

The Missionary And Conflict In Two Historical Dramas Of The Eastern Cape

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The discourse of history and conflict in the Eastern Cape has been influenced by the geographical position of the area. The Eastern Cape is a border area (The East London area is still called Border) and as such has always been a site of conflict especially about land. However as an area of early missionary activity the discourse of this conflict has been deeply influenced by Christian images and ideals. I shall examine this interaction in two plays: *The girl who killed to save* by HIE Dhlomo and *Richard Gush of Salem* by Guy Butler.

The cattle killing still evokes strong feelings in residents of the Eastern Cape yet Dhlomo's play written in 1935 presents the event through the eyes of a writer fully imbued with missionary ideals. Butler's play presents an incident in the sixth frontier war when Gush prevented a Xhosa attack by persuading the chief to retreat. Here too the language and ideals of the Christian missionaries pervade not only the language of the writer but also the actions to the Xhosa chief.

My interest in this topic arises from two things; both connected to teaching. Firstly how are we to utilise the new educational movement to cross-disciplinary study and secondly how can we interest our students in texts (such as protest literature) that suddenly may seem to have no relevance to their lives. A third point, not directly connected to teaching method at all, is the alarming marginalization of history in our educational system. It is because of this third point that I feel we as educators must get involved in incorporating our history into our other teaching.

The following paper suggests an inter-disciplinary link between history, literature and biblical

studies. An aspect that should be included in any study of the history and literature of the Eastern Cape is geography. The terrain, vegetation and climate of the area are the underpinning of all the historical events here. One of the reasons the Xhosa managed to resist the British for so long was because of the terrain and it was the very fertility of the area that made it attractive to white settlement. However there is no space for that in one paper but it would form part of a full course

I have chosen two plays with a very obvious historical theme and unity of time and place but as much of our literature is clearly linked to events of the day this method of examining texts could easily be adapted to such texts as Fugard's *Boesman and Lena* or Abrahams' *Mine Boy*.

When we talk of the discourse of war we think of two opposing factions: enemy/ally English/Afrikaans, NP/ANC. But in South Africa, and particularly in the Eastern Cape, the discourse of war is not a matter of opposites but one of overlapping and mutation. The peoples of South Africa share the same geographical space and all consider themselves citizens of the land. We consider we have a place here. This 'place' is not merely a geographical one but also one of ideology; and the ideology of religion and particularly that of Christianity has been one of South Africa's main sites of both overlap and conflict.

Khabela says 'The struggle to reclaim their land from the colonial settlers was viewed by the Xhosa not only as a political struggle, but also as fundamentally a religious one. Their wars against the settlers were not just political, they were basically a struggle of religions and therefore a struggle of the gods' (1996:47). The discourse of mission Christianity has been a thread looping the ideologies of Afrikaner, Khoikhoi, English and Xhosa. For instance Van der Kemp used the expression "Sifuba-Sibanzi" (the Broad chested One) as a description of Christ (Khabela 1996: 78). But such fusion of language is not only apparent in historical documents but also in the language used by writers of fiction and drama.

NXELE AND NTSIKANA

I have chosen to begin this paper with the two earliest Christian Xhosa prophets :Nxele and Ntsikana because it is in their discourse that we can first see the discourse of the Christian missionary beginning to permeate Xhosa discourse .Both were influenced directly or indirectly by the missionary Van der Kemp, both preached an amalgam of the Bible message and traditional Xhosa custom, both attacked Xhosa custom from the perspective of missionary ideology and both despaired of dealing with the whites and expressed this desperation using mission language and they died a year apart(1820 and 1821). Nxele, who is often called Makana, picked up his Christianity from the Dutch farm on which he spent his early years and from his father who had been at Van der Kemp's mission at Bethelsdorp. After his father's death he was more or less abandoned by his mother and survived as best he could in the veld emerging as an adolescent with a fully developed religious view- a fusion of Christianity and Xhosa tradition. He preached a sense of sin and condemned the same traditional customs that the missionaries did, such as witchcraft and polygamy. His leadership qualities made him, rather than his message, attractive (Mostert, 1992:427). However the discourse of his message was to be seen enacted in later events. He was attributed with mystical powers and such powers were encouraged by the desperation of the Xhosa who were being driven steadily eastward by the British and whose shrinking lands were ravaged by drought. He later proposed two gods: one for the whites and one for the blacks. He taught that because the whites had murdered the son of God they had been driven from their own country and onto the sea where they searched for a new land but the god of the black people would now help the Xhosa to push them back into the sea. He, Nxele, had been sent as an agent to destroy the whites and to bring back to life their ancestors and cattle (Elphick, 1997:72). The sacrifice of the cattle would allow the ancestors to return.

This was said nearly 40 years before the actual great cattle killing. We can see how this discourse is used again in the language of the historical Nongqause and in Dhlomo's play. At one time Nxele gathered followers at Cove Rock south of modern East London. Here he said

that he would summon the Xhosa ancestors to rise from the sea. Again we can see the Christian idea of resurrection and rebirth permeating the belief in ancestors and the two ideas of driving the whites into the sea and repopulating the earth linked to this resurrection.

Throughout the 1800s there was a definite link between economy and Christianity. The constant taking of Xhosa cattle and burning of crops and houses, killing of women and children put the Xhosa in a strange position as far as the mission message was concerned. Many of the missionaries were genuinely concerned for their flocks but often appeared as intermediaries between the British and Xhosa chiefs. Although the missionaries were treated with respect as teachers the suspicion about their motives steadily grew as more and more missionaries, especially those with British roots, began to link the idea of Christianity with 'civilizing the barbarian' The spread of Christianity owed more to the zeal of African converts than to the direct actions of the missionaries' (Elphick, 1997:4).

Ntsikana, the other great Xhosa Christian prophet was more conventional in his interpretation of Christianity but his discourse is also a mix of the two cultures. He had probably heard Van der Kemp preach at Ngqika's great place at the end of 1799 and the beginning of 1800 and would have heard of the 'miracle' of Christmas Day when Van der Kemp having been ordered to pray for rain did so and was rewarded with a thunder shower (Mostert, 1992:316). As in the case of Nxele the philosophy he was to follow emerged fully developed at adulthood. Having stood up to dance he was stopped by a whirlwind (Mostert, 1992:462). He washed off his red clay and began to chant and preach that Nxele was a false prophet. He later prophesied that the people from the west would bring the word of life but that the grass would be eaten away by sheep, war would come and his people would be driven across the Kei (Mostert, 1992:463). If one listens to a recording of Ntsikana's Great Hymn one can easily observe what is meant by the concept of discourse change and fusion. This change is more immediately apparent in music than in words, especially as in this case we are dealing with words translated originally from English or Dutch into Xhosa and then back into English again so we can examine them.

***RICHARD GUSH OF SALEM* (GUY BUTLER)**

BACKGROUND TO THE PLAY

Richard Gush Of Salem is set during the 6th frontier war in 1834 and by this time mission stations had sprung up throughout the Eastern Cape and the Lovedale Press had been operating for 10 years so the influence of missionary discourse would have spread even though the Xhosa were not particularly interested in becoming Christians. The play was first performed in 1970 as part of the 125th commemoration of the landing of the 1820 settlers. In his introduction Butler says he was influenced by the idea of ‘response of individual conscience to racial and other violence’ (1982:viii) and by his own sympathy with his Quaker background.

Salem was attacked by Xhosa warriors on Christmas 1834. This attack was part of a mass movement of the Xhosa caused by the continued extensive British possession of Xhosa territory and the drought of 1834 but the actual attacks were precipitated by a government patrol searching for stolen horses. When these could not be found the soldiers rounded up some cattle and started back to Fort Beaufort; Xhosa men tried to stop them and the soldiers shot and killed two men and injured another two. The cattle belonged to Chief Ngqika and his son was one of those injured - grazed by a bullet. The taking of the chief's cattle and the obvious intent of killing one of his sons was taken by the Xhosa people as a declaration of war. One of Ngqika's other sons begged Somerset to make peace but Somerset replied ‘the time for conference has gone by’ (Milton, 1983:107). However another of the chief's sons expressed his view that suing for peace was a waste of time ‘I am a bushbuck: for we chiefs are shot like them’ (Mostert, 1992:655). There was a general attack on the colony from Dec 22nd onwards. The settlers began to gather in churches and any other strong building. The Xhosa killed traders and took cattle but did not kill missionaries, women and children. On Jan 3rd Tyhali (one of the chief's sons) sent peace proposals to Somerset but he replied that he

had no time to consider these.

THE PLAY

The play opens with the conflicting views of the Settlers. The trader Charlie wants 'One country! No frontiers! Free trade. Mix' (Butler, 1982:21). The traders argue the uselessness and dangers of the reprisal system. (This system was one where, if cattle were taken from a farmer, a patrol would go out and if the actual trail could not be found any cattle were taken.) Gush explains his decision not to try to regain his lost cattle in the following words. 'How can I appeal to a system of injustice that multiplies the crime?' (Butler, 1982:25). Gush is presented as a lone voice in this plea for justice and indeed generally the settlers were more concerned with their own welfare than justice. But although very much in the minority, there were others who were not happy about the way cattle were re-captured. Stockenstrom says in his autobiography 'the great source of misfortune on the frontier was the taking of Caffre cattle under any circumstances by our patrols' (cited in Mostert, 1992:627). The conflict of self-interest and justice that was between missionary and settler and within the heart of the missionary himself is seen in George's words in the play 'who comes first- your own kin, or thieving kaffirs?' (Butler, 1982:25) and in Gush's response, 'The burning question is between me and the system. God is looking at us through the magnifying glass of the morning sun. He wants to know what I am going to do about the system. It can only lead to war' (Butler, 1982:26). The discourse of politics and the discourse of Christianity is interwoven.

In scene 2 Butler has all the characters return from their various expeditions in time for Christmas. Some trading ventures were crooked but successful (selling green musket balls with an assurance that they would grow into three-legged iron pots) some like Gush's were unsuccessful. Gush's lack of success though is linked to the missionary idea of hearing voices. Prophets are often 'called' and Xhosa witchdoctors even today respond to what they feel as a call. Both Ntiskana and Nxele felt themselves called. Later Nonqause heard voices telling her to kill the cattle. It is an element of both Christian and Xhosa religions. Gush's

explanation for losing his money is 'we have sinned' (Butler, 1982:41). This is a recurring cry throughout the 19thC. Gush's wife Margaret objects to the 'we' but the Xhosa, with a stronger communal identity were later prepared to accept that the sacrifice must be made by everyone.

A Christmas service is presented on stage with the breaking and sharing of bread. Phillip describes a communion service at Ayliff's mission at Butterworth where a service was surrounded by 'a hundred warriors, glistening with red ochre, and blue crane feathers dancing on their heads' (Butler, 1982:45). He contrasts the magnificent warriors with the pitiful group of Europeans and Xhosa Christian converts. He describes Ayliff breaking the bread and giving it to the chief who distributed it among his men as he had seen Ayliff do. Butler here conveys the idea of how Christian symbols were disseminated among the indigenous people without the underlying dogma to explain them. The breaking of bread is obviously seen as a symbol of peace and not a re-enactment of the Last Supper. Butler ends the service with a messenger arriving with the news that thousands of warriors are advancing over the Keiskamma and the Fish.

The next part of the play involves plans for resistance of the attack. It is presented as a religious issue- a form of passive resistance. Actually the points that Gush makes are practical rather than religious. He recommends leaving the cattle in the bush because to put all the cattle in a kraal is merely to save the Xhosa the trouble of herding them. He also insists that as the Xhosa have never been known to attack women and children there is no need for everyone to huddle together. The group ignores the advice and Gush leaves to go back to his own home. He is criticised and reviled by the rest. Here Butler makes his point about individual conscience as opposed to group will. Gush is shown in his home suffering because of his isolation but determined nevertheless to stick to what he believes.

Some time later the Xhosa are heard chanting their war cry and Gush comes into the laager to tell them of his decision to go out unarmed to speak to the Xhosa chief to ask him why they

attack people who have done them no harm. Besides repeating the assurance that the Xhosa do not kill unarmed men Gush says he will remind them of the names of the missionaries that have been sent out from Salem.' I shall get at their conscience' (Butler, 1982:65). Butler is not only presenting the missionaries as good people but as people who are acknowledged as good by the Xhosa. He presents none of the doubts that existed among the Xhosa about what the role of the missionary was in relation to the British government. The playwright's attitude is completely subsumed in of the missionaries' view of themselves.

The climax of the play happens off stage and is reported as if seen through a telescope. Two kinds of music are used to show the conflicting discourse. 'It is very quiet except for a distant war chant' (Butler, 1982:67). On stage Margaret Gush takes bread out of the oven while the characters on stage sing "Bread of Heaven". The domestic action of baking bread is fused with the Christian tradition. This is immediately followed by Gush rushing in to collect the bread to take to the Xhosa chief. Gush: The chief asked for bread. It was all he asked for - bread' (Butler, 1982:68).

Gush's son relays what is happening off stage: 'The chief takes one of the loaves. He breaks it and gives a portion to Gush , who breaks his and gives a portion to Woest. The chief gives a portion of his to the induna. They all eat. The chief rises. They shake hands' (Butler, 1982:69). The very words used are reminiscent of the communion service There is singing off stage: ' It is not the same song, thank God. They've gone, thank God we are safe' (Butler, 1982:69-70). Without dialogue Gush re-enters holding a chunk of bread. He breaks pieces off and hands them to the characters on stage.

In this play the influence of the protestant missionary discourse and symbols is obvious in both the historical events and in Butler's interpretation of those events. Janet Hodgson describes this kind of exchange as a claim for ownership of sacred symbols (Elphick, 1997:87).

INTRODUCTION TO *THE GIRL WHO KILLED TO SAVE*

BRIEF NOTES ON HISTORICAL EVENTS BETWEEN 1835 and 1857

In 1835 Chief Hintsa was murdered and his body mutilated by British soldiers. Stockenstrom made a treaty with the Xhosa that allowed grazing between the Keiskamma and Fish rivers and allowed authority of the chiefs. He placed the onus of guarding the cattle on the farmers. Maitland tore up Stockenstrom's treaties. The patrol system was re-instated. Christian Xhosa were not subject to the chiefs and the Xhosa partly blamed the missionaries for this. Settlers became more racist. Mlanjeni appeared as a prophet supposedly sent by Nxele to predict great events. He ordered the sacrifice of dun or white cattle. There were renewed hopes of regaining the land. Mlangeni said if the settlements were attacked the bullets would turn to water. There was an increasing belief that the god of the Xhosa was supreme. There were more changes of government policy towards the Xhosa. The authority of the chiefs was steadily eroded. Rumours of British defeat by Russians at Crimea and the belief that the Russians were black encouraged resistance to the British. In 1850 Mlangeni inspired an attack on the British colony. This lasted till 1853. There was bitter fighting and horrifying stories of cruelty on both sides. The Xhosa were defeated and allowed to live only in certain sections of the Eastern Cape. Lung sickness in cattle spread from Mossel Bay causing the death of thousands of cattle. There were increasing incidents of Xhosa prophets calling for sacrifice so as to bring the country back to normal. These calls for sacrifice were also influenced by missionary teaching. In April; 1856 Nongqause and her friend heard two strangers who told them to tell everyone they must kill their cattle, cultivation must stop but new grain pits must be dug and strong cattle enclosures built. Witchcraft must be stopped. When Chief Sarhili eventually supported the idea killing began in earnest. By the end of 1858 the Xhosa population had dropped by more than two thirds. Probably 40,000 people had died of starvation and 150,000 were displaced as they searched for help. An estimated 400,000 cattle were slaughtered by January 1857. The Xhosa lost a further 600,000 acres of land to the British and their power as an independent nation was lost for ever.

MILLENNIAL PHILOSOPHY

Protestantism has two different kinds of eschatology: pre-millennialism and post-millennialism. Post-millennialism teaches that the second coming of Christ will occur after the millennium or a thousand years of peace. This idea is influenced by Revelations Chapter 20 '... over such the second death has no power but they shall be priests of God and of his Christ and they shall reign with him a thousand years.' The feeling is optimistic. God will use human instruments to perfect the Kingdom of God and this will be formed gradually through individual conversions and social improvement. Christians should not only try to convert others but should also try to lessen social evils. Ntiskana followed this philosophy and so did the later educated elite produced by the missions such as Tiyo Soga and Dhlomo himself.

Pre-millennialism begins from the conviction that the world is evil and growing increasingly corrupt. The Kingdom of God will be erected only after existing societies and political systems are destroyed in a series of cataclysmic events culminating in Armageddon. Then Christ will come and create his millennium (Mostert, 1992:337). Nxele incorporated many of these ideas but placed them in a Xhosa cosmology: it was this philosophy that was followed by Mlangeni and incorporated into the visions of the cattle killing

TWO PLAYS BY HIE DHLOMO

Besides *The Girl who Killed to Save* another play of Dhlomo's worth examining for a programme involving the East Cape would be *Ntsikana*. This is a dramatic representation of the Xhosa prophet who was preaching at the same time as Nxele but with a very different approach to Christianity. He preached pacifism and had an enduring effect on the educated elite. The play *Ntiskana* shows the beginning of a process stretching 50 years and *The Girl*

who Killed to Save shows the end. Throughout the 50 years and throughout both plays we can see the missionary discourse and how this has been assimilated by Dhlomo. The discourse of both plays is influenced by the very fact of being printed by Lovedale press started in 1823 at the Scottish Mission station so close to where Ntsikanna preached and died. The Lovedale Press set out a policy that their aim was to ‘provide the ministry of the printed word for the Bantu people’ (*The South African Outlook*, Jan 2nd 1934.). The words ‘ministry’ and ‘word’ give the underlying idea that influenced Dhlomo.

The play *The Girl who Killed to Save* begins with an historical note ‘Umhlakaza, assisted by his daughter Nonqause preached a new gospel which was none other than a resurrection from the dead’ (Dhlomo, 1985:3). In fact the gospel was not new as there had been a rash of such prophecies throughout the British occupation especially in the 1850s with the spread of the lung sickness in cattle. Furthermore the gospel was deeply influenced by Mhlaza’s own background. Mhlkaza was a baptised Methodist and became the personal servant of the Anglican bishop of Grahamstown Bishop Merriman. Merriman walked the Eastern Cape getting to know the area and Mhlkaza accompanied him more as a companion than a mere servant. He joined the Anglican church. However he wanted to be a fellow priest and not a servant, Merriman did not think this possible and in 1853 Mhlkaza returned to his people on the Gxarha river where three years later his niece spoke to two strangers.

The subtitle of the play is *Nongqause the liberator*. The double title *The girl who killed to save* and *Nongqause the liberator* contains the underlying ideology of the play. Nongqause ordered that the cattle be killed in order to save the Xhosa from British domination and so regain the cattle and land that had been taken. She intended to liberate them. Dhlomo of course intends this ironically, in the ideology of the play she killed her fellow Xhosa and by so doing liberated them spiritually. The old culture has been killed and now the Xhosa are liberated and so free to take up the new.

The play opens in a tribal setting where Nongqause is shown as being eagerly sought for

advice. She says to the old man, 'Life is being organised on a higher scale. Like you, the country is near a new birth, a greater day, a happier life' (Dhlomo, 1985:7). Dhlomo is here using the double discourse of Xhosa belief and Christian. The old man is about to join the ancestors but the Christian idea of a new life is also hinted at. 'A happier life' is a Christian idea. Xhosa mythology does not seem to suggest that the life of the ancestors is any happier than actual life or that the whole world would be reborn. Life was perceived as a continuum the ancestors were still part of the community and not in a special place. The chief Sarhili (Kreli) arrives with a group of doubters. Dhlomo's stage instructions read 'Nongqause, feigning to be seized with a hysteromania-like trance, pretends to be listening to a whispering voice' (Dhlomo, 1985:9). Dhlomo's attitude is clear: it is all an act; and Nongqause herself cries out, 'If only I could know the truth without doubts. The truth! Give me the truth. Take all. Give me the truth, truth.' (Dhlomo, 1985:9). She admits that she only hears sounds which Mhlakaza has translated into words 'Let them kill me. Death is better than the pangs of uncertainty, I help them because I honestly believe we shall get new cattle and grain, and that the dead shall rise' (Dhlomo, 1985:10). Dhlomo's own ambivalence is shown in the contradiction between the stage direction 'pretends' and Nongqause's words 'I honestly believe'. He is trying to present her as both a charlatan- someone infused with pagan superstition- and also as the liberator of her people who eventually drives them into western progressive ways and religion. At this stage – 1935 - Dhlomo, like many other educated Africans, supported western 'progress'.

Scene 2 at the chief's great place shows the doubters being castigated for their selfishness in not killing their cattle. 'Our race cannot suffer because of individuals. Individuals must lose themselves in the race' (Dhlomo, 1985:15). These words are similar to Sarhili's actual words to Sir George Grey 'There is a thing which speaks in my country, and orders me and my people to kill our cattle, eat our corn and throw away all our witchcraft wood, and not to plant, and to report it to all the chiefs in the country' (Mostert, 1992:1204). Mostert comments on the Old Testament terminology and indeed the discourse of both play and history sounds like Exodus.

The next two scenes are set in or near the Brownlee's house. Brownlee was born in the area and fluent in Xhosa, of all the administrators he was the one with the most intimate knowledge of Xhosa ideology but both historical records and the play show him bewildered about what was happening in 1856. In the play Brownlee repeats the fears of the Settlers that the cattle killing may lead to starvation and that the desperate people will attack the colony.' I'm afraid the plot behind the whole movement is to starve the people into fighting the European. The leaders are playing on the people's feelings to cause trouble' (Dhlomo, 1985:16). Here Dhlomo is giving the common Settler view of a conspiracy theory and he does little to contradict the idea. However in actual fact Brownlee wrote 'Though famine may induce people to commit riots and outrage, a starving people are not in a position to undertake aggressive warfare' (Mostert, 1992:1195). Neither Dhlomo in his version of Brownlee nor Brownlee's own words acknowledge that fifty years of territorial theft combined with drought, cattle thieving, systematic breakdown of the chief's authority, regulations against Xhosa custom and the recent terrible lung sickness in the cattle could have led to this level of desperation. Also neither Dhlomo nor the historical Brownlee seems to see that the missionary teaching of the resurrection was in any way responsible for the form this desperation took.

Hugh (Mrs Brownlee's brother) takes up the analysis of the situation.

It is true is it not that both the missionary and the Administrator have long been trying to civilize the black man, turn him into a regular efficient worker, and into a peaceful citizen (Dhlomo, 1985:17).

Here Dhlomo links the roles of the missionary and British government in their aims. So too did many actual missionaries at the time and the Xhosa were aware of this. Dhlomo also does not challenge the idea that one of the roles of the Christian missionary was to provide servants for the colony. This is confirmed a few lines later when Brownlee addresses a group of men who have come looking for work 'I'm glad to hear you prefer to go and work for the

European than to remain in Xhosaland and kill yourselves by destroying cattle. You are brave and wise. The white man is just. But remember you must be honest, obedient, loyal servants' (Dhlomo, 1985:17). Dhomo says all this without irony.

The next set of speeches articulates the philosophy of the play. Hugh says 'If old ideas, customs and sanctions are to be destroyed and the site prepared for new intellectual and moral structures, there must first be a process, not of construction but of destruction. It will be the agony of birth. This great cattle killing drama which we witness today will prepare the Xhosa soil- soul- for the early propagation of the message of the missionary, the blessings of medical science, the law and order of the administrator, and the light of education' (Dhlomo, 1985:18). He adds later 'If we believe in the doctrine of the survival of the fittest then we may excuse her by saying that those who survive will be individuals physically and intellectually superior to the others' (Dhlomo, 1985:18).

The missionary continues the argument, 'Nongqause may reduce at a sweep what legislation and missionary endeavour have so far failed to fight against- the power and influence of the witchdoctor, the tyranny of custom and tradition, the authority of the chief, the isolation of the Xhosa nation. By isolation I mean that the Ama Xhosa are a self-sufficient community, hostile to and not eager to come into contact with Europeans. The Nonqause Drama will break down this self-sufficiency, this hostility, and force the AmaXhosa to throw themselves- literally and metaphorically - into the arms of their white neighbours' (Dhlomo, 1985:19). Dhlomo here puts in a nutshell the mixture of missionary and colonial attitudes.

Scene 4 shows the Brownlee family helping the starving Xhosa. Brownlee who is organising everything uses missionary terminology to describe physical assistance: 'They have heard of salvation, and see! They already come!' (Dhlomo, 1985:21). Even the rhythm of the words has biblical overtones. A series of victims 'confess' their sins of trusting the chiefs and witchdoctors, they beg forgiveness and proclaim a god of love. The missionary's prayers over the dying are full of conventional piety 'Let the doom brought by their own stupidity lead

them to the paths of righteousness' (Dhlomo, 1985:24).

The whole scene is expressed entirely in missionary terms. The Xhosa are benighted and need both physical and spiritual help from the whites. The blacks who are helping the Brownlees are presented as subaltern or as not fully understanding the issue.

The final scene of the play balances the opening scene but Dhlomo shows the 'progress' that has been made 'Interior of a Christian, but "raw" Xhosa home' (Dhlomo, 1985:26). A man is dying and there are both modern medicines and traditional cures on the table. Dhlomo makes it clear that although much 'progress' has been made there is still trust in traditional methods. The missionary, accompanied by a white doctor and Tiyo Soga, enters (Soga was the first fully-ordained overseas-trained black minister and an early follower of Ntsikana. He was the same age as Mlangeni and vehemently opposed his prophecies). A small organ is also carried in. The dying man sits up and describes a vision he has of Nonqause laughing with those who died who tell her that 'hunger and destitution drove them into the paths of life. They call her their Liberator from Superstition and from the rule of ignorance... do lead me to the master. O Nongqause, the Liberator' (Dhlomo, 1985:29). The missionary sits and plays soft music.

In this final scene Dhlomo combines missionary discourse with the hopes of an educated elite who would be able to change the perceptions of the Xhosa. The very presence of Soga in the scene reflects Dhlomo's hopes. A black educated clergy would in future be able to tap into indigenous ideology and combine the best of Christian and Xhosa traditions. A disciple of Ntsikana who wrote the first truly African Christian hymn would form the beginning of a new generation of Xhosa Christians. The play presents the cattle killing, not as the Xhosa saw it, but as a piece of mission literature the play is useful to us today as a study of how missionary discourse influenced both events and the interpretation of such events.

CONCLUSION

Now is an ideal time to rethink our teaching of South African literature. The methods of Practical Criticism have never been suitable for South African literature and for many of us other methods seem inadequate and result in students merely re-telling the story or going off on an ideological diatribe. If we could combine our study of literature with other disciplines that have had an influence on such literature we could produce for students a worthwhile body of knowledge that is not merely linked to their present perceptions but has concrete grounding.

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