ukhona umuthi iqhikiza elangidlisa ngawo. Mhlawumbe lingizonda ngoba ngingathandi uMuzwa ongumngane walo. Ingabe lathelani emanzini?" (Act IV, Scene IV, 48).

The play therefore revolves around our heroine Nontula and hero Siphango and antagonist Muzwa. All the tragic events in the play happen to Nontula and she is never depicted in any Act or Scene as a happy character or as achieving what she wants in life, but instead her plans are frustrated and destroyed by those in power. She is a victim throughout the play. The loss of her parents, of her fiancée Siphango and the loss of her life leads us to classify the play as tragedy in that she does not contribute in anyway towards her suffering but other people like Muzwa do. We therefore feel pity for her and fear that similar events may happen to us since they are uncontrollable. We pity Nontula because she has not caused her misfortune.

It is the death of Nontula that finally makes Muzwa realise that he is an evil person who does not deserve to be part of the community. This critical look by Muzwa at himself confirms what Raleigh (p.) said in his History of the World:

"It is therefore death alone that can suddenly make man to know himself. He holds a glass before the eyes of the most beautiful, and makes them see therein deformity and rottenness, and they acknowledge".

It is therefore essential for us to understand the theories of tragedy, that even if the tragic plays evoke pity and fear, they remain plays and they have to be enjoyed. We therefore have to derive pleasure in pitying others like Nontula and Siphango in that if we do not pity them the play would have lacked one essential element of tragic plays.

Many commentators and interpreters of Aristotle's formulation on tragedy agree that the primary tragic emotions are pity and fear and that most tragedies tend to leave the audience not depressed but relieved and even exalted. A.C. Bradley, in his classic study of Shakespearean tragedy, wrote of four responses to tragedy: a feeling of acquiescence in the catastrophe, pity, fear and a sense of waste which the struggle, suffering and fall of the tragic figures evoke. Pity is felt for the human sufferer, since he is one like ourselves and fear is experienced at his fate.

We may say, then, that fully developed tragedy is possible only where keen desire and high ability to understand human suffering unite with noble capacity for taking pleasure in its artistic representation.

In support of this view, Ehrlich, in his article, "*Hamlet's Absent Father*" he wrote:

"By watching tragedy we can wish, and thereby help create our own psychic health. It is the miracle of tragedy that failure belongs to the fictitious characters and health to the artist and the audience" (p.).

It is through other people's miseries that we learn and correct our mistakes in order not to find ourselves in similar situations. We derive pleasure in pitying characters on stage but we do not want to experience the same tragic events which our characters experience. If our fictitious characters do not suffer any misfortune we would even leave the theatre disappointed and refuse to accept that the play is a tragedy.

St. Augustine, in Confessions (Sheed translation) had this to say:

"I developed a passion for stage plays, with the mirror they held up to my own miseries and the fuel they poured on my flame. How is it that a man wants to be made sad by the sight of tragic sufferings that he could not bear in his own person. Yet the spectator does want to feel sorrow and it is actually his feelings of sorrow that he enjoys. Surely this is the most wretched lunacy? For the more a man feels such sufferings in himself, the more he is moved by the sight of them on the stage. Now when a man suffers himself, it is called misery; when he suffers in the suffering of another, it is called pity. But how can the unreal sufferings of the stage possibly move pity? The spectator is not moved to aid the sufferer but merely to be sorry for him, and the more author of these fictions makes the audience grieve, the better they like him. If the tragic sorrows of

the character, whether historical or entirely fictitious - be so poorly represented that the spectator is not moved to tears, he leaves the theatre unsatisfied and full of complaints; if he is moved to tears, he stays to the end, fascinated and revelling in it. So that tears and sorrow it would seem, are things to be sought. Yet every man prefers to be joyful. May it be that whereas no one wants to be miserable, there is real pleasure in pitying others - and we love their sorrows because without them we should have nothing to pity" (p.41).

It is therefore clear that tragedy is the greatest of literary forms because in it the paradox of art is at its strongest. The more humanly terrible and questionable the experience, the greater the pressure of imaginative definition needed to make it acceptable. Acceptable it precisely is, in its mysterious way in that we even accept an evil man like Muzwa because of the fullness with which art has defined him and in a sense forgive him. If you remove a character like Muzwa in the play, the play loses substance and ceases to be tragic and our sympathy and pity is lost and by the same analogy the real pleasure of pitying others in the play is lost.

The play Manhla Iyokwendela Egodini has been written along the lines of a classical tragedy. It is delightful to share in the world of Mncwango, his vision of the tragic world. Though there are few well-written plays in African languages, Mncwango's contribution with his play must be appreciated. The other well-written play by Mbatha is Nawe Mbopha kaSithayi (You too, Mbopha, the son of Sithayi) which portrays the tragedy of Mbopha

throughout the play. Mbopha is forcefully drawn into the plot of assassinating Shaka by Mkabayi, and Dingane and is later killed himself. However, this past mentioned play has been criticised by some of the critics as the adaptation of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar which portrays the tragedy of Brutus. It can be argued, therefore, that Mbatha was influenced in theme, style and approach in writing this play, by the events that occur in Shakespeare's play. One, however, does not dispute or challenge the events that occur in Nawe Mbopha kaSithayi because they are historical events which actually occurred as it happened in the play. Mncwango's plays, therefore, offer us an insight into the world of African tragedies.

KUSASA UMNGCWABO WAKHO NAMI - "SOCIAL INEQUALITIES AND GENDER STEREOTYPES IN THE PLAY"

"Male dominance is perhaps the most pervasive and tenacious system of power in history ... it is metaphysically nearly perfect. Its point of view is the standard for point of viewlessness; its particularity the meaning of universality. Its force is exercised as consent, its authority as participation, its supremacy as the paradigm of order; its control as the definition of legitimacy".

(Catherine Mackinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State: Towards Feminist Jurisprudence 8 SIGNS 635 at 638 [1983]).

This text as the above quotation suggests, reflects the different kinds of authority and power - the texts move away from men's abuse of power in "the public sphere", to men's abuse of their authority as the 'head' of the family in the "private domain". What Mncwango attempts to do in this text is to suggest the interrelationship that exists in the private life of individuals with the public's role that individual ultimately plays in social relations. The play depicts how our heroine Nokufa struggles to survive in the environment that is hostile to women. Nokufa, though married, with her husband (Nkosi) working, struggles to make ends meet because her husband Nkosi does not support the family. He spends his money drinking and gives some of it to his girlfriends. Nokufa's aim is to see her children having a bright future. What Nokufa did was to open a shebeen and sell

traditional African beer so as to raise money to feed, clothe and take her children to school. Mncwango explains this succinctly in his preface when he says:

"Esengumakoti uNokufa wabe ephuza utshwala besiZulu, umqombothi, kanye nesishimeyane, edayisa ngabo athole imali ayikhweze, ethi wenzela ukuba abantabakhe bangalambi uma sebekhulile. Umyeni wakhe, uNkosi, wabe engamtsheli lutho ngalemali abe eyigcina, ngoba wabe ethi angadakwa amshaye, amhluphe kanye nabantabakhe, kanti futhi eqonywe izintombi eziningi abe edla nazo imali abeyihola emsebenzini. UNokufa wabethenga ukudla, athengele izingane okokugqoka, wazifundisa ezimbili ezindala, uThemba noZithulele, waze waphumelela ukuzisa esikoleni esikhulu ekholishi eMpumulo, ethi ujonge ukuba zifunde zibe othisha".

It is quite interesting that a male writer, like Mncwango, writing in the mid-1950's, could raise these social issues about abuse of power by men or those in authority in the private domain. He is making us aware of the gender stereotypes that existed all along. Social relations have always defined male and female roles in terms of 'private' vs 'public'. The 'private' sphere, is the domestic, home environment which has always been reserved for women, it was always expected that women's roles will be at home, that is taking care of all household chores and necessities like cleaning, washing, cooking and taking care of the children. The male role has always been defined in terms of the 'public' sphere - which is associated with politics, power and this would inevitably give man advantage of keeping in touch with the outside world. The orthodox discourse has always

defined a 'man's' role - as the head of the family in the private sphere. This automatic assumption of power vested on men purely by the virtue of their sex has created many problems. Many men like Nkosi in the play, have abused their power as heads of the family whilst neglecting the very roles of providing for their families so that they may be 'true' heads of their families.

Feminist literature has discussed extensively the problem experienced by many women in marriage relationship and in society as the whole. Nkosi, for instance, abused his wife physically by assaulting her and the children when drunk. He abused her emotionally, by drinking excessively and reduced her self-esteem by going out with other women in front of her and in public. This kind of treatment is inhuman and degrading.

Nokufa in the meantime was faced with the situation of assuming the role of the head of the family, by being a breadwinner, by providing for her children and also take them to school until they actually graduated as teachers. Her role surely cannot be undermined and she has contributed more to society and to her family than her husband but yet her opinions in public would never be taken seriously by virtue of the fact that she is a woman. Society has protected male egos (even if they are useless, abusive men) at the expense of women who have much to offer.

The most tragic event in the play, is when Nokufa after realising that she has TB (Tuberculosis) with her two children her husband

Nkosi insisted that she be treated by the witchdoctor despite the fact that they had failed on many occasions to treat the disease. Nkosi refused that his wife should go to hospital and said that, that will be disobeying his ancestors. Nokufa after many attempts to persuade her husband that he must allow her to go to hospital, when he realised that Nokufa was really dying and that his witchdoctor had failed, he agreed that she should go to hospital but apparently it was too late to save her life and she died in hospital. This refusal of Nkosi to allow his wife to go to hospital puts Nkosi in the position of extraordinary power. It reduces his wife's status to that of Nkosi's property in that he could do as he wishes with it. It is very tragic that many women, purely because the man has paid lobola (bride price) are denigrated to the level of property. Nokufa dies in the play, she suffers assaults, harassment and intimidation throughout the play. We feel pity for her and we fear because similar circumstances can happen to anyone - as they in fact actually happen to many women in the world. Our sympathy is deserved because Nokufa suffers not because of her wrongdoing, she suffers merely because she was born a woman, therefore, she has no say in determining the destiny of her life. Gordimer has also made statements which seem to suggest some sympathy for feminism - for example, she comments that women are regarded as "honorary children" and in an interview in 1982, she said: *"Well, speaking for myself as a woman and a citizen, I have become much more radical in my outlook"*. The co-existence of these views opens a number of questions. It suggests that Gordimer herself has undergone a process of politicisation on the question of gender.

Her politicisation on the question of gender seems to have entailed a recognition of sexual oppression as a social fact. Women oppression has existed for many centuries, and they have been disempowered and downgraded to the level of their children. For black women, the oppression has been two-fold there has been a racial and economic oppression and as well as social oppression. Most men have legitimised women's oppression under the name of culture and tradition and they have socialised boys and girls from an early age for different roles they have to play in society.

There are many different feminist theories that exist in the world which have sought to address the problem of women's oppression. Some of these theories differ in approach and some converge. For this project, we will look at "Liberal feminism" and "Radical Feminism". West has argued that women experience the world differently than men and that the law and culture reflect male experiences and male needs. This is a correct assumption since we all know that culture and language has always been biased in favour of men. For instance, Nkosi's authority over his wife's body and soul is recognised by culture and customary law and that is why he could easily refuse to take his wife to the doctor and nobody could oppose him. If he does what is practised in his society, exercise his authority over his wife nobody could challenge his view at home. The (private domain) is paralleled to the men's power in society (in the public domain).

According to liberal theory, the role of the state is to ensure that 'individuals' should be free to choose their own style of life, and to exercise that freedom of choice in as many spheres as possible - economic, political and personal. "Liberal theory reflects the belief that individual's wish to maximise their pleasure and happiness, and that the role of the state should be to increase the sphere of freedom for individuals to make choices which maximise their happiness. Liberal feminism accepts this view of the relationship between the state (those in authority) and the individual. Thus, the best way, on this account to eliminate women's suffering is to increase "women's sphere of consensual freedom". West criticises this approach and argues that while liberation's ethic of individual pleasure maximisation and essentially selfish consensual behaviour may accurately reflect the male psyche, it does not necessarily reflect the female psyche. If, in fact, for both biological and social reasons, women are apt to seek pleasure for others, rather than seek their own pleasure maximization, - then the liberal ethic consent may have far less than optimal consequences for women's ethic of consent. Perhaps we should look at the nature of women's consent, that is as to why do women consent to their misery.

First, as primary caretakers of children, women come to see themselves as giving selves that take care of others and subordinate their own needs for others, primarily their children. Of greater importance for a critique of liberal theory is West's contention that women "reconstitute" themselves as giving selves

so as to control and suppress the pervasive danger and fear which they experience in their lives. West writes:

"Most simply, a woman will define herself as a giving self so that she will not be violated. She defines herself as a being who gives sex so that she will not become a being from whom sex is taken" (p.).

Furthermore, the woman consent to this arrangement to protect herself. Thus initially, her choice is liberal - she chooses to maximise her happiness, or at least limit her loss. But after this initial choice, she exists - both internally and externally - to satisfy the desires of others. The problem with liberal feminism is that it can attend to and provide for the correction of illegal acts, but cannot account for or respond to pervasive and repressive social conditions. On the other hand, we have radical feminism which has been called by others as the "theory of power and equality". Where liberal theory posits women as autonomous individuals capable of making "free" choices in a manner identical of men, radical feminists assume a "definitional inequality of women ... and urge the legal system to eradicate that disempowerment and thereby make women what they are presently not, and that is equal" According to radical feminists, "the cause of women's disempowerment ... the expropriation of [women's] sexuality". And it is the "threat of male violence and violent sexuality" which defines women's lives and results in their continued subordination. The results of this analysis is an unyielding and insisting commitment to substantive equality. That is, domination is bad and results in

women's unhappiness. If, on the other hand, women were objectively equal to men in terms of the distribution of power women would subjectively be more happy. As West notes, radical feminists concentrate their energies on eliminating the hierarchies of power which facilitate the expropriation of female sexuality. That is, it is not the subjective condition of suffering and misery which needs to be addressed, but the substantive inequalities of power between the sexes.

However, there are problems with this "theory of power and inequality". Radical feminists make a similar mistake as liberal feminists - they assume that the conditions which determine women's subjective experiences are the same as those of men. Thus, since like men, women suffer disempowerment, and since disempowerment results in subjective unhappiness, then objective empowerment and equality will result in salvation, for both men and women alike. The question is whether this ideal - which may be true of men and is borrowed from male philosophical analysis is true of women. By accepting the radical strategy of seeking objective equality in order to facilitate happiness - and ignoring women's own descriptions of the sources of their happiness - radical feminists allow their ideals of equality to tramp women's subjective experiences.

Therefore as argued above it seems clear that what Mncwango may be implicitly suggesting in the play is that our society needs to liberate women in all spheres of life. Women must not be discriminated against only at workplace or in the public domain

but also they must be treated as equals even at home, at the private domain. The notions of hierarchy and male authority is put under scrutiny in the play. The question to ask ourselves is - should men such as Nkosi, who fails to provide for his family, who assaults his wife and children, who abuses alcohol, be treated as head of the family and superior over everybody in his household, whilst his wife - Nokufa, who has played all the traditional male roles by providing food, clothing, shelter education and emotional support for her children should be treated as inferior? Whilst many women have appeared to have accepted and to be happy with the status quo - of male domination, many were not - but were afraid to be vocal because they would be challenging what is traditionally assumed to be normal. The emancipation of women has been part of the broader struggle against apartheid and South African women still assert their power at the workplace, at home and in politics.

It is these traditional social stereotypes which made our heroine in the play suffer. Nokufa's sufferings are no different from Hilwayo, and Zenzile's suffering in Ngenzeni?, and they are not different from Nontula's suffering in Manhla Iyokwendela eGodini. The only difference that exists is that Nokufa is abused by her own husband, she suffers because of the entrenched notions of patriarchy that have been accepted as legitimate in our culture whilst the characters in other plays suffer because of the abuse of power by public officials, by people who have public authority such as King Menziwa and Prince Muzwa.

THE AFRICAN DRAMAS - DEPOLITICISED

Until fairly recently the 'traditional' approach to the tragedies in South Africa involved a more or less exclusive focus upon the hero in the plays, the identification of certain moral truths about "human nature" and as the play unfolds recognition of an 'order' or harmony which despite possible breakdown manifests recovery through 'insight' and the defeat of evil.

Most of our plays have put in encouraging particular attitudes - a longing for instruction in certain abstractions about human behaviour, a pseudo fatalistic or stoic resignation about the frailties of this world, acceptance of the status quo. When one speaks of our plays one does not restrict oneself to plays written in African languages but also plays that are written in English languages are guilty of the same offence. In the earlier years this was done because many writers feared to be victimised by the apartheid government but in later years most writers chose this route because it is more lucrative financially in that plays that did not oppose the status quo were more likely to be prescribed for schools and universities than those which opposed the status quo - many of which were effectively censored.

None of these plays which promote the status quo, considered, to any noteworthy degree the aspects of socio-political world evident within the plays, within which the characters with whom

they are so engaged, are located. Nor do they consider to any worthwhile extent that content from which the play comes from. South African writers and critics continued to indulge in this avoidance during the sixties and the seventies despite the fact that writing and criticism in England and America was never so narrow. Only few playwrights and dramatists emerged in the late seventies and early eighties as exceptions to this feud. Such writers include Maishe Maponya, Matsemela Manaka, Zakes Mda, and Athol Fugard. These writers works will be discussed later in this chapter.

The bias in traditional South African criticism of plays written in African languages - its preference for emphasis upon individual rather than socio-political concerns in the plays coincides in its effects. With that bias deliberately aimed at by the educative philosophy propounded by the dominant classes. Its emphasis effectively depoliticises as well as misrecognises certain possibilities that may be found in our facts⁽¹⁰⁾. It is not perhaps surprising that South African critics often so doggedly stick to their Beadley, a late Victorian scholar who worked within an educative system that served the interest of the Imperial English ruling class which believed itself free to determine its fate⁽¹¹⁾. The function of traditional literary criticism in general in South Africa has been much discussed in recent years. The plays together with works by other writers have been bitingly discussed as instruments of hegemony. Discussing the need for new techniques of writing, Mthobisi Mutloase argues, "We will have to donder conventional literature:

old fashioned critic and reader alike ... We are going to pee and spit and shit on literary convention before we are through"⁽¹²⁾. Most of our playwright and dramatists are caught in the tension of choosing freedom and economic benefit rather than the responsibility of making their plays relevant to everyday life of all the people of South Africa. They avoid the event current issues that affect their everyday life. Achebe criticises such an approach by saying:

"It is clear to me that an African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social and political responsibility of the contemporary Africa will end up being completely relevant"⁽¹³⁾.

It is imperative to put Achebe's argument into clear academic perspective, in that literature cannot exist outside society and its history. Literature is not something out there to be discovered but it is a social construct. For instance, Marxist theories of literature believe that literature can only be properly understood within a large framework of social reality. They hold that any theory which treats literature in isolation (for instance, as a pure structure, or as a product of writer's individual mental process) and keep it in isolation, divorcing it from the society and history, will be defficult in its ability to explain what literature really is. Karl Marx argues that: *"all ideological systems (that structure literature) are the products of social and economic existence"* (Selden, 1985: 23 - 24). The national interest of the dominant social class

determines how people see human existence individually and collectively.

Materialist criticism, especially developed exploration of the way in which texts reveal the extent to which individuals are significantly shaped and determined by the process in which they are placed. Or, again, it explored ways in which texts themselves both reflect and also respond to the existing relations of domination and subordination within which they occur. Such approaches to plays may occasionally in turn, prompt reference to the particular conditions within which audience or reader may be located. Moreover, modern practitioners in theatre have not been slow to demonstrate this.

Mncwango's texts primary have interest in terms of their relationship to the world from which they come, but it must be recognised that in South Africa, the extent to which we may be prepared to react to certain issues in the text, such as those relating to power, injustice and political or social exploitation and oppression, will depend upon more than attention to the text itself and debate about its context. Such a prerequisite may well have been understood by the critics in South Africa, who choose and often still chose to stick to traditional emphasis to dwell upon the abstract eternal 'truth' rather than upon the particular reality. On the issue of criticism, Ladimeji, an African artist argues that:

"African literature reverberates largely within the structure of African culture and history on which English literature shares very little light but distortion" (The Times Literature Supplement, 1973, May 18).

On the same issue, Achebe argues that an African critic cannot see himself in isolation from the African philosopher, politician, theologian, or educator; all of whom are looking for an African solution to their problem:

"African critics should search for African solutions in criticism or should search for those solutions which though not specifically African, will nevertheless do justice to the African works of art". (Achebe, 1975: 21).

Iyasere, like Ngara, Achebe, Ngugi; JC Dlamini Mncwango and other African writers is strongly committed to a position that will reflect African standards of writing and evaluation rather than foreign approach when writing or evaluating an African work of art. Iyasere believes that:

"To assess a work by standards that are alien to it is only to judge one system of values by another, which inevitably leads to a mutilation of the art" (Ntali quotes Iyasere, 1984: 12).

In resisting the traditional approach-tendency in criticism it may be necessary for us to start with awareness of ourselves, situated as we are in a semi-industrialised capitalist, post-apartheid state that is also in transition from the past years,

which were characterised by brutal exploitation and repression. In this way we may be more equipped to identify certain concerns in a text that itself comes from a totally different context, but one also characterised by transition and great change in the social order.

On the same issue George Lukacs argues that a realist work must reveal the underlying pattern of contradictions in social order. Lukacs' use of the term "reflection" supports his old realist view that the novel and any other form of literary genre reflects reality, not by rendering it mere surface appearance, but by giving us a "truer more vivid and more dynamic reflection of reality".

To 'reflect' is to frame a mental structure transposed into words. A literary text may conduct a reader "towards a more concrete insight into reality". Literature reflects not only individual phenomenon in isolation, but the "full process of life". However, the reader is always aware that the work is not itself reality but rather a special form of reflecting reality (Selden, 1985: 28 - 29).

The majority of creative artists do not set out to write about the formal aspects of art, they set out to write about life, about society and about reality. It is this reality which they transform into artistic forms, which is the result of historic conditions, and artistic form is related to social content. Marx puts it clearly when he says:

"Creative artists set out to write about life, about society and about reality. It is reality which they should transform into artistic forms" (Ngara quotes Marx, 1985: 3).

Ngara on the other hand believes that in class society, economic power is concentrated in the hands of the ruling class which control the means of production. He argues that because the ruling class controls the economy, it will obviously prescribe what is written, in other words:

"It controls the means of mental production and consequently the intellectual life of people during a particular epoch" (Ngara, 1985: 25).

In South Africa, writers have been pushed by the ruling class into compromising their positions. Many committed African writers used their artistic talents as a way of opposing the injustices imposed by the dominant ideology. According to Ngara: *"the degree to which literature confirms or opposes the dominant ideology depends on the degree to which the ruling class is challenged by the revolutionary groups"* or by the alternative discourse. It is no wonder Mothobi Mutloase challenges and criticises the notion of "art for art sake" when he says: *"... We are going to kick, pull and push and drag literature into the form we prefer. We are going to experiment and probe and not give a damn what critics have to say because we are in search of our true selves undergoing self-discovery as a people"* (Gugelberger, 1988: 197). Mutloase argues that writers and artists must concentrate on everyday phenomenon, typifying the

contradictions and the struggle that exist in the society so as to transform their environment.

Most writers are confronted by universality of the human condition, by interaction between personal and communal experiences and by the constraints of craft. The creative individual reaching out to a number of readers and potentially shaping their awareness has always experienced tension with control-practising structure. Writers often confront tension between the social and political responsibility and their inner feelings of freedom. The power of art lies precisely in the artist's capacity to expose contradictions and reveal hidden tensions. The struggle to confront the truth. Sheriff believes that:

"A writer must be free, must blaze the way to change. A writer is an extremist by vocation, by thoughts of imagination, that is why he creates and sees what others do not. A writer should be responsible to himself, to his thoughts and only in this way is he responsible to society"⁽¹⁴⁾.

The same sentiments are shared by Njabulo Ndebele (1991: 115), who insists that:

"Protest writing contributes towards the consolidation of consciousness and a freeing of imagination".

His perception is that literature is not merely an expression of powerlessness in the face of political structure but can itself be a locus of power. Literature is not only seen against and

appraised in the light of major historical events, forces or ideas but is also produced by people acutely aware of their historical situation.

In his article - "*Poetry and Politicisation*", Watson argues that poetry is an "active intervention in the struggle" and that it has a role to play in its enduring ability to reveal or refute the hidden tensions. He believes that literature reflects the world, by actually participating in the struggle and thereby help to change the conditions prevailing in it.

It has been made clear that most of our dramatists are confronted with this tension when putting their ideas on paper. Their talent is curtailed by the knowledge that their work will never be read or published when they criticise or challenge the orthodox discourse. That is why perhaps the literature written by the majority of African writers in African languages is so quiet, it is because they fail to confront the truth and they easily succumb to the system in order to remain free that is why one would strongly support the deconstructionist assumption that:

"The fundamental trust (of a critic) is to expose the extent to which the writer is caught, in the contradictions, limitations and dyadic consciousness necessary inherent in the colonial contexts in which he has lived all his life, despite his overt opposition to its prejudice and paradigms" (Belsey, 1980: 104).

One would therefore recommend a situation where our African writers refrain from the mass production of literature which is not qualitative and which is unrepresentative of the society they seek to represent. Literature written in African languages should not be school-oriented only but should also depict the social and political realities as experienced by the society as a whole.

On the issue about studying plays, Dollimore and Sinfield argue that:

"We should not ... expect any straightforward relationship between plays and ideology: on the contrary it is even likely that topics which engaged writers and audiences alike were those where ideology was under strain"⁽¹⁵⁾.

Therefore, when we examine the plays written in African languages, and when we also examine the historical discourse, we should be ready to notice those moments of parallel that may prove fruitful both for our reading of the play and for our awareness of our own particular context. The extent to which we attempt to do these things may be the extent to which we cease to depoliticise and misrecognise the African drama and begin, instead, to treat it in a less disabled way.

Mncwango in his plays has attempted to reveal the contradictions that have always been in existence. In his approach at presenting his plays, he reveals the social and political realities of his time. He shows how the true nature of the state

power is portrayed in *Ngenzeni*? He shows us in Act Three when Menziwa announces that he has decided to promote Hilwayo to be leader of his warriors 'induna yebutho' and that he has decided to send him and Ndabeni, his friend - (in the company of Sibiya, his Chief Minister) to go and rob Mzimba's cattle in Ngwavuma. When left with Sibiya on stage, he confirms that he intends to eliminate his opponent.

"Lomfana waseMangadini kufuneka afe" (Act I, Scene III, 19).

Menziwa's intention to have Hilwayo murdered although he does not succeed in the play - and the consistency with which he proceeds confirm him as a practitioner of violence, recalcitrant and ruthless when it comes to the preservation of his power and dignity. What Mncwango has attempted to reveal to us is the extent to which Menziwa can be likened with the apartheid regime in South Africa where opponents of this heinous crime were banned from South Africa, forced to go into exile, tortured, assaulted, detained and murdered. The system of government then used repressive means to silence the majority of the people who were fighting against the system. Those in power (the National Party Government) could only remain in power through force, intimidation and all forms of violence. However, it is quite interesting that they were forced to relinquish power and give way to the government of the people which was elected democratically.

It is perhaps for this reason that Mongane Wally Serote in his poem - "*The Dry White Season*" suggests that even if those who have power can abuse it but they should always be aware that - "seasons come to pass". What Serote says there is that the Nationalist government was not going to rule forever instead it is the people themselves who will rule forever through their elected representatives. The same approach applies in *Ngenzeni*? since towards the end of the play, we see the kingdom of Menziwa, crumbling and near collapse. The people who were his instruments started questioning him and acknowledging the importance of public opinion and criticism. Menziwa's only solution, like the apartheid government decided to kill his chief minister Sibiya and his personal assistant - Simelane - because he was of the opinion that they betrayed him. This kind of behaviour is emblematic of the fragmentation and collapse of what was a unified, coherent society.

This recognition of the inter-relatedness of ruler and ruled reflected also a well known Elizabethan notion, especially during the Shakespearean time. The Elizabethan England believed in what was called the "Divine Rites of Kings" - where the king was seen as God's representative on earth. This notion puts emphasis on order and hierarchy and it was believed that any person who attempted to fiddle or disturb the order of things and hierarchy was interfering with God himself and deserved the severe punishment. The hierarchy was arranged in such a way that in every living thing there was to be one person or one thing superior over others. The arrangement was like this - in Heaven

- on top of the hierarchy there was God himself - followed by God the Son (Jesus) - then the Holy Spirit, the Arch-Angels, the Cherubs and then the Inferior Angels. On earth and in Church it would be the Archbishop, the bishops, the deans, the fathers, the deacons and then the entire congregation. In political life it would be the king, his chief minister, his ministers, generals and then his subjects. This hierarchy also took place amongst the animals - for instance, the lion is the head of the jungle, amongst the trees - the oak is the most valuable and treasured, and amongst the flowers the rose was considered to be the best. Therefore, the notion of Divine Rites of Kings operated on the assumption that this order and arrangement of things was planned by God himself and the kings and rulers executed God's authority on earth. It is, therefore, because of these reasons that you find kings during the Elizabethan period abusing their power. Some of these assumptions are raised by Shakespeare in some of his plays like Julius Ceasar, King Lear, Henry V, Richard III and Twelfth Night. This notion of "Divine Rites of Kings" was, however, in a mysterious way adopted by many kings and rulers even in the African continent. Kings and rulers believing to have God ordained powers used repressive and oppressive means to remain in power. Therefore, a similar identification which registers the magnitude of the impact of the dominant class not only in its relation against those who threaten aspects of, or oppose, the existing social order but in its domination who submit to it emerges from an account in our present day encounters.

Therefore, the presentation of a ruler such as Menziwa in Ngenzeni? should not surprise us since many kings in the world including African kings such as Shaka, Dingane, Cetshwayo and others who also behaved in the similar manner. Relationships between the dominant and subordinate orders and between different groups within the dominant order will always exist and it seems to me it will always be problematic.

However, most African writers writing in English have managed to politicise theatre and drama and by doing this manage to conscientise our people to stand up and fight for their rights. The plays of these writers are not depoliticised and silent about the socio-political realities that face our people. Firstly we have playwrights like Maishe Maponya who had deliberately labelled his play as falling clearly and squarely in the category of "The Theatre of the Dispossessed", and he believes that theatre is one of the dynamic ways of raising the consciousness of black people in South Africa. In his play The Hungry Earth, Maponya portrays the evil system of apartheid and capitalism. He argues that the apartheid system is responsible for the migrant labour system which has left many families disintegrated. In the play, miners who come from all over the country, and especially in the rural areas are separated from their wives and children and they live in compounds in the mines. The conditions in the compounds are beyond reproach in that the health standards are violated. Miners sleep in groups of ten and twelve in each compound bedroom without any adequate facilities. These men are stripped of their dignity and they are treated in an inhuman and

degrading way. Maponya also raises some capitalist assumptions in his play in that these miners dig gold and coal for big conglomerate and it is only the mine bosses who are enriched and our people's labour is cheap exploited labour since these miners are underpaid. What also happens in the play is that the miners who were drilling underground died as the result of the great explosion. Many of the widows of these miners were not compensated and the children became orphans. Miners who worked in these dangerous conditions were not insured by the big conglomerate since what they wanted was to exploit their labour and maximise profits.

Maponya gave his play the title The Hungry Earth because he wanted to portray mine bosses as hungry and greedy and they feed on the blood and toils of the African people. The Hungry Earth is the big capitalist world which feeds on the labour of many black people. In the final scene when one woman learns of her husband's death, she says:

"Oh, how cruel this earth is. Our men will never stop dying to feed this hungry earth. Today I have no place to stay. Today I am a widow. Today my children are fatherless. Yet I do not know. How many more have vanished like that without the knowledge of immediate relatives. My husband has died digging endlessly for gold which would help to prop up the apartheid system. My man is dead! My man is eaten by the hungry death. He is dead!"

Maponya's play explores issues like working conditions, living conditions, lack of pay parity with white miners and many more. In line with the advocates of black consciousness theatre, Maponya's play demystifies the underlying relations of exploitation. The use of vernacular, hybrid forms and many more is an important part of Maponya's discourse.

His dramaturgical approach is an attempt to create what he calls 'Theatre of Purpose'. Affected by the increasingly radical political theatre of the pre-1976 period, he can be seen to provide a sense of continuity to the Black Consciousness movement. He says his inspiration was Maqina's Give Us This Day in 1995, which Maponya describes thus:

"The play was about the cries and grievances and the making of our people. It was like a prayer and it convinced me that what we needed was a theatre which was supported by the people and in turn supported the people in this struggle" (The Star, 2nd July 1981: 14).

Some have, however, labelled Maponya's theatre as radical theatre - it is perhaps because they view it from the point of view of the orthodox dominant discourse. However, viewed from the alternative or opposing discourse - the discourse from which our main characters in Mncwango's play belong, it is a necessary theatre that will expose political and economic exploitation, and will also enable our people to stand together to fight oppression.

Maponya has helped to mould an approach to theatrical construction which will break down preconceptions not only about society, but about theatrical forms which reflect that society. To refer to Eagleton's (1976) formulation, Maponya's play tells us in the very conditions inscribed in its form and content, not only about the socio-economic conditions it signifies, but also about the ways in which black artists perceive and structure their responses to those conditions. *The Hungry Earth* does not reflect a view of social conditions, but produces such a view. Our critical investigation of the text and its performance is a way of seeing both what is produced and how it is produced. In other words we are able to come to an understanding of how artists like Maponya, structuring culturally experience works, inscribe a structure of social consciousness.

The production of a performance from a text which is in turn a production of Maponya's consciousness, is a vital part of our understanding of South African culture and society. Rathbone (1979: 130) reminds us that to understand South African society, politics and economics, we must also understand other forms of expression:

"If one is to understand how people whose political organisations are banned, organise themselves there surely all their other modes of articulation must be considered".

Therefore, Maponya's attitude to black theatre represents an extension of the pre-1976 movement in Black Consciousness theatre:

"I use my theatre to enlighten and conscientize. If it sounds like propaganda, then I can't help that. I need an escape valve for this burning anger. I can only stand up and shout. Okay, so it is not drama. It is a call to my own people, and it is the only way I know to get them to wake up"⁽¹⁶⁾.

Therefore, the notion of theatre was an "escape value" for members of a group who are politically disfranchised is important. The forms of cultural resistance are a crucial element in any attempt to understand black political consciousness in this country. What we learn through a critical assessment of Maponya's play is not merely his view of events, but also the methods of constructing artistic responses to those events. His play is not interested in individual psychology like the traditional plays, but like Johnson's Everyman in his Humour, it focuses more on the collective experience of the people.

Another play which confronts socio-political issues head on - like Maponya's is Zakes Mda's We Shall Sing for the Fatherland. In this play the element of psychological exploration is diminished (but not entirely absent) as we register here that the characters here are 'type' (of what we must decide) rather than individuals. Also the statement of the play is openly or nakedly didactic⁽¹⁷⁾. The context of the play is an imagined future which is post-colonial, post-independence or post-apartheid because he

says in the play - "wars of freedom are over" (p.22); apparent liberation has been achieved. Ironically though, it is asserted towards the end of the play that "a new war is needed" - because the white corrupt government is seen as replaced by the black corrupt government. In the play Sergeant and Janabari (the tragic heroes in the play) who were once well known freedom fighters are portrayed as hoboes which immediately suggest a social context of 'haves' and 'have-nots', a society where people are not equal in terms of possessions, property and power. We are presented implicitly with a situation of privilege vs deprivation. This perception is strengthened by the realization that these main characters in the play are in the park (as most hoboes do), which has several implications: a park is a place of leisure for the privileged⁽¹⁸⁾, a park is a manifestation of wealth for the few⁽¹⁹⁾, where mention of tourism (with the implication of capitalism) is made. Because Sergeant's and Janabari are not part of the wealthy, the privileged few, their right to be in the park is in question. They attempt to buy with money a right of occupation or the temporary right to use the park, suggesting that access and privilege depends on financial status and that rights are commensurate with having money. These are capitalist conceptions. These two hoboes after the 'wars of freedom' they are portrayed as homeless, and unemployed and they are struggling for survival, yet they have put their government to power. It is ironic that Mda used the title We Shall Sing for the Fatherland, because the hoboes thought when they won their struggle against the colonial government, they thought they were going to rejoice and then sing for their fatherland - but instead

of singing, their voices are unable to come out of their mouths because they have frozen to death in the park when the temperature was minus three degrees celsius. They had nowhere to go and no one to look up to for security. All those in authority or in power forgot about these freedom fighters, but enriched themselves. The language in the play establishes the idea of minimalized humanity, where survival and human need are the central issues. The types represented by Sergeant and Janabari are thus the dispossessed, the suffering elements of humanity. (Tramps or hoboes are often used in certain types of drama to suggest the human condition stripped down in the drama of the absurd, and existential drama). Once a man is cut off from his religious, cultural and economic structures he is close to nothing, having no surviving identity, and is characterized simply by his elemental need to survive. Identity and complexity of meaning are sociological, cultural and political constructions - man makes his own meaning and identity. Therefore, Scene One of the play ends with the entrenchment of notions of power, authority and hierarchy. Thus the ranked identities bestowed by positions within a system are set against the commonality of humanity. There is also the discourse of capitalism in the play (p.13) - like in The Hungry Earth, Mda refers to stocks, shares, loans, overdrafts, huge sums, investment - and this is phrased in the way which suggests commerce and industry are the continuing realities and the continuing determinants of identity and position. This could mean that the revolution has not changed these essentials but only that a black man replaces a

white man as the chairman of the Stock Exchange and also continue to exploit our people economically as the white man did.

Mda's strategy of setting the play in post-colonial, post-nationalist society may simply have been a clever mode to avoid rightwing and apartheid government's censorship. Indeed, he seems to be implying a very reactionary viewpoint - that empowered blacks, and that capitalism will survive because of basic human nature which is uncompassionate and predatory. Mda's play was, therefore, also an attempt by the playwright to explore social inequalities, however, Mda goes further in that he suggests that in fighting social, economic and political inequalities we must guard against doing the mistakes of the past when we are in authority. He says we need to learn from the mistakes of the past and not repeat them.

This chapter has, therefore, illustrated how African dramas were depoliticised by those who wield power and by the critics who adhere to the orthodox notions of criticism. It has also attempted to illustrate how other writers like Mda, Maponya, Fugard, Manaka, Mncwango and others have managed to escape this process though at the very high expense of censorship, banishment, arrest and other forms of repression. Their approach endorses the materialist position that the underlying structural relations are a prime determinant in the making of drama and theatre.

Tom Lodge (1983: ix) in his Preface to Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945 says that while his book is about black political resistance, there is a further story to be told about other kinds of resistance. As we have seen, the theatre in South Africa tells such a story, elucidating aspects of political development at a level of popular participation which is not always apparent to the social or political scientist.

The idea of the performing arts as providing tools for social action is fairly widespread, particularly in the Third World. Kidd and Colletta (1981) have edited a collection of representative essays describing the work in the field: showing how in numerous countries performing arts play an important role in literacy programmes, unionisation, community health and many more fields of endeavour. In South Africa community theatre is a phenomenon which has become increasingly prominent in the 1980's. This theatre has been categorised as 'goal-oriented' (Blecher, 1980) where theatre is seen as providing ways of solving problems which are specific to a particular community.

However, there is a fine line between theatre which shows the community how to survive in the system, and theatre which shows the community how to mobilise resources on the basis of rejection of the system. The former reproduces the relations of domination and exploitations while providing means for the exploited to survive. The latter demystifies the relations of domination and exploitation, showing the exploited that their situation is caused not by any "natural" order of things, but by the artifices

of men and women, and that they are, therefore, capable of alteration. The difference has been expressed by one observer as the difference between theatre for 'domination' and theatre for 'liberation'. Therefore, as we have seen theatre and plays can be used as a means to conscientize audiences in relation to a broad vision of structural change (Kidd, 1981: 281). As seen from the plays of Mncwango and other dramatists discussed in this dissertation - that their theatre can be distinguished from the forms of theatre which are guided by white intellectuals. Despite various ideological and class differences which can be traced in their work, most black theatre practitioners and dramatists contribute to a sustained critique of the dominant orthodox discourse and there is a reinforcement of political consciousness among African people.

To reiterate this point, Augusto Boal, whose name is virtually synonymous with the notion of theatre as a conscientizing medium in the Third World says:

"I believe that all the truly revolutionary theatrical groups should transfer to the people the means of production in the theatre so that the people themselves may utilize them. The theatre is a weapon, and it is the people who should wield it" (Boal, 1979: 122).

THEATRE AND STAGEABILITY IN AFRICAN DRAMA

When we speak about stageability, we speak about a place and area where a play is performed. This place and area where plays are performed is called a stage and the area is called a theatre. Most European plays and modern plays are performed at the theatre, a place, specifically designed for different types of plays and which can easily be altered to suit the needs of the dramatist. The concept of the theatre sounds very modern but it actually dates back to 15th century, with the development of the English theatre in England, many of Shakespeare's plays were performed on stage at the Globe Theatre. The stage and setting could be easily appropriated to suit the dramatist's themes and plot at the time.

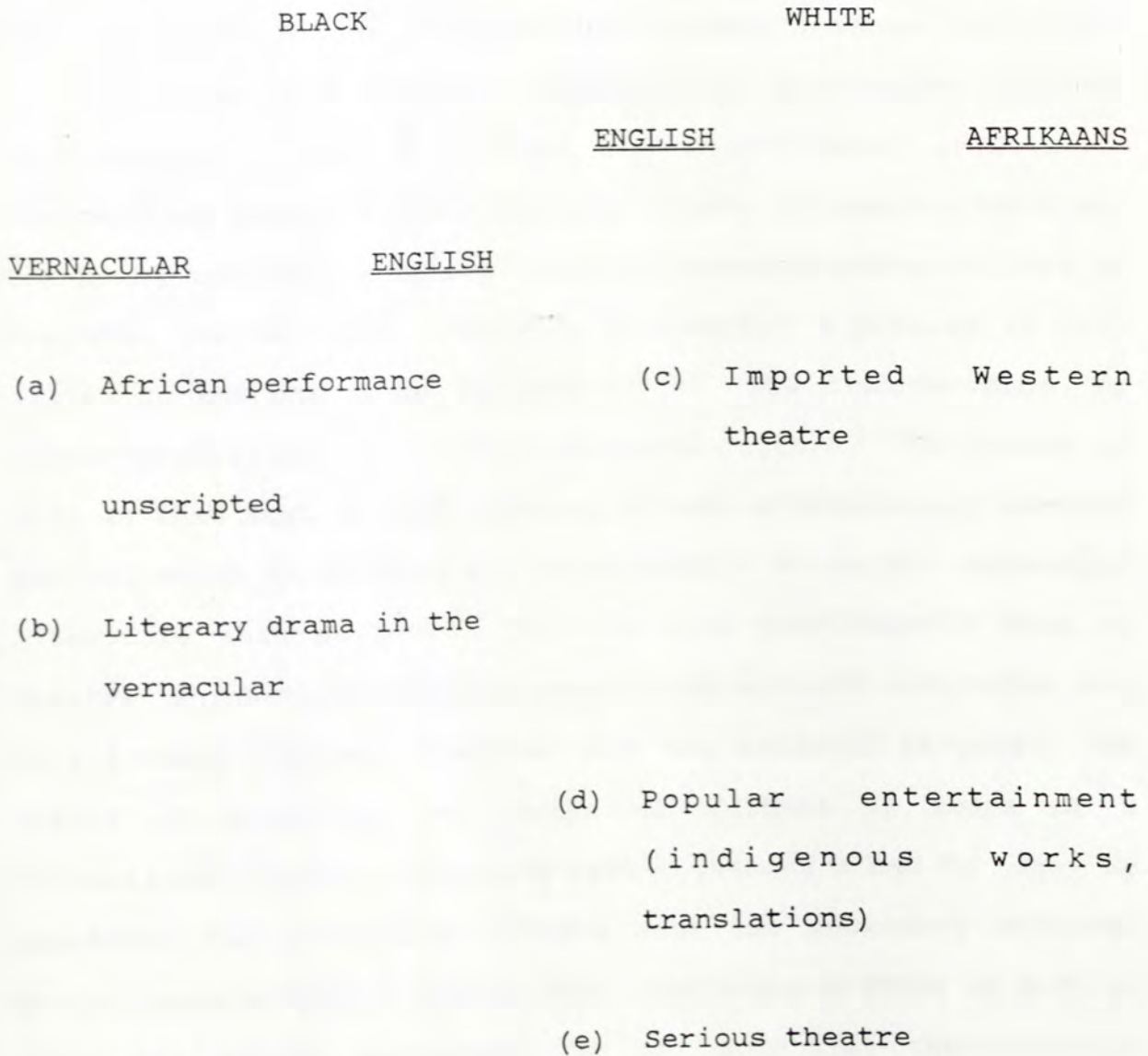
It is clear, therefore, that stageability in most cases is associated with theatre. This concept of stage or theatre gives much problems for our writers who write plays in African languages since their plays give problem when they need to be put on stage. It is still not clear what precisely takes place in the mind of our writers when they create their plays. It seems as if they write freely, anything that comes to their mind without envisaging any form of theatrical restrictions. Their plays, in order to be performed on stage would need further refinement by a trained dramatist and much of what may be the essential components of the play may need to be eliminated if it

does not comply with all dramatic techniques or if it does not fit well on stage. To locate my argument within a particular context I will attempt to classify the different types of dramas (plays) that are currently available in South Africa. I will also attempt to highlight the differences that exist in them when they are produced and the difficulty that some of them present (especially those written in African languages) when they are supposed to be performed.

Theatre or stage plays are a direct communication channel with the audience or society and can therefore be the most powerful medium for bridging the barriers and forging links - unless of course, the medium itself is organised along the same lines of cultural differences, which has long been an unfortunate fact of theatre in South Africa. There has never been one theatre tradition in this country. There has been at least five distinguishable traditions influenced by such opposing classifications or African/Western, Afrikaans/English, indigenous/imported, Black/White, literary/theatrical and popular/political theatre.

The following scheme will present what are possibly the most important distinctions to be borne in mind when studying the history of theatre in South Africa.

FIGURE 1:



Category A in the figure is exclusively a Black art form and includes all kinds of African performance indigenous to South Africa, such as ritual, dance, ceremonies and other incipient forms still practised in rural areas by traditional societies. There are many cultural groups who have developed their own performances. These performances have seldom been documented and

are naturally unscripted. Today, because of rapid westernisation, through the influence of the radio and other media and the entire urbanisation movement, these archetypal forms of theatre are rapidly disappearing or changing. To date unfortunately there have been few co-ordinated efforts to document and preserve these cultural riches, although efforts are now being made to set up some kind of research infrastructure to see what can be done. Category B presents a problem closely allied to the one faced by Category A: The disappearance, or rather stultification of the indigenous culture. The result of this is that most writers working in what are basically western genres, write in English and consequently it is the vernacular literature that suffers. This is also particularly true of theatre, which is intended to communicate with all audiences, not only a small audience familiar with the regional language. An effort at promoting the indigenous culture by means of a conventional western schooling system therefore had to begin by providing the particular culture with the necessary cultural goods: novels, plays, poems, etc. But plays written in Zulu or Xhosa are seldom performed, for the potential theatre-going audience in South Africa is just too small. The only strong exception has been Welcome Msoni's uMabatha and Mbongeni Ngema's Sarafina. So the only income for the author is book sales - and significant books sales only occur when a work is prescribed for schools or universities. This also implies that certain standards of control have to be met.

This in turn makes the works unsuitable for performance before audiences used to a slightly more aggressive and "committed" approach. All this signifies a rather depressing circular process of course and effect, which is familiar with developing countries. Most of our plays written in African languages fall squarely in this category - which then present a serious problem when they are to be performed. To many it would seem a striking contradiction that most of these plays are written to be read rather than to be performed. Because of economic reasons - which are motivated by the lack of interest in our audiences to go watch the plays performed in African languages, our dramatists have found themselves between two stools - on the one hand they are faced with a desire to communicate intense feelings and shared experience but because of the lack of support of the plays in theatres, they are forced to sacrifice what is the essential content of the plays - that is performance. On the other hand there is also a need for economic survival and since there are few theatre goers - our dramatists have preferred to write plays that will be prescribed and read at school. One can list many plays written in Zulu that have presented the problem of unsuitability for stage performance. All Mncwango's plays would give problems if they were to be performed on stage. However, interestingly adjustments have been made in the part to appropriate these plays so that they can be played in the air - on radio. The attempts have been quite successful - because much of the detailed work or passages which would be played by actors is cut and a commentator or narrator can easily fill the gaps where the script is lacking. The other plays that could not be

played well on stage but was a success on the radio was Mkhize - Ngavele Ngasho, Blose - Ugomisa Mina Nje Ugomisa Iliba, and - UNTombazi and others.

These works though they may be very important in terms of the long-term investment - in cultural development - they, therefore, have had little effect on the mainstream of theatrical development in South Africa, beyond creating a literary stratum in the population. The other contributing factor for these works to have so little influence in theatre development may be the fact that black townships where these plays could be performed and understood lack facilities and infrastructure such as theatres. This lack of facilities has made many of our people to view theatre as an elitist form of entertainment. Secondly, our system of education has always viewed performing arts - such as music, dancing and acting - as a sideline, as a profession that can be done part-time and not full-time and the emphasis is always put on acquiring academic education. Thus the system of education can somehow be viewed as guilty for creating this hostile attitude towards the performing arts. It is quite interesting that in most European countries people have made a luxurious living and made a name for themselves purely by taking stage play or theatre seriously as a career.

It would seem to me that the best way to deal with this problem would for the new department of education to put arts and culture in the education curriculum so that we can have a future generation which will have wide scope and choice of careers in

the future. It is essential in any healthy system of education to expose your students to a variety of careers so that they may choose careers best suitable for their talents. We need to move away from a system of education that will prescribe what students and teachers should do in class and we also need to move away from labelling certain professions as first class professions and others as third class professions. What we need to realise is that we are different and gifted in different fields and all these fields will need to be developed if we need to have a healthy multi-dimensional society.

Our people have been exposed mostly to the white theatre written in English in category C of my chart. A much more direct influence was exercised by Category C, mainly the visiting theatrical companies, directors and artists who toured the country during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was their influence in particular which provided the incentive for local theatre industry to develop among white population, even though the exact form it took was to differ for the Afrikaans and English-speaking segments of that heterogeneous group. The Afrikaans-speaking population very soon created its own playwriting tradition. In the case of the English-speaking theatre, the performances by locals were often far more professional, consisted largely of foreign plays, reviews, musicals and so on; performed in the metropolitan areas and certain colonial outposts of importance. Except for direct influences on the African music, this injection of western culture largely reached the black population indirectly, even

though earlier in the century there were no real technical bars to blacks attending any of the shows. Growth was achieved in two ways. First by schools and missionaries who influenced the founding of amateur theatre groups (for example, the Bantu Dramatic Society of the Thirties) and taught English literature (with all the negative effects that reading Shakespeare may have an incipient playwriting tradition). They managed to instill a sense of drama as art in certain communities, thus creating potential audiences and literary writers.

Categories D and E in Figure 1 are possible the most important and include all work done by local groups and individuals, be it in producing European classics, new American work or local indigenous plays. Both popular theatre (i.e. light comedy, farce, melodrama, thrillers, etc.) and serious theatre (i.e. works which try to say something about human condition, be it social, political or religious) have been produced by local companies - amateur and professional for more than a century. The development of the theatre, however, remained largely a segregated activity.

Theatre and its development has, therefore, been controlled by those in power to promote their interests. As I explained earlier on that theatre can be manipulated to promote a certain ideological view be it dominant or alternative view - therefore, because of the danger that the theatre presents its development has been entailed and some form of censorship has been imposed on some of the progressive plays produced in South Africa.

All theatre is in some sense political: it is a public art performed in specific contexts and inscribing certain ideological positions. It is necessary, however, to distinguish between this general sense and a mode of theatre which can conveniently be categorised, for generic reasons as a political theatre.

Kirby (1975) rejects the notion that all theatre inscribes a political stance: he suggests that the relationship between theatre and politics must be measured in terms of the 'intent' of the creator of the work:

"... if a presentation does not attempt to be political, it is not political ... theatre is political only to the extent that it attempts to be political ... Political concerns and engagement must be in the work, not in the mind of the observer"
(Kirby, 1975: 129 - 130).

Kirby here ignores the ideological implications which Brecht so clearly demonstrated. Politics and political attitudes are expressed in every social act, including abstention. While the individual play or performance embodies codes which can be deconstructed, the reader or spectator receives meanings quite different to what authors "put into their" works".

McGrath (1981: 1) discusses the political nature and function of theatre in much more convincing terms:

"... that's what theatre does. You go into a space, and some other people use certain devices to tell you a story. Because they have power over you, in a real sense, while you are there, they make a choice, with political implications as to which story to tell - and how to tell it".

Elsewhere, McGarth (1979) discusses the more specific details of what he calls "the theory and practice of political theatre". It is fruitful to consider in broad outline how he arrives at that theory of a socialist political theatre. McGarth, drawing on the work of Raymond Williams (1977) distinguishes different types of literary production in any society:

"... in any period there are likely to be three main elements of literary production - the residual, which draws its sources from a previous period but is still effectively alive in the present; the dominant, which exercises hegemony over the period culturally; and the emergent element ..." (McGrath, 1979: 44)

Raymond Williams himself elaborates the third element. In discussing "emergent" literature, Williams (1977: 123) says that this refers to literature in which:

"... new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationships are constantly being created".

The paradigm of 'emergent' political theatre, despite its simplification of quite complex issues, serves as a useful sounding-board for the analysis of alternative theatre in South Africa.

At the first glance, the concept of "emergent" is not easily defined. Williams is careful to point out that:

"... it is exceptionally difficult to distinguish between those which are really elements of some new phase of the dominant culture, and those which are substantially alternative or oppositional to it - emergent in the strict sense, rather than the merely novel" (Williams, 1977: 123).

Therefore, the truly emergent theatre, then receives its definition only in relation to dominant forms to which it is substantially alternative or oppositional. Social stratification, ideological contradictions and economic exploitation have had radical effects upon South African theatre. The appearance of emergent performance form - reflects ideological change and continuity amongst different social groups. Artistic and academic paradigms established by the dominant groups have been contradicted by emergent forms, and it is necessary to re-assess many assumptions and pre-conceptions about the nature and function of theatrical activity in South Africa. These assumptions and pre-conceptions have been established in the dominant system of values and meanings which is concretised as a tradition. Here those meanings and values have had their self-reinforcing ideological bias entrenched.

Emergent theatre must be examined in its relationship to such factors. Emergent artists like Leonard Mncwango are not merely constituted by traditions in the way Eliot suggests: they also constitute their own traditions. They perceive traditions as having been established in the interest of the dominant group and therefore try to reconstruct them. Emergency art is, therefore, alternative and oppositional in the sense described by Williams.

It is the context of performance which gives theatre its fundamental dynamism. Audiences share with performers in the act of dynamic performance/communication. In South Africa, because of the nature of political and social relations, the values of western traditions in literature and theatre have been enshrined and universalised as standards of taste and judgement. New cultural forms have been assessed by these standards. Only in recent years has there been any significant attempt to re-assess these entrenched standards and norms.

Traditional orthodox attitudes are now seen increasingly as the cultural pre-conceptions of the politically dominant group in South African society (Sole, 1983 and Tomaselli, 1981c). What is pre-grounded in the dominant thematic and stylistic features of the western tradition of drama is termed universal. Conversely, what is foregrounded in the features of indigenous alternative forms of theatre are social and economic factors: the very conditions of a performance are an essential part of its meaning. In Mncwango's Ngenzeni? and Manhla Iyokwendela Egodini - the condition of meaning - economic, political, cultural and

ideological, are part of the total signifying practice which constitutes theatrical performance.

The first African writer to have contributed to this emergent alternative theatre was Herbert Dhlomo. Dhlomo names his play The Girl Who Killed to Save: Nongause the Liberator. Dhlomo's was a significant attempt to create a play which was substantially alternative to the established white theatre. The Bantu Dramatic Society had been formed with the intention of providing a forum for black cultural expression, but its early work was strangled by Eurocentric notions of drama, and by prejudices of middle-class taste. Dhlomo's play, therefore, appeared in print at a crucial time. In The Girls Who Killed to Save Dhlomo did more than write a short history. He explored a tribal past in order to comment on the ideological conflicts of his own time. Dhlomo was fortunate in his relations with an institution like the Lovedale Press. His was the first play by a black African writer to be published in the English language, and Lovedale had already published the earliest plays in African languages. While, there existed examples of published dramas in vernaculars, and while there is evidence of performed dramatic sketches and of showing theatrical troupes (Lloyd, 1935; Kelly, 1937), it is the publication of Dhlomo's play in English that African drama in South Africa achieved prominence. It is also clear that Dhlomo was not only interested merely in national history and values as reflected in African traditions, but also in the relation of these to the modern urban African. His theatrical interest

would, therefore, be geared towards the creation of forms and themes which would show this relationship.

In 1937 the Witwatersrand University Press published a play by Nimrod Ndebele called uGubudele namaZimuzimu (Gubudele and the Cannibals). The play was based on the short one-act college play of the 1920's (Vilakazi, 1945: 352). This was the first time the Zulu drama had been published in book form in vernacular. (Gerard, 1971: 258). The plot shows how the hero takes revenge on the cannibals for eating his father, and is in the tradition of the Mariannhill School plays. In the following years, emanating from academics in universities, the development of literary drama in vernacular would provide another threat to the growth of black drama.

With the growth of the interest in African languages in the universities, literary drama in the vernaculars and translations of classical drama into the African languages became desirable. Throughout the period we are studying more from the point of view of black theatre traditions than those of dramatic literature - African academics would turn their attention to the task. Msomi's translation of MacBeth created a sensationally successful UMabatha. Shakespeare in translation not only attracted African academics but also appealed to government education policies initially opposed by Dlomo.

Lewis Nkosi on the other hand, like Herbert Dlomo, was an educated man steeped in literary scholarship. Both of them wrote, in addition to the plays the dramatic and literary criticism. Nkosi's characters are products of the same kind of context in which he moved at that time. In this regard Nkosi makes an important assertion in the latter critical work:

"The first major distinction to be made in African drama is that which separates traditional forms from the western-oriented drama of the scripted play: within these two main categories further divisions and subdivisions can be endlessly made but will prove finally less significant than this initial division"
(Nkosi, 1981: 173).

There is no doubt, if we accept Nkosi's own distinction, that his own play *The Rhythm of Violence*, belongs to the alternative or oppositional discourse.

According to Eagleton's formulations, most plays, when performed are not merely doubles of their texts. Performances of the plays construct interpretations of the texts - construct ideologies out of ideologies - and such performances alert us to the weaknesses. The value of this process is that the performances become signifying practices not only of the situation seen by the playwrights, but also of their own ideologies and stances. The performances, therefore, become indicators of the "structures of the genesis of consciousness" (Williams, 1980: 271).

Theatre presents not an objective view of reality but a vision of it. By altering the relationship between signifiers and signified plays like the one of Maishe Maponya's The Hungry Earth represent the categories of a dominant ideology a work in society so that audiences can be momentarily distances from the associations nourished by this dominant ideology. Furthermore, because plays are also productions of ideology and not mere reflections of it, Maponya's play shows us not real history, but the way in which history signifies itself to him. Artists like Maponya offer us not only insights into a demystified 'reality' which they construct, but also offer us insight into the formal operations whereby the construction takes place. In Brechtian terms, what committed playwrights like Maponya is doing, in presenting a demystification of important social situations, is by implication showing the feasibility of altering the dominant structure of relations .

Mncwango has attempted to communicate with us in his plays the ideological influences that characterise his characters in the play. His plays are a comment on social and political reality of the time. If his plays were performed in our theatre they would be relevant as they were when he conceived them. Matsemela Manaka has commented on the plays and theatre and he sees them as a form of communication:

"Communication is the key issue in theatre. It does not matter what language is used, what matters is whether the language communicates with the people being addressed" (Theatre of the Dispossessed, 1980: 29).

It is, therefore, essential for our dramatists to contribute towards the liberation of our people's minds through theatre. Their productions should be more relevant to the needs of the communities they intend to serve. If the kinds of play they produce are relevant, perhaps the number of theatre-goers will increase and theatre will cease to be viewed as an elitist form of entertainment and which has no relevance to the everyday life of an ordinary man. Both the dramatist and audience alike should contribute towards the development of the people's theatre and none should sit and watch other people transform society. Steve Biko once said:

"Many people are merely spectators in this daily struggle for human dignity - they stand aloof and watch, as the few carry on the battle - they do not want to get involved, not even a drop of blood to soil them - their hands are clean" (Black Viewpoint, 1972, 14).

We therefore, have a role to play towards the development of African theatre and literature as a whole. Our literature should seek to challenge the existing assumptions that all is well. We need to educate and disseminate information for the benefit of all.

Lastly, our dramatists need to write plays that will be capable of performance not just plays that can be read at school. Plays have more meaning if actors on stage engage audience directly and if they create that atmosphere which the dramatist sought to create when he wrote the play. The only effective way to evoke intense feelings and emotions about the tragic event on the play, is to put the hero or heroine in front of the audience - on stage and make him or her dramatise the incident - in that way our sympathies will be shared, pity and fear which are elements of tragedy will be felt by the audience.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that most of African dramas are faced with the collision of two anti-theatrical worlds. The world of the orthodox traditional discourse represented by those in authority and by those who abuse their power and the world of the alternative discourse which challenges all old assumptions that customs and traditions should be accepted blindly and be assimilated to. These two anti-theatrical worlds have been clearly revealed in all the texts of Leonard Mncwango where he contrasts his heroes and heroines, which are ordinary citizens, with the most powerful antagonist - the king and those in authority. Mncwango's approach of making his themes and social concerns favourable to the ordinary people was not the usual approach especially during the time from which he wrote his plays in the 1950's. To speak theatrically and artistically against those in authority could result to unfavourable consequences to his life and family. However, Mncwango chose to explore the contradictions that exists in society. He realised that people need to be re-oriented in the way they view and perceive things and it is only through this new orientation that the social structures and mental perceptions of the people's external world could change. Our perception of the external world is conditioned by the social and educational institutions that exist in the place we live in. Apartheid Bantu Education, for instance, contributed in instilling the inferior mentality and the perception that most Africans have of themselves. This tallies well with Ngugi wa Thiongo's assertion that:

"The images we have of ourselves in relation to otherselves or the images we have of otherselves in relation to ourselves are dependent on the place we occupy (in the mainstream economy) and system of production" (Ngugi, 1981: 123).

The colonisers, Ngugi argues, maintain control by instilling images of defeat, unsureness, division, inferiority complex, helplessness and abject humility on the minds of Africans. The social and educational institutions designed by the state use hidden curriculum and hidden powers of psychological coercion and mental conditioning. Mncwango is, therefore, like other African writers who are committed to change and also committed to conscientization of society especially Africans to stop being ignorant by blindly accepting repression and exploitation disguised under the cloak of culture, custom and tradition. Our people need to wake up and start doing things for themselves because every individual is capable of determining his future by being the "master of one's fate'. What Mncwango has done through his play is to educate society to appreciate its potential and its capabilities. He has done what Achebe has always maintained that it is the duty of the artist, to teach, re-educate and help one's society to regain its belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-denigration. This means that an author has always to be conscious of what message he wants to put across to the community when writing his text. To educate society is a process, a process which perhaps may need to start by removing from society's minds that which they sometimes hold dear. By this I attempt to say that education,

for instance, is 'malleable' and 'ductile' too. It can be used to 'liberate' people by making people aware of who they are, what they are capable of achieving. In South Africa, for instance, education was used by the state as a form of social control. Social class influences the way schools operate as agencies of social control. Gintis in his definition of class argues that the curriculum maintains, reproduces or replicates the power structure of society. On the other hand, Paulo Freire, has popularised the notion of education as "domestication". He argues that 'schools do not liberate, at best they domesticate'.

The neo-Marxist literature on schooling and social control advances two simple and contradictory propositions. The first is that schooling teaches subordinate class servility and second is that it does not. Both propositions are correct in that for majority of Africans education has been teaching subordination whilst for other races it has been teaching supremacy.

This is clearly illustrated in Bowles and Gintis' argument in their 'Correspondence Theory' that the educational system is essentially about shaping the consciousness of future workers to fit the capitalist system. In school, education has contributed to the reproduction of the social relations and production largely through the correspondence between school and class structure. Therefore, by accepting the given education without question, we are contributing in reproducing the social order created by the very system that oppresses us.

Mncwango and some other committed artists are faced with this kind of reality. It is no wonder we find in Mncwango's play - Ngenzeni?, characters like Sibiya, Simelane, Mthembu, KaMajola and others who have completely assimilated to the orthodox worldview. These characters believe strongly (that the king's view is never to be tried and tested by his subjects). It is this kind of cultural education which has passed through word of mouth from generation to generation. This kind of thinking is instilled on all nationalists immediately they start conceiving and understanding the world that surrounds them. It is this kind of education that must be uprooted and indeed to attempt to do so one would meet with serious opposition from those who fear change. That is why characters like Hilwayo and Zenzile were met with powerful opposition from all sectors of like.

What Mncwango has sought to achieve in his play is the taken-for-granted truth about the tragic events that take place everyday in our society. He has done like other committed artists like Maponya, Manaka, Dlomo, Fugard and others by being objective about life and by supporting through his texts justice. He has done like Ngugi wa Thiongo's hero, Matigari, in the novel of the same name. Matigari never lost hope in his search for truth and justice despite the severe repression and detention. When Ngugi comments about this character he says:

"The true seeker of truth never loses hope. The true seeker of real justice never tires. A farmer does not stop planting seeds just because of the failure of one crop. Success is born of trying and trying again.

Justice must seek the truth. When justice triumphs, truth will reign on earth" (Ngugi, 1987: 84).

Mncwango has, therefore, succeeded in revealing to us the existing tensions that exist in society. He has, therefore, suggested that the orthodox traditionalist view must accept the necessity for change since society and culture evolve and change with time. What he attempts to do is to acknowledge the need to democratise our society, the need for those in authority to be accountable and transparent. No ruler could rule without the co-operation of his subjects. He believes that between these two modes of behaviour discussed above, there must be an acceptable compromise, both honourable and practical. He argues further that there must also be tolerance and understanding between the ruler and the ruled. Freedom of thought, expression, association and choice are the cornerstone of every civilised society and, therefore, the kings and those in authority must respect these treasured freedoms. It should also be noted that although Mncwango in his plays, uses the traditional leaders - such as King Menziwa in *Ngenzeni?* and Prince Muzwa in *Manhla Iyokwendela Egodini*, the plays are a comment on any form of abuse of power, including those in government and modern institutions and not only traditional leaders. Corruption and abuse of power has always been associated with all forms of power in the modern society. It is, therefore, important that Mncwango's plays be understood as a comment on the society as a whole. His themes and social concerns are somewhat universal. What Mncwango sought to achieve in his texts was to approach the universal themes of abuse of power and oppression, through his own experience. He

wrote these plays from his expression, from his world view and from where he stands. Achebe has also argued that, he sees the role of the African writer as somehow symbiotic; and he remarked on universality by saying:

"When I was talking about universality, I was actually implying roots because I do not believe that it is the business of any writer to chase, to run after universality. I think it is the business of universality to be chasing the writer. Now anybody who sets out trying to be universal will fail. This is the way it strikes me. I think the business of the writer is to write from his position, from his experience, from his view of the world, from where he stands, from what he knows, and as long as he does this faithfully there is enough that is common between people's between one people and another, for what he says to be appreciated" (In Person: Achebe, Awooner, and Soyinka, ed KC Morell, University of Washington, 1975: 21-22).

Therefore, it seems what Mncwango says - that tolerance and compromise are as necessary a part of a worldview of life - and should be appreciated. This attitude, 'more relaxed, more accommodating' of tolerance and flexibility which Mncwango suggests in his plays, makes meaningful compromise possible and it may also have been the solution that averted the tragedies of Nontula, Hilwayo, Zenzile, and the numerous tragic events that took place in the plays. He has managed to depict and reveal the problem of many individuals' conflict with society, their isolation and their attempt to come to terms with it.

It seems as though that what Mncwango also implicitly suggest is that few individuals who experience tragic events in society, can change and shape the destiny of many people's lives. The death of innocent people though tragic can culminate in the liberation of millions of people who have been leaving under the oppressive regimes for centuries.

NOTES

1. See - Achebe Chinua - Things Fall Apart, London Heinemann (1958). No Longer at Ease (1960), Arrow of God (1964) and A Man of the People (1966). All unpublished by London: Heinemann.
2. Saul Bellow, The Victim, Harmondsworth Mddx, Penguin Books, 1966, p.85.
3. Saul Bellow, Danglish Man, Harmondsworth Mddx, Penguin Books, 1972, p.159.
4. Achebe Chinua - "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation", Nigeria Magazine, 81, 1964, pp.157 - 160.
5. See also Martin Orkin's Introductory Notes on Maishe Maponya's The Hungry Earth.
6. Aristotle, The Poetics (tr Bywater).
7. Popular here in the sense used in modern studies of African drama, i.e. light entertainment, aimed at general public, political in the sense of being committed to socio-economic and political change.
8. Diagram taken from Hauptfield, T and Steadman, I (eds) - South African Theatre for Plays and an Introduction.

9. Inevitably education authorities demand a 'safe' non-controvertial theme and pure language usage.
10. Roland Mushat Fryre, *The Renaissance of Hamlet: Issues and Responses in 1600* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984).
11. Dollimore and Sinfield, *History and Ideology: The Instance of Henry V*, p.212, *Writing of the 16th and 17th centuries in the Protestant Doctrine of Callings*.
12. Mthobi Mutloose (ed), Forced Landing, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1980, Editors' Introduction.
13. Ngugi wa Thiongo quotes Chinua Achebe in his collection of *Critical Essays*, Writers in Politics (1981, p.61).
14. See Sheriff Hetata's 'Literature of Change', a paper delivered at the New Nation International Conference of African Writers, 1991, Wits University, Johannesburg, Johannesburg (Dec 2 - 7).
15. Dollimore and Sinfield 'History and Ideology: The Instance of Henry V', p.219.
16. Quoted in Silber (1983/1984: 12).

17. See p.22 of Zake's Mda's - We Shall Sing for the Fatherland.
18. See James Mathew's Story - "The Park".
19. See p.16 of the play - We Shall Sing for the Fatherland and Other Stories - 1980, Johannesburg: Ravan.

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