

**Language, Literature and Intellectual**

**History in South Africa:**

**A Conversation**

**about**

**the**

**New African Movement**

**between**

**Ntongela Masilela**

**and**

**Sandile Ngidi**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### **Introduction:**

by  
Sandile Ngidi

### **Chapter 1:**

Interview with Ntongela  
Masilela on the nature of the  
“New African Movement” website

by  
Sandile Ngidi

### **Chapter 2:**

An Interview with Ntongela  
Masilela regarding the “H. I. E.  
Dhlomo Center for African  
Intellectual History”

by  
Mbukeni Herbert Mnguni

### **Chapter 3:**

Considerations on certain  
Aspects of the New African  
Movement: An Interview with  
Ntongela Masilela

by  
Sandile Ngidi

## INTRODUCTION

by

Sandile Ngidi

Ntongela Masilela's work sharply pricks our sensibilities to the urgency of our collective duty to confront the continued marginalisation of South Africa's black literary and intellectual archive even when apartheid has been defeated. I use the term black as synonymous with the term African with the proviso that both terms refer to racial and ethnic groups that were historically oppressed in the legislative framework of apartheid through a barrage of laws promulgated following the arrival of Jan Van Riebeeck in the Cape in 1652.

It is Masilela's intellectual admonition and visionary commitment that has drawn me towards his work and prompted the interviews contained in this publication. I am therefore honoured to write this introduction and share my angst and hope on the state of South Africa's black literary and intellectual archive. His work profoundly speaks to the textual gaps in the reading and rendering of 27 April 1994 and the rise of Nelson Mandela to the presidency of a liberated country. Masilela's voice speaks to the contradictions and ironies of liberation. For him Joseph Ki-Zerbo's clarion call for Africans to "rebuild the identity from which the African peoples have become alienated," remains instructive to his intellectual vocation.

Masilela's is an ambitious project covering a broad canvas of South Africa's neglected intellectual and cultural heritage. His is an epic homage to our heritage, our valid heritage. His work holds the promise of an antidote for the lethargy that set in amidst the spirit of "a rainbow nation" and its lure of a fake sense of *uhuru*. We have given far more than we should have, and the reciprocity from the other side remains largely elusive, despite the fact that readers in indigenous languages are growing in the newspaper market.

In an interview with Dr Mbukeni Herbert Mnguni for instance, Masilela notes, “the New African Movement sought to transform *European modernity* in South Africa.” His multidisciplinary corpus is clearly located within the socio-political realm and delineates lines of convergence and conversation between early New African writers and various parts of Africa and her Diaspora. He argues that the figures he has profiled on his web site were essentially responding to the modernity “imposed by means of imperialism and colonialism.” This response in turn resulted in a theses that came to be known as *New African modernity*.“ *It was a rejoinder that also sought to advance “the democratic interests of the majority of South Africans”,* Masilela contends. Equally remarkable is how this scholar shows relations forged by New African thinkers such as Elijah Makiwane, Selope Thema and John Tengo Jabavu, interaction created across ethnic divides.

Nelson Mandela best articulated the notion that apartheid was not merely premised on political subjugation but also had a vicious predilection for creating the alienation of the conquered peoples from their cultural identity/ies. It is remarkably profound that at the historic Rivonia Trial on 20 April 1964, Mandela’s opening defense included an invocation of his youth in the Transkei where “I listened to the elders of my tribe telling stories of the old days.” Of course the politically astute father of South Africa’s liberation back then, was not (by implication) clamoring for an orthodox return to the ways of the old. Instead Mandela’s statement was modernist as epitomised by his belief in a non-racialism and democracy.

Mandela’s contention centred on an inclusive African nationalism and not a jingoistic affirmation of the Xhosa-speaking people whose majority hailed from the Transkei. Clearly for Mandela what was on the dock at the Rivonia Trial was not simply the political utopia but also the dream for the protection of African identity as experienced through his Xhosa linguistic and cultural childhood. South Africa’s very own and first poet laureate Mazisi Kunene, who wrote in isiZulu during his tumultuous years in exile for over three decades, has been a Mandela figure and liberator of our tongues from the

shackles of neocolonial otherness. Incidentally, it was through Ntongela Masilela's veneration of Kunene's import in the African literary canon that the two of us first established common ground after my exposure to a paper he had written to bid farewell to Kunene upon his return to South Africa in 1993.

Masilela lucidly argues that Eskia Mphahlele is "the most important figure in the cultural politics of South African exile experience," and salutes Kunene the lone figure in the bitter exile experience as a sentinel that stuck to his linguistic 'spears' to paraphrase Mbulelo Mzamane and insisted on writing in his native Zulu language. One more time the debate on language stares at us with eyes of fire although it has beset African literature over the last 40 years. Furthermore the freeing of South Africa in 1994, the last country to be independent on the continent, provides renewed interest in the debate since the colonial project left a grievous assault on the psyche of the once-oppressed majority.

Masilela's archival research also underlines the role of literature in helping a nation gaze at its identity whether this is done from a collective or fractured standpoint. For literature is ultimately about the power of representation to paraphrase Lewis Nkosi's statement at the inaugural Cape Town Book Fair in June this year, whilst over the past 12 years South Africans have sung the national anthem with enthusiasm and celebrated numerous Nelson Mandela birthdays, we are very far from attaining a shared 'national position' on who are the writers of the nation. Apart from the predictable partitioning of local literature into 'black and white', (which often ignores the textual nuances resulting from class and ideology), I believe that indigenous African language writers remain marginalised and unable to substantially constitute a force that is "representative" of South African national literature.

I am aware that to tackle the thorny subject of language in South Africa today is to court controversy. My attempt here is to encourage dialogue, and in the process help reshape South Africa's impact on the national, continental and international literary arena. I fully agree

with Hannes van Zyl's assertion that "a literature in any given language excludes those who do not know the language." Without too much statistical espousal, the fact that the country's black majority do not speak and read English, suggests that these people do not read most of the books written in English by their celebrated writers. If this sounds obvious, I am stating it mainly because I believe the hegemonic status of English in a post-apartheid society is not only anomalous but also a severe condition of linguistic, cultural and intellectual injustice. When one considers for instance that according to the 2001 national census, Zulu is the mother tongue of 23.8% of South Africa's population, followed by Xhosa at 17.6%, Afrikaans at 13.3%, Sepedi at 9.4%, and English and Tswana each at 8.2%, shock is inevitable.

Although Masilela does not directly make these points, his scholarship alerts one to them. The literary, political and cultural figures that he unearths, attest to the history and politics of narrating our cultural and intellectual heritage. This narration has (with minor exceptions) in the main deliberately disregarded the role of indigenous African languages in the acquiescence of modernity in South Africa. This tendency has over time created and perpetuated a faulty notion that indigenous language writing is not only a return to tradition, but also a threat to modernity. Consequently in South Africa for instance, this false idea is likely to have been one of the reasons why during the apartheid era in particular, no substantial body of indigenous literary work emerged in translation and claimed its seat in the amphitheater of what is generally supposed to be South African literature.

For this linguistic occupation was a political act, Afrikaans literature on the other hand enjoyed the revitalizing act of translation – and the result was that Afrikaans writers whose works enjoyed this benefit, succeeded in making a literary impact that was not confined to one linguistic milieu. Equally damaging for indigenous language writers who had remained at home, was that often virtually all of them were painted with one brush and castigated for espousing ethnic politics and lacking visionary commitment. When one revisits the literary

terrain of South Africa today, it can be argued that it is a terrain that cries out for the urgency of translation. Translation in this regard can be an act of justice, reconciliation and literary repositioning.

This exercise would also require that translating African indigenous is not limited to English, but also includes rendering the works into other South African indigenous languages.

Like David Atwell 's 2005 book *Rewriting Modernity*, Masilela's archive re-opens the deliberation on the archiving and positioning of South African literature. South Africa may well be the final frontier on which to arbitrate the linguistic question in Africa. Masilela's work will hopefully create an interest among African language scholars to revisit the roles of African language writers in developing South Africa's literary aesthetics in the same way that figures like Baudelaire, Gautier and Hegel helped influence aestheticism in Western literature and philosophy. Whilst doing so we must heed Homi Bhabha's rejection of the notion that "the place of the academic critic is inevitably within the Eurocentric archives of an imperialist or neo-colonial West." As Bhabha sardonically puts it, the thought that "the Olympian realms of what is mistakenly labeled 'pure theory' are assumed to be eternally insulated from the historical exigencies and tragedies of the wretched of the earth," is misleading.

That Masilela has made judicious use of newspapers as sources of reference in the creation of his archive is apt. Even today newspapers make a compelling commentary on the validity of his project. What publishers have not begun to explore with books, is proving a resounding success in the newspaper industry. By way of example, there are three widely read Zulu newspapers; *Ilanga*, *Umafrika* and *Isolezwe* in South Africa today. The latter is the youngest of the three and in less than three years, has already reached a milestone with over 100,308 units in sales. *Ilanga* started by the ANC's John Langalibalele Dube in 1903 and is published twice a week, has a circulation of over 500 000 per edition. *Umafrika* is steadily carving a niche as a "serious" Zulu newspaper. This success clearly debunks the long-held defense that there was no market for literature and books written in Zulu. At least what is true even in a liberated South

Africa is that no serious effort has been made towards engendering a Zulu book readership culture, despite empirical support for this.

Finally, it is my belief that posterity will reward Masilela's project handsomely. As Sophia O. Ogwude contends, "...today's utopia is tomorrow's truth."

Sandile Ngidi, Johannesburg, August 2006

# CHAPTER 1

**Interview with Ntongela Masilela on the nature of the “New African Movement” website.**

by

Sandile Ngidi

Our teachers, once we reach adulthood, are those who bring us something radical and new, who know how to invent an artistic and literary technique, finding those ways of thinking that correspond to our *modernity*, that is, our difficulties as well as our vague enthusiasms.

-Gilles Deleuze, “He was my Teacher,” (1964), emphasis in the original.

*What has inspired you to compile the work and preserve it on the net?*

The dramatic political changes that happened in our country in 1994 compelled me to attempt to reconstruct South African intellectual and cultural history, a legacy that had been made invisible by politics of domination, i.e., apartheid and segregation. When I started doing archival research with the aim of constructing an intellectual structure of this cultural history, I was not aware of the extensiveness and depth of our intellectual history. For example I had known that H. I. E. Dhlomo was one of our outstanding poets. But upon undertaking an extensive research on him, I was amazed to discover the extensive catalog of his writings in *Umteteli wa Bantu* from 1922 to 1930, in *The Bantu World* from 1934 to 1940, and in *Ilanga lase Natal* from 1943 to 1954. The collecting and reading of this material radical altered my estimation of him and my understanding of our cultural history: I now consider his greatest contribution to our intellectual

history to be his inestimable endeavour as a great essayist rather than as a brilliant playwright or as an outstanding poet.

Likewise concerning S. E. K. Mqhayi, I think his lasting contribution may turn out to be his role as a cultural historian of the New African Movement, rather than as a great poet, which he was, or as a novelist and short story writer of merit. His novella, *Ityala Lamewele* (1914, *The Case of Twins*) is one of our best literary works of the past century. He wrote it with two objectives in mind, as he clearly states in a Preface to the text: one, it was to indicate that the philosophic and cultural systems predicated on traditional societies were more than capable of navigating and negotiating the new novelties of modernity; two, it was written in isiXhosa in order to promote the importance of African languages in historical representation against the newly emergent hegemonic English language. So, by 1914 Mqhayi was already aware of the dangers the English language posed to African languages, a prescient observation that was confirmed by Benedict Wallet Vilakazi in 1938 in the intellectual disagreement with H. I. E. Dhlomo, and by Ngugi wa Thiong'o in 1977 when he stated that he would no longer write novels in English but in the Kikuyu language. Ngugi's encounter with the historical meaning of Mqhayi in South Africa in 2003 on the occasion of his Steve Biko Lecture at the University of Cape Town has had profound consequences for him: directly because of this encounter, on his return to Los Angeles in November 2003, Ngugi informed me that "in good conscience Masilela, I can no longer accept at all that this literature written by Africans in the European languages in Africa is African literature." In other words, his encounter with the historical meaning of Mqhayi has radicalized him to the extent of completely rejecting the literature written in the non-African languages as African literature. This extraordinary effect has occurred exactly 90 years after Mqhayi proclaimed his two objectives.

I believe Mqhayi opened the domain of cultural history to us South Africans: he was our first major intellectual historian on the cultural plane and was followed by Clement Martyn Doke on the linguistic plane. Without Mqhayi, today we would have forgotten a very

brilliant Sotho political intellectual like Simon Majakathetha Phamotse, who was an editor of a newspaper called *Naledi ea Lesotho*, whose copies have all practically been lost. Phamotse belongs to the great generation of Sotho writers and intellectuals of the 1910s like Thomas Mofolo, Azariel M. Sekese, Zakea D. Mangoaela, Everritt Lechesa Segoete and others. Consequently it is not accidental that Mqhayi was our first compatriot to recognize the greatness of Clement Martyn Doke as a scholar and a linguist in 1932 (in the poem, "U-Professor Doke," *Umteteli wa Bantu*, March 19, 1932), that is within nine years of the intellectual debut of this former missionary, who upon his retirement at the University of Witwatersrand in 1953, returned to missionary work by translating the Bible into the Lamba language of Zambia, thereby picking up where his father Joseph J. Doke (one of South Africa's first science fiction writers and one Mohandas Gandhi's best friends) had left off upon his death in 1913.

My discovery of Mqhayi's poems, articles and essays in *Izwi Labantu* from 1899 to 1903 (all the copies of the newspaper from 1903 to its demise in 1909 are lost), in *Imvo Zabantsundu* from 1900 to the middle of the 1920s, and in *The Bantu World* from 1933 to about 1939, has made me alter my intellectual estimation of this extraordinary figure. I'm well aware that many South African scholars as well as other Africanists will disagree with my views. This disagreement is good and healthy since it opens up a forum for serious discussion of our intellectual history and cultural legacy. My consolation is that I have direct archival knowledge of both H. I. E. Dhlomo and S. E. K. Mqhayi. My ignorance of the voluminous nature and cultural depth of the writings of Dhlomo and Mqhayi inspired me on the journey of intellectual discovery, since I was aware that I was lacking in understanding the historical importance New African intellectuals. This is what has led me to this attempt to reconstruct South African intellectual history.

Consequently, the *first fundamental reason* for constructing this website of the New African Movement was to share first and foremost with my compatriots and with other people in the world our intellectual legacy from Tiyo Soga in the 1860s to Ezekiel

Mphahlele in 1960 (Mphahlele went into self-imposed exile in 1957). This intellectual and cultural legacy encompasses about 350 New African intellectuals between Soga and Mphahlele: writers, poets, painters, politicians, teachers, editors of newspapers, preachers, entertainers, musicians, etc. For each of them I have attempted and I'm still attempting to construct a portal consisting of all their writings as archival material available anywhere in the world. I was convinced that all of us South Africans were not aware of the enormity of the intellectual legacy that history has bestowed to us. I wanted to assemble this material in an easily accessible manner on the Internet. All of us South Africans, Indians, Coloureds, Europeans and Africans, contributed in the making of the New African Movement. Quite a few South Africans, of all races and creeds and religious beliefs were New African Intellectuals, but by no means all South African intellectuals were members of the movement. *In consequence, not all the figures on this website are necessarily New African intellectuals of the New African Movement. Most of them were, but not the European missionaries, for example.* Many South Africans who were not members of the intelligentsia participated in the New African Movement as New African masses by belonging to or supporting political organizations such as the African National Congress and independent religious movements like the Ethiopian Church and African Zionism. It is important here to register the fundamental contribution of such intellectuals such as Isaiah Shembe and Credo Mutwa to the New African Movement. Their intellectual prowess is not readily given the cognizance it truly deserves and legitimately possesses.

The *second fundamental reason* for the website was to construct a map of the entrance through violence of *European modernity* into South Africa (through imperialism and colonialism) and its subsequent transformation into *South African modernity* by means of political and cultural manifestation of *New African modernity*. Using the modern dialectic of Hegel, one could say *European modernity* was the *thesis*, *New African modernity* the *antithesis* and *South African modernity* the *synthesis*. In other words, the first was an object, the second was a process or instrument, and the third was a new product. 1994 could

be viewed as the “final” phase but not necessarily the last transformation of European modernity through New African modernity into South African modernity. Nelson Mandela today is one of the last representatives of the “New” African Nationalism of New African modernity. On the cultural plane, the last representatives of the New African Movement at the beginning of this new millennium includes, among others, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Archie Mafeje, Lewis Nkosi, Nadine Gordimer, Mazisi Kunene, G. R. Naidoo, Daniel Kunene, Alfred Khumalo. This nationalism was proclaimed by Anton Lembede in the 1940s within the circle of the ANC Youth League. 1994 represents the victory of the African Nationalism of Nelson Mandela over and against the African Marxism of Albert Nzula (who died in Moscow in 1933 at the age of 29) within the history of the New African Movement. As all of this implies, the making of South African modernity was made possible by the economic transformations of the country as well as by the contestations of various ideologies such Marxism, Nationalism, Liberalism, Fascism, Nazism, Ethiopianism. The website attempts to capture the contentious intersections of all these modern ideologies. In principle then, the website attempts to articulate the intellectual structure of South African modernity.

The *third fundamental reason* for this project was to indicate the importance of the role of the newspapers in the construction of South African modernity. It is not possible to exaggerate the importance of journalism in shaping the perceptions or the fundamental intellectual contours of our modernity. The role of New African newspapers in shaping the modernistic sensibilities of the New African masses between 1880s to the 1950s was truly extraordinary: be it *Imvo Zabantsundu* (editors, John Tengo Jabavu from 1884 to 1920, and S. E. K. Mqhayi from 1920 to 1922), or *Izwi Labantu* (editors, Walter Rubusana and Allan Kirkland Soga and Cyril Mhalla from 1897 to 1909), or *Ipepa Lo Hlanga* (editor, Mark S. Radebe Sr. from 1894 to 1904), or *Tsala ea Becoana* and later *Tsala ea Batho* (editor, Solomon T. Plaatje from 1910 to 1915), or *Umteteli wa Bantu* (editors, Marshall Maxeke and Abner R. Mapanya individually and at separate moments from 1920 to the 1940s), or *The Bantu World* (editors, R. V.

Selophe Thema from 1932 to 1952, and Jacob Nhlapo from 1952 to 1953), or *Ilanga lase Natal* (editors, John Langalibalele Dube from 1903 to 1917, Ngazana Luthuli from 1917 to 1943, and R. R. R. Dhlomo from 1943 to 1963) and *Inkundla ya Bantu* (editors, P. C. Katamzi and Govan Mbeki from 1938 to 1944, and Jordan Ngubane from 1944 to 1951)---all these newspapers as well as others unmentioned created a unique modern culture. Each of these newspapers fully participated in the making of this intellectual festival of ideas which lasted nearly a century. In all essentials, without these remarkable newspapers and the brilliant journalism that was so characteristic of them, we would not have the intellectual shape of the New African Movement as we know it today. Most of the books that have been published so far on the history of South African newspapers and journalism in the twentieth century have not dealt at all, let alone seriously, with the contribution of these newspapers in the formation of our modern sensibilities in the first half of the twentieth century. The book that comes closest to this noble task is *South Africa's Resistance Press* (2000). It would take several volumes to show the prodigious nature of the contribution of these newspapers.

The stellar nature of this achievement can be seen in the journalism of R. V. Selophe Thema and Henry Selby Msimang in *Umteteli wa Bantu* in the 1920s, in the editorials of Selophe Thema in the *Bantu World* in the 1930s and those of Jordan Ngubane and his columns in *Inkundka ya Bantu* in the 1940s. I'm painfully conscious that I'm leaving out of this estimation the superb journalism of H. I. E. Dhlomo and Solomon T. Plaatje. This tradition is so full of embarrassment of riches that one can afford at this high plain of estimation to leave these two great intellectuals out of consideration on these matters. I have no reason for not believing that the prose of Ngubane and Selophe Thema, at their very best moments, which was many times indeed, was intellectually equal to the prose of Thomas Mofolo's in *Chaka* (1925) or the poetics of Benedict Wallet Vilakazi's *Amal' eZulu* (1945, Zulu Horizons) or the lyricism of H. I. E. Dhlomo's prose poems of the 1940s. Given the profound effect of R. V. Selophe Thema's journalism on the then young New African intellectuals who apprenticed with him such as Peter Segale, H. I. E. Dhlomo, Guybon Bundlwana Sinxo,

R. R. R. Dhlomo, Henry Nxumalo, Jordan Ngubane, Peter Abrahams, Todd Matshikiza in the 1930s and in the 1940s, it is not surprising that Jordan Ngubane referred to him in later years “as the greatest son produced by South Africa” since the advent of modernity. He believed that all South African journalists should school themselves in the journalism of Selope Thema. Selope Thema does cast a shadow on South African journalism in the second half of the twentieth century. Given these remarkable achievements, the website attempts to indicate three things: that in the modern era journalism was transformed into a high art form by some New African intellectuals; that New African newspapers mapped out the terrain and splay of South African modernity; and that the New African intellectuals who were editors of these newspapers changed forever the historical consciousness of “Old Africans” into “New Africans”. On all these issues R. V. Selope Thema was very exemplary, despite his contemptible reactionary politics.

The *fourth fundamental reason* for this endeavor was to attempt to understand why *New African literature in the English language* seems to have been preferred over the *New African literature in the African languages* when in fact the latter seems to have been much stronger intellectually and artistically than the former in the modern era. The enigma of this conundrum resides in the valorization of the Sophiatown Renaissance of the 1950s in relation to the other historical periods and cultural movements preceding it in the history of the New African Movement. It may be that the lasting achievement of the 1950s may not be in literary and journalistic matters, as wisdom of today supposes, but rather in its photography and in its music. The enticing and exhilarating nature of the decade of the 1950s may reside in the fact that it was the culminating era in the cultural expression of modernity in South Africa. The artistic noise of this decade has not subsided a full half a century after it was first produced. The explanation for this overestimation may perhaps reside in that the Sophiatown Renaissance (*Drum* writers were a variant of this larger phenomenon) was terminated by political repression which tragically expressed itself in the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960 rather than the cultural movement terminating itself

through cultural and intellectual self exhaustion. That many of these intellectuals, artists and political leaders of the 1950s were forced into exile may perhaps also add luster to this glamorization.

This question of the artistic and intellectual value and merit of the Sophiatown Renaissance in relation to the achievements of earlier decades led me as evident in the structure and form of the website to demarcate and periodize the history of the New African Movement into the following preliminary constellations in order to estimate the true nature of achievement of each particular historical period: the Xhosa Intellectuals of the 1880s, the Golden Age of Sotho Literature circa 1910s, the Gandhi School, the Zulu Intellectuals of the 1940s, the African Political Organization Intellectuals (i.e., Coloureds), the Petersburg Art Movement, the Voorslag Group, the European Friends of the Natives, New African scholars, the Thaban Nchu-Kimberley Circle, and the Native Marxism and Labour Movement. Many New African intellectuals belonged to more than one of these intellectual groups or cultural movements, some successively and others simultaneously. For instance, H. I. E. Dhlomo belonged to the *Umteteli wa Bantu* group, Zulu Cultural Society, and to Zulu Intellectuals of the 1940s. Dhlomo was unique in belonging to many other formidable intellectual groups, for example, the Johannesburg Dramatic Society. Given the example of Dhlomo, the website attempts a full periodization of the whole historical era in order to have a full splay of the richness of our intellectual and cultural history.

These are some of the reasons that inspired me to attempt to preserve a *portion* of our intellectual and cultural history through the system of the new technologies.

*What is the value of ICT's in general and the web in particular in celebrating our intellectual tradition?*

I believe that the invention of the World Wide Web (WWW) and the extension of the e-mail system from the American military networks to the public domain in the early 1990s was one of the extraordinary

happenings within my lifetime. The other life-changing event was of course the date of 1994 so meaningful to all of us South Africans. Since I believed that the invention of the Internet was such a breakthrough demarcating modernism and postmodernism, I wanted to participate fully in this revolution rather than pay lip service to it. The construction of the website is an attempt to participate in the Internet revolution. I created the website not only to give a different form of futurity to our intellectual and cultural history but also to make our tradition available to the rest of the world. I was principally preoccupied with the construction of the website from 1995 to 2002. Presently I'm mostly engaged with publishing a series of books based on the archival material in the website. For instance, I have just completed typing over the past fifteen months a 1500-page anthology of New African creative and critical writings from F. Z. S. Peregrino in 1903 to Phyllis Ntantala in 1993. It is called *The New African Movement: A South African Reader in Modernity and Modernism*. It covers our intellectual and cultural history from 1900 to 1940, and will consist of three volumes. The collection consists of writings in isiXhosa, isiZulu, in Sesotho and English languages. The anthology is scheduled to be published by the Africa World Press in 2006, the centennial anniversary of the birth of A. C. Jordan and Benedict Wallet Vilakazi and the publication of Walter Benson Rubusana's *Zemk' inkomo Magwalandini* (Preserve Your Culture, Lovedale Press, 1906). I hope to follow this with similar anthologies about the Sophiatown Renaissance of the 1950s, the Xhosa Intellectuals of the 1880s, and the Zulu Intellectuals of the 1940s. I expect to publish many books from the archives in the website. I do not believe that the Internet will ever replace the necessity of books.

Having said this, I want to emphasize that my singular intent with the website was to restore our political and cultural traditions in a form that would be user-friendly to students and scholars all over the world. I hope the website will resonate with the intellectual curiosity of the students whatever their level of maturity. I hope they will find something that is compatible with their intellectual interests whether be it in the realm of Music or Art or Religion or Politics or Literature or Philosophy. The website encompasses all of these domains of

knowledge because it truly reflects the extraordinary nature of South African achievements as the country was slowly shifting from being predominantly a traditional society (somewhat feudal) to being progressively a modern one (capitalist society). *The website is about the making of South African modernity* . Since South African modernity has been forged through multilingualism and thrives in this context, it is not surprising that the archives of the website consist of materials in many of the South African major languages: in isiZulu, in isiXhosa, in Sesotho and in English languages.

Although the website was aimed at students, it was constructed in such a manner that it would also serve the intellectual and emotional needs of scholars as well as of the general public. This broad appeal to the complex spectrum of the public has influenced the structure of the website itself. The entry level are the photographs of the nearly 350 New African intellectuals who are on the website, having their individual portals. Each photograph is accompanied by the name of the person and the datum concerning her or his birth and death, when these are known. The photographs can be used by a Primary School teacher to instruct students about the figures of our intellectual tradition, especially if the students are not as yet able to read by themselves. The teacher can also utilize the quotations which are excerpted from the writings of these members of the intelligentsia. The quotations should be viewed as the second entrance level to the portals. They can be read by Primary School children who have already acquired reading proficiency. The third entrance level is the short intellectual biographies that vary from a single page to about six pages. I think these biographies will prove useful not only to High School and College students, but also to the general public and scholars. The monographs, the fourth entry level, on each of these figures, most of which are *still* to be written, will hopefully be intellectually fascinating to those who are interested in having an analytically informed overview of these intellectuals. Perhaps this entry level will prove useful to College students. The fifth entry level consists of the archives of the writings of these intellectuals. This is the most important domain since it situates the visitors to the website or portals within the historical materials which

went into making intelligible the construction of South African modernity.

The website is constructed in such a manner as to open a collective discourse as to the nature of the enormity of South African intellectual and cultural history. Since the website can never be completed, it is for visitors to carry on its further construction in their own particular ways.

The website has been patiently constructed in such a way that no South African can claim with good conscience that he or she is not knowledgeable about our intellectual and cultural traditions because they are not easily available in an accessible manner.

Johannesburg, South Africa-----Claremont [Los Angeles], California,  
July 3-4, 2004.

# CHAPTER 2

## An Interview with Ntongela Masilela Regarding the “H. I. E. Dhlomo Center for African Intellectual History”.

by

Dr. Mbukeni Herbert Mnguni

*When was the “H. I. E. Dhlomo Center for African Intellectual History” started?*

The H. I. E. Dhlomo for African Intellectual History was established in 1999. I think the origins of the Dhlomo Center which is located here at Pitzer College in Los Angeles lie in the 1980s in West Berlin when I was closely associated with Mbukeni Herbert Mnguni and Vusi Mchunu who were the conjoint editors of *Azwa-Finnaba* a quarterly cultural magazine which was later transformed into *Inkululeko* a cultural magazine as the liberation of South Africa from apartheid illegitimate forces was becoming more and more of a reality? I contributed several essays and articles to these magazines, in particular an essay on the intellectual history of Pan-Africanism and another on the photography of Peter Magubane. My understanding of the objective of the editors of both magazines was to mobilize South African exiles with the aim of using intellectual culture and political culture in the struggle against apartheid. It was in the context of my intellectual work in support of this goal that I came across the name of H. I. E. Dhlomo. Although I knew that Dhlomo was the author of the *Valley of a Thousand Hills*, I had a superficial knowledge of his historical importance until I arrived in Europe from United States. My rediscovery of him in Europe was in a context of a practical matter. I was a member of the editorial board of the German dance magazine called *Tanz-Aktuell* based in West Berlin. Strangely enough I was responsible for matters concerning ballet history. I wrote several articles on ballet history as well as a review of

several books on dance history as well as the obituary on the occasion of the death of Alvin Ailey. But I found this unacceptable that I was writing about ballet history in West Berlin when South Africa was undergoing dramatic changes. Of-course these writings on ballet history constituted a small part of my writings on South African intellectual and cultural history. Nevertheless, my writing on European dance history rather than on African dance history became intellectually and politically unacceptable to me. At this moment of my crisis I read somewhere that Dhlomo had written on African traditional dance. This was very exciting because I expected that Dhlomo would lead me away from European dance history to African dance history. Before I could do more research about the dance writings of Dhlomo I left West Berlin for Los Angeles.

*What are the objectives of the Dhlomo Center?*

On obtaining a teaching position at Pitzer College in 1989 in Los Angeles I continued my investigations on the dance writings of H. I. E. Dhlomo. In the process of locating his writings on African traditional dance in the archives, I discovered to my utter astonishment that Dhlomo had voluminously written in three newspapers over a thirty-year period: in *Umteteli wa Bantu*, *The Bantu World* and *Ilanga lase Natal*. The originality of these writings dissipated my interest in African dance history and instilled in me a tremendous curiosity about African intellectual history. As I discovered hundreds and hundreds of pages of Dhlomo's writings in these three newspapers, I discovered that Dhlomo was in discourse or correspondence with other African intellectuals in South Africa in the early part of the twentieth century about whom I knew nothing such as Benedict Wallet Vilakazi, R. V. Selope Thema, Pixley ka Isaka Seme, Solomon T. Plaatje, S. E. K. Mqhayi, Clement Martyn Doke, Harold Cressy and hundreds of others. These Africans called themselves "New Africans" modeling themselves on the "New Negroes" of the Harlem Renaissance. *I discovered that these other New African intellectuals had also written extensively in these three newspapers as well as in a hundred others.* This discovery inspired me to set up a "H. I. E. Dhlomo Center for African Intellectual History" with the

aim of collecting all the the articles by these hundreds of New African intellectuals in these newspapers from 1860s to the 1960s for an archive and database. The objectives of the Dhlomo Center are simple but arduous in realizing: one, establishing an extensive archive consisting of the writings of these New African intellectuals; second, reconstructing South African intellectual history on the basis on this archival material. I called the historical, political and cultural project of these New African intellectuals the “New African Movement.” I also discovered that the New African Movement was about the construction of modernity in South Africa. The crucial thing to note is that the New African Movement sought to transform *European modernity* in South Africa imposed by means of imperialism and colonialism into *New African modernity* representing the democratic interests of the majority of South Africans. Simultaneously the New African Movement struggled to transform *New African modernity* into *South African modernity* that would be more inclusive. This mainly concerns the past. The New African Movement has relevance in the present in the sense that when the former President Nelson Mandela and and the present president Thabo Mbeki called for the creation and making of the “African Renaissance”, I understood that this possible rebirth or renewal was only possible on the basis of the cultural and intellectual tradition of the New African Movement. So, in a real sense, the founding of the “H. I. E. Dhlomo Center for African Intellectual History” sought to interlink the *idea* of the African Renaissance with the *history* of the New African Movement.

*What kind of work has been done since the Center was initiated?*

On the basis of the archival materials assembled at the “H. I. E. Dhlomo Center for African Intellectual History”, I was able to create over a seven-year period a website called the “New African Movement” here at Pitzer College in Claremont [Los Angeles]. I only put the website on the Internet last year on the exact date of August 11 (Wednesday), 2004 at 9:26 am. The website can be found at this URL address: [www.pitzer.edu/New\\_African\\_Movement](http://www.pitzer.edu/New_African_Movement). So the first initiative of the Dhlomo Center was the construction of the website and its launching. The website, which is about the construction of

South African modernity across the twentieth century, aims to be an archive of the writings of about 350 New African intellectuals. The Dhlomo Center also aims to publish monographs of prominent New African intellectuals such R. V. Selope Thema, Clement Martyn Doke, Jordan Ngubane. The first monograph I have written is to be published in a few months (2005). I'm presently reading and correcting the galleys of *The Cultural Modernity of H. I. E. Dhlomo*. At the same time the Dhlomo Center is putting together anthologies, each of which will contain the writings of a particular New African intellectuals. The first one I have just completed assembling is called *The Literary and Cultural Writings of H. I. E. Dhlomo*. Hopefully it will be published in 2006 or 2007. The Center hopes to compile and publish also the writings of other outstanding New African intellectuals. At the third level, concerning publications, The Dhlomo Center aims to publish anthologies that will assist in *periodizing* South African intellectual history. Some of the anthologies being prepared are the following: *The New African Movement: A South African Reader in Modernity and Modernism*; *Zulu Intellectuals of the 1940s*; *Xhosa Intellectuals of the 1880s*; *New African Epics*; and *Sophiatown Renaissance: A Reader*. *The New African Movement* anthology is about 1500 pages and will be published in three volumes. It has been a great pleasure typing it on my computer with my finger over the last year. This anthology is a compilation of the writings of many of these New African intellectuals. The writings in this anthology will be published in English, Sesotho, isiXhosa, isiZulu, as they had originally appeared. Typing this anthology has afforded me a great lesson in South African intellectual and cultural history.

*How many members does the Dhlomo Center have and from where does it receive support?*

Unfortunately the H. I. E. Dhlomo Center for African Intellectual History has only one member: myself. This has made for difficult work. I'm still looking for members for the Center. On the other hand, several my of intellectual elders who are my mentors have given me their blessings and moral support: Ezekiel Mphahlele in Polokwane, Mazisi Kunene in Durban, Bernard Makhosozwe

Magubane in Johannesburg, Manuel Olivella Zapata in Bogota, Daniel Kunene in Wisconsin, Abdias do Nascimento in Rio de Janeiro, Lewis Nkosi in Basel, and Peter Abrahams in Kingston.

*How is the Dhlomo Center financially sustained?*

Up to the present the H. I. E. Dhlomo Center has been financed from two sources only: my younger brother who is a medical doctor in North Carolina, Dr. Aubrey Masilela, has given me approximately \$25,000 over the last six years in support; my institution, Pitzer College, has given me in the form of fellowships and grants about \$40,000 over the last fifteen years. I'm profoundly grateful to both of these sources for their undying support. Although I have applied to several Foundations for support over the last three years, I have not as yet received any.

Berlin, Germany-----Claremont [Los Angeles], California, July 11, 2005.

# CHAPTER 3

## Considerations On Certain Aspects of the New African Movement: An Interview with Ntongela Masilela

by

Sandile Ngidi

*What are some of the philosophical, political, intellectual and cultural imperatives that should underpin the celebration of Benedict W. Vilakazi and the Bambatha Rebellion of 1906 in 2006? Why do the legacies of these two icons matter to a liberated South Africa?*

The historical portrait of Benedict Wallet Vilakazi that has been rendered for posterity by his New African contemporaries such as H. I. E. Dhlomo, Walter M. B. Nhlapo, Clement Martyn Doke, E. H. A. Made, Jordan Ngubane is that of a man who in his intellectual practice and commitment was characterized by a *high moral seriousness*. This is the intellectual appraisal that informs several poems written *before* his early tragic death at the age of 41 years in 1947 by his fellow poets, be it H. I. E. Dhlomo or Walter M. B. Nhlapo. This characterization became even more prominent in the remarkable threnodies written after his death by again H. I. E. Dhlomo and E. H. A. Made. This moral seriousness came from his deep Catholicism which also accounts for his conservatism. It is easily forgotten today that Vilakazi was very conservative to the point of being completely apolitical. One could say he had a reactionary political cast. Strangely, Vilakazi's Catholicism was intellectual rather than religious, because it came from two brilliant Zulu intellectuals of the 1920s who were Catholics: A. H. M. Ngidi and Josiah Mapumulo. In the an essay of 1933 in which he reflects on his own intellectual formation, Vilakazi recollects that reading the articles and essays by these two intellectuals in the pages of *Ilanga lase Natal* newspaper was what led him into his intellectual vocation. Here in parenthesis one needs to mention that it is nearly impossible

to overpraise John Langalibalele Dube for having founded Ohlange Institute in 1901 and for having launched *Ilanga lase Natal* in 1903, since with these prescient revolutionary gestures, even though he was politically reactionary and conservative, Dube not only made modern Zulu intellectual culture possible in the first half of the twentieth century, but also made possible the transition from tradition to modernity realizable by making “New Africans” model themselves on “New Negroes”, especially on Booker T. Washington. Since both Ngidi and Mapumulo were products of the British imperial culture in the late nineteenth century when classical studies (Greek and Latin) were being replaced by English Studies (English grammar and modern English literature), Vilakazi learned from these Zulu intellectuals two things: a historical consciousness of the *importance languages as modes of historical representation* and a *classical posture* in matters of culture.

Vilakazi viewed *language* and *classicism* as intellectual and cultural weapons for shaping and constructing a *modern culture* in South Africa. Although he seemed to have been a gentle person and was liked by many, if not by most of his contemporaries, he was very combative regarding intellectual matters. H. I. E. Dhlomo seems to have had high anxiety about Vilakazi’s intellectual combativeness given the famous intellectual duel between them of 1938-9. The undercurrents of this fight between them were already there in the early 1930s, as I will try to show elsewhere. Basically the contention between them was Dhlomo’s persistence in writing his creative work (plays, poems, short stories, prose poems) in the *English language* rather than in *isiZulu* as Vilakazi believed should be the case in the instance of Zulu intellectuals, writers, and artists. This is the principle that Vilakazi believed in and adhered to for the rest of his life: *that New Africans should write imaginative literature in the African languages and not in the European languages*. The supreme exemplary figure for Vilakazi regarding this was S. E. K. Mqhayi. But Mqhayi went much, much further than Vilakazi was willing to go in that Vilakazi made allowance that critical works and essays could be written in the English language, whereas Mqhayi opposed this. *In the present circumstances, Mqhayi would have opposed both Mazisi Kunene and Ngugi*

*wa Thiong'o who write their creative works in the African languages yet continue to write their critical work in the English language, a language of occupation which is hegemonic.* Consequently, Vilakazi wrote his remarkable dissertation and essays in the English language. But Mqhayi wrote his *creative work* (novellas, poetry) and *critical work* (biographies, essays, reportage, etc) in isiXhosa. *No one has been able to match Mqhayi in his complete commitment to the African languages.* The explanation for this may be that Mqhayi was historically an intellectual bridgehead between tradition and modernity, and very much struggling with the entanglements of tradition, whereas practically all the New African intellectuals of his historical moment felt themselves situated in modernity and gazing back on tradition with different levels of intensity. Mqhayi was unique in taking the *translation* process seriously: translating from the English language into isiXhosa, as Tiyo Soga had done in the nineteenth century by translating John Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress* into isiXhosa. I cannot recall Vilakazi doing any translation work which was actually published. There were New Africans who aspired like Mqhayi to write their critical work in the African languages: the essays of Emman Made, of J. J. R. Jolobe, and of S. M. Mofokeng, written respectively in isiZulu, in isiXhosa, and in Sesotho published in their respective anthologies of essays. Some of the newspaper columns of R. V. Selope Thema and Jordan Ngubane, written respectively in Sesotho sa Leboa (formerly known as Pedi) and in isiZulu. But to bring to a conclusion this reflection on the 1938-9 dueling between Vilakazi and Dhlomo, it needs to be said that although Dhlomo did not disagree ideologically with Vilakazi concerning the primacy that should be given to the African languages over the English language, he argued that the imperatives of capitalist publishing dictated that he should write in the English language in order for him to reach a wider reading public. Vilakazi never accepted the logic of this argument because for him writing in the African languages was a fundamental issue of *national and cultural identity*. Dhlomo was bothered and haunted by his own response if one reads between the lines his many intellectual sketches of his dead great friend, especially the one he wrote for the newly launched *Drum* magazine in the early 1950s. Dhlomo is an enigma in many ways because he

wrote several pieces extolling the intellectual and cultural virtues of the Zulu language yet practically never wrote anything in this language, except for three or four small articles that appeared in the 1930s in *The Bantu World* newspaper.

*The question of classicism was very important for Vilakazi because like other New African intellectuals of the Zulu Intellectuals of the 1940s the real historical challenge in modernity was how to replicate the exemplariness of Shaka's greatness in militarism by realizing it in the field of intellectual culture.* It is not surprising that Zulu intellectuals such as Mazisi Kunene, R. R. R. Dhlomo, Jordan Ngubane, H. I. E. Dhlomo, Benedict Vilakazi, John Langalibalele Dube wrote either essays or novellas or poems or epics *in search* of the historical meaning and significance of Shaka in South African history. I do view the Zulu Cultural Society, especially at the moment of the Zulu Intellectuals of the 1940s, as an intellectual laboratory of this search. All the aforementioned intellectuals were members of it. Let me add in parenthesis that the Zulu Cultural Society stood in relation to Zulu intellectuals in the same relation as the Lovedale Literary Society did to the Xhosa Intellectuals of the 1880s in the nineteenth century: intellectual forums in which European modernity was transformed into New African modernity.

The search for the meaning of Shaka was not uniform throughout this period: for example H. I. E. Dhlomo wrote a negative appraisal of the great ruler in *Umteteli wa Bantu* in 1930s which is in total contrast to the positive evaluation he wrote in the 1950s in *Ilanga lase Natal*. Vilakazi wrote a somewhat ambivalent take on the great chief in *Ilanga lase Natal* in the 1940s. Perhaps the historical figure of Shaka brought to Vilakazi a conflict in his spiritual self between his *Catholicism* and his *cultural nationalism*. I think the real purpose of the essay on Shaka by Vilakazi was to meditate on the dialectic between tradition and modernity, as is true of the short obituary notice he wrote in *Ilanga lase Natal* on the death of Isaiah Shembe in 1936. I think what really fascinated Vilakazi about the Shakan period was the great imbongi [griot, praise poet], Magolwane, of the Royal Court who performed dramatic *izibongo* (poems) in the classical vein. *It is*

*classicism of Magolwane that Benedict Vilakazi sought to bring from tradition into modernity.* Whether this transposition is doable from one historical period to another is open to intellectual debate. Regarding the appropriation of this classicism from this great Shakan Royal Court poet, Mazisi Kunene followed on the footsteps of Benedict Vilakazi. This is the reason that Kunene could not escape the shadow of Vilakazi, which shifted in the 1950s from being overcritical of his master to absolute adulation from the 1970s onwards.

Another point that needs to be mentioned as we are approaching the centennial year of the birth of this great intellectual next year in 2006, is that Vilakazi was the first *literary historian* and *literary critic* of *African literature in the African languages in South Africa*. Clement Martyn Doke was a great linguist of the African languages rather than a historian of these literatures. In this domain, Vilakazi was a predecessor of A. C. Jordan and Mazisi Kunene, both formidable intellectuals in their own right. In many ways the path breaking opening made possible by Vilakazi's doctoral dissertation *The Oral and Written Literature in Nguni* (1946) opened a discourse which was joined by Mazisi Kunene's thesis *An Analytical Survey of Zulu Poetry: Both Traditional and Modern* (1959) and A. C. Jordan's *Towards an African Literature* (1973, originally appeared as a series of essays in *Africa South* journal in the 1950s). Although the missionaries brought to us the written word and the culture of modernity, for which practically all the New African intellectuals were grateful, and although they opened traditional African cultural and intellectuals systems to modern knowledge, they were not in a real position to systematize the intellectual products of this encounter. *As far as I'm aware Vilakazi was the first person to systematize, periodize and create a diachronic conceptual structure of the literary history of African literature in the African languages.* In effect Vilakazi was attempting to de-center the hegemonic position occupied by African literature in the English language. In other words, he wanted the tradition of African literature in the African languages, which for all intents and purposes began with Mqhayi and in which he placed himself, to be positioned into its proper central place in the literary system of South Africa. In the domain of poetry, African literature in the African languages,

beginning with Mqhayi and Nontsizi Mqgwetho through J. J. R. Jolobe and Vilakazi himself to Mazisi Kunene and David Livingstone Phakamile Yali-Manisi, that is across the twentieth century, is intellectually and imaginatively stronger than that written in the English language. Regarding prose, which is closer to philosophy and is constituted by the genre of the novel, English language literature has been more dominant, though not hegemonic. Vilakazi's project of constructing a literary history was both ideological and evidently intellectual.

Benedict Wallet Vilakazi needs to be regarded also as a brilliant *scholar*. The scholarly collaboration between Vilakazi and Clement Martyn Doke was one of the best that ever happened in South African intellectual history. The immediate product of this collaboration was the great *Zulu-English Dictionary*. Unfortunately, this great intellectual collaboration was cut short by the tragic and sudden death of Vilakazi in 1947. One can only dream as to what other intellectual marvels could have come from this collaboration. This gives one an opportunity to make an important observation, which is that the brilliance of Vilakazi would not have been realizable as it was and in the form it was without the support of, and collaboration with, Clement Martyn Doke. I think the greatest tribute given to Doke by anyone of his New African stature was by Mqhayi in poem of 1932 in which he celebrated his linguistic genius and his extraordinary contribution to African cultures. Doke was also engaged with intellectual and religious matters also in both present day Zimbabwe and Zambia. In this sense, Mqhayi was prescient in his intellectual appraisal of Clement Martyn Doke.

Lastly, Vilakazi was an *enabler* of the greatness of Mazisi Kunene. I limit myself here to quoting the whole poem by the younger poet in *The Ancestors & the Sacred Mountain* (1982) about his great predecessor:

### **A Meeting with Vilakazi, the Great Zulu Poet**

Sleep tried to split us apart

But the great dream created a new sun.  
Through its towering rays two worlds emerged  
And our twin planets opened to each other.  
I saw you descending from a dazzling hill,  
Your presence filled the whole world.  
I heard the drums beat behind your footsteps  
And the children of the south began to sing.  
They walked on the ancient path of the goddess Nomkhubulwane  
And the old dancing arena was filled with festival crowds.  
Your great songs echoed to the accompaniment of the festival horn.  
It was the beginning of our ancient new year  
Before the foreigners came, before they planted their own emblems.  
I came to the arena and you held my hand.  
Together we danced the boast-dance of our forefathers  
We sang the great anthems of the uLundi mountains.

I think that for Mazisi Kunene, and as he imputes of Vilakazi, the “planted foreign emblems” were among other things the English-language literatures in South Africa. As is well known, Kunene regards Afrikaans literature, whether by Coloureds or whites, and English-language literature, whether by Africans, Indians, or Coloureds, as *literatures of occupation*. Interestingly, I do not believe that the Vilakazi would have agreed with his protégé about regarding his Catholicism as an ideology and a religion of occupation. I should state that Mazisi use to berate me repeatedly in the late 1970s and in the late 1990s, in a brotherly way, that my Marxism was an ideology of occupation in certain parts of Africa from Ethiopia to Angola. When he sings of Vilakazi that “you held my hand” and “we danced the boast-dance of our forefathers,” I take it to mean that Vilakazi was exemplary to Mazisi about enhancing and making hegemonic African literature in the African languages. Although it is an open question whether African literature in the African languages will eventually predominate over English language literature in South Africa, there is no doubt in my mind that in a monumental quest for this realization, Mazisi Kunene willed himself to being the greatest African poet in the twentieth century, which is something that Vilakazi could not have anticipated.

Now as to the connection between Benedict Wallet Vilakazi and Chief Bambatha who led the Rebellion 1906, which now is historically known as the Bambatha Rebellion, I first came across this interlinking in the mid 1990s when I read H. I. E. Dhlomo's magnificent threnody "Ichabod: Benedict Wallet Bambatha Vilakazi", which originally appeared immediately after the death Vilakazi in *Ilanga lase Natal* (November 8, 1947). It was clear to me that since Vilakazi was born in the same year as the Bambatha Rebellion of 1906, his full name was in homage to the great warrior chief. As far as I'm aware H. I. E. Dhlomo never wrote Vilakazi's full name in the many portraits of him other than in this threnody written after his death. As far as I'm aware Vilakazi never in his magnificent intellectual career wrote anything about this chief whose name he bears. I would have expected him to have done so in at least one of his numerous poems. But it remains to us who will be celebrating next year 2006 as the centennial year of the birth of the "Great Zulu Poet" as well of the Bambatha Rebellion, to establish concrete historical, cultural and intellectual connections between the two.

I think it is advisable to begin by quoting an extraordinary stanza brimming with allusions in H. I. E. Dhlomo's remarkable threnody:

The Beauty that he loved and sang is one  
 With him. He is beyond the stars and sun.  
 Mamina, his imagined Love, doth kiss  
 Him with immortal kisses, not of bliss!  
 Like Beatrice guide she stands to him who made  
 Love hermit pure while others love degrade;  
 Goddess of Love Nomkumbulwana, shakes  
 His hand, while heaven with music wondrous quakes!  
 Black bards and heroes greet their friend and peer;  
 Great Shaka, Magolwana there appear,  
 Mbuyazi, Aggrey, Dube, Mqhayi, ache  
 To meet him---so Bambatha, his namesake;  
 Not these alone, for here below he loved  
 And spoke with long haired bards, among them moved;

Now Keats, his idol, whom he prayed to meet,  
Chaste Shelley, too, come forth our Bard to greet,  
And Catholic great Dante, Comedy  
Divine enjoying, smiles to meet and see  
A Catholic bard mate.

The “beauty” alluded to was the “Beauty and Truth” aesthetic principle of the English Romantics promulgated by John Keats in one of his great letters. In the same way that the English Romantics were enthralled with Nature as a spiritual and a philosophical process which would enable them to hold Industrialism at bay, so too the poets in the Zulu Intellectuals of the 1940s group, be it Vilakazi or Dhlomo or Made, appealed to Nature as a mediating process between tradition and modernity. Although all the aforementioned Zulu poets were for modernity, they all wanted its temporality decelerated in order to give tradition a momentary space for reflection on the new culture. Mazisi Kunene in his 1959 thesis, written when he was twenty-eight years old, articulated a bitter contempt for the Zulu poets’ weakness for the English Romantics. Written in a state of bitter anger at what he perceived as his compatriots’ unacceptable adulation of the aesthetics that reinforced the cultural and philosophical “occupation” of the country, it is remarkable to observe the force with which he makes judgments about excellence and mediocrity in the history of Zulu poetry. In the section where he analyzes the poetry of Vilakazi, Mazisi Kunene demotes any poems which he suspects the influence of the Romantic sensibility has predominated in their construction. There is a palpable moral outrage in Kunene when he perceives the extensive influence of Shelley on Vilakazi, to the point of believing that the English poet had seriously damaged the Zulu poet. He salvaged only two poems in the whole oeuvre of Vilakazi as truly great because they were free of the Romantic influence.

Rightfully so, Dhlomo emphasizes Vilakazi’s Catholicism, which affected his philosophical outlook, artistic sensibility and his famous apolitical indifference. In other stanzas not quoted, Dhlomo examines Vilakazi’s Catholicism in relation to “Death,” “Fate,”

“Mother Nature,” and “Eternity.” In this stanza, he playfully compares Dante’s Beatrice to Vilakazi’s Mamina. Then Dhlomo postulates that with his death, Vilakazi has spiritually migrated to join Bambatha in the realm of Zulu ancestors rather than joining Dante in the circle of Catholic immortals: here Dhlomo is postulating that the *social being* of Vilakazi’s Zulu existence is more determinant than the *moral sensibility* of his Catholicism: in other words, Bambatha or Dante? With this postulate of placing Vilakazi on the *historical side* of Bambatha rather than the *spiritual side* of Dante, Dhlomo then proceeds to situate him in *Zulu national history* and in *New African intellectual history*. As already mentioned above, Vilakazi seems to have wanted to emulate the *heroics* of Shaka, shifting them from *militarism* into *poetics*. Regarding Magolwana, as already mentioned too: he was important in relation to poetic classicism. Dhlomo alluding to them in this threnody confirms with his authoritative opinion what we already observed. Aggrey, a Ghanian, whose full name was James Emman Kwegyir Aggrey, sought to bring to South Africa in 1921 the conservative modernity of Booker T. Washington, a yearning that had already been aspired towards by John Tengo Jabavu in 1885 in one of his editorials in *Imvo Zabantsundu*. John Langalibalele Dube and S. E. K. Mqhayi have already been mentioned, especially the latter, and Dhlomo authorizes the above observations with his intellectual power.

One of the strands in this remarkable threnody is an issue that has confronted Zulu intellectuals throughout the twentieth century: *is Zulu nationalism as legitimate as African nationalism, or is it a contradiction of the latter?* Many, if not most, of the Zulu members of the New African Movement were on the side of African nationalism against Zulu nationalism: this is true of Pixley ka Isaka Seme as it was of Benedict Wallet Bambatha Vilakazi. Albert Nzula stood for Marxism. Only John Langalibalele Dube and A. W. G. Champion, among the important Zulu intellectuals and political leaders, now and then when they lost political battles at the national center retreated to the region of Natal in anger to flirt with Zulu nationalism against African nationalism. They never crossed the line despite their political anger.

Exile in many ways was a terrible experience, consequently it led a *major intellectual* like Jordan Ngubane to abandon African nationalism in the latter part of his life for Zulu nationalism. In exile too, Mazisi Kunene in the "Introduction" to *Emperor Shaka The Great* flirted with Zulu nationalism while the epic itself was solidly a discourse on African nationalism. This occasioned outbursts of terrible violent arguments between him and me in Los Angeles in the late 1970s and in the early 1990s. I remember one day Lewis Nkosi mentioning to me in January 1989 in Warsaw, Poland, that the thing he feared most about his cousin, the great poet, is that he could unintentionally lead Zulu intellectuals into Zulu nationalism with disastrous consequences.

In conclusion therefore, for us in a liberated South Africa in 2005 in preparation for the centennial year of 2006, we should celebrate Chief Bamba and Benedict Wallet Bamba Vilakazi as two great icons who stood for African nationalism against Zulu nationalism. This was a great historic achievement. The recent defeat of Afrikaner nationalism has lessons for all of us. The one absolute danger of African literature in the African languages is that it could spontaneously give rise to *ethnic nationalism* against *African nationalism*. Despite this danger, it is imperative that African literature in the African languages be at the center of South African intellectual and cultural experience, and not English language literature. In her most recent critical work, *Living in Hope and History* (1999), Nadine Gordimer has had the most interesting things to say about this fundamental historical matter: "If we are to create a twenty-first century African literature, how is this to be done while publishing in African languages remains mainly confined to works prescribed for study, market-stall booklets, religious tracts? We have long accepted that Africa cannot, and so far as her people are concerned, has no desire to, create a 'pure' culture in linguistic terms; this is an anachronism when for purposes of material development the continent eagerly seeks means of technological development from all over the world . . . *But we writers cannot speak of taking up the challenge of a new century for African literature unless writing in African*

*languages becomes the major component of the continent's literature. Without this, one cannot speak of an African literature. It must be the basis of the cultural cross-currents that will both buffet and stimulate that literature"* (p. 33-34, my emphasis). This was the position of Benedict Wallet Bambatha Vilakazi in his intellectual quarrel with H. I. E. Dhlomo of 1938-9, which in fact began in the early 1930s. A full sixty years later it is a position endorsed by our greatest living novelist, *who could only write in the English language no less!*

Indeed, it needs to be emphasized that an African Renaissance in the whole of Africa, let alone in South Africa, will not be realizable until the African literature in the African languages displaces the hegemonic African literature in the European languages and occupies the center of African intellectual and cultural discourse. S. E. K. Mqhayi undertook this project in the early years of the twentieth century, Benedict Vilakazi and B. M. Khaketla strengthened it in the middle years of the century, and Mazisi Kunene and David Livingstone Phakamile Yali-Manisi have consolidated it from the twentieth century into the twenty first century.

*You are currently working towards the publication of a book on H.I.E. Dhlomo who was one of the early modernists of the New African Movement, what are some of the core learnings that we as readers should take away from your book? Why in your view Dhlomo went the modernist route whilst his brother went the other way?*

It is difficult to know where to begin regarding H. I. E. Dhlomo because he was the one who led me in the direction of the New African Movement, a political and cultural movement that constructed New African modernity in South Africa across the first half of the twentieth century. This happened while I was working for a German dance magazine called *Tanz Aktuell* in West Berlin in the late 1980s (please refer to the following documents: "New Negro Modernity and New African Modernity" located in the New African Movement website; "Themes and Categories of the New African Movement," to be found at the website as of March 2006; and "*An*

Intellectual History of the New African Movement,” which is a long first chapter of the book I’m presently writing: *An Intellectual Biography of the New African Movement*).

Let me begin by clarifying that this short book on Dhlomo, *The Cultural Modernity of H. I. E. Dhlomo*, is not a *biography* but rather a *monograph*. In a true sense, it is an extended *intellectual essay*. A second clarification I would like to add is that this essay is only about Dhlomo’s *modernity* rather than his *modernism*. Consequently, it is focused on Dhlomo’s cultural, political and intellectual *essays* rather than on his *creative* writings, poems, plays, prose-poems, short stories and novella. I wrote this monography in June-August 1997 after spending about two years collecting, reading and assessing all the articles and essays by him that appeared in *Ilanga lase Natal*, *The Bantu World*, *Umteteli wa Bantu*, *Inkundla ya Bantu* newspapers, in scholarly journals such as *Natives Teachers’ Journal*, *The South African Outlook*, *Bantu Studies*, *Transvaal Native Educational Quarterly*, and lastly popular magazines such as *Drum*. All of these writings appeared approximately in a thirty-year period from 1924 in *Umteteli wa Bantu* to *Ilanga lase Natal* in 1954. The last two years of Dhlomo’s life were spent in serious illness that resulted in his death in 1956. This monograph was written with the aim of publishing it on centennial year of his birth that was 2003.

Upon completion of this monograph on Dhlomo’s modernity I had hoped that I would immediately set about writing another monograph on his purported modernism. I say purported modernism because many scholars, especially African scholars, largely take it on faith that there has been an African modernism without feeling the need to intellectually and historically prove or justify it. So, my separating them chronologically was an implicit critique of this faith based “knowledge.” There were two reasons for separating the historical eventuations and intellectual constructs of modernity and modernism. While in the European historical theatre the *historical experience* of modernity had preceded the *cultural expression* of modernism by many centuries, because that is where both were forged, in the African context they eventuated almost

simultaneously, with modernity imposed on African history by European colonialism and imperialism and modernism being created by Africans themselves in the process of learning from European modernism whilst simultaneously reacting against it. It should be made clear that it was the European missionaries who enabled Africans to achieve this “modernism,” albeit in unintended ways. It was clear to me examining African intellectual history that while modernity was a matter of *historical consciousness*, modernism was a product of the *artistic imagination*. In separating them, I also wanted to study them as singular historical processes in order to understand their geneses within the African context. It was while writing this monograph that I saw the writings of Nigerian art scholars and curators, Okwui Enwezor and Olu Oguibe which convincingly argued intellectually for the existence of a specifically African modernism in regard to African contemporary art. It was not so much that I necessarily doubted that there had been an African modernism as much as I thought that it needed to be proven intellectually rather than taken on faith. Arguing for an African modernity is much easier than proving the much more complex and complicated matter of African modernism. I did not write a monograph on Dhlomo’s modernism because the project of constructing a website on the New African Movement dawned on me or intervened. I have been working on it for the last seven to eight years. I hope I will eventually get an opportunity to write this second monograph.

As I was assembling and collecting the writings of Dhlomo I came across two remarkable documents without which I would not have been able to write the monograph the way I eventually did. One was Tim Couzens’s magisterial biography, *The New African: A Study Of The Life And Works Of H. I. E. Dhlomo* (1985); the other was the special issue of *English in Africa* journal (vol. 4 no. 2, September 1977), “Literary Theory and Criticism of H. I. E. Dhlomo,” edited by Nick Visser, who was an American living in South Africa.

There is another important contribution by Visser to our intellectual history. As far as I’m aware he was the first to write the first serious

scholarly appraisal of the Drum writers as well as being the first one to invent the designation of “Sophiatown Renaissance” (“South Africa: The Renaissance That Failed,” *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 11 no. 1, 1976). Visser makes two interesting and contentious issues. That the *Drum* writers phenomenon was a “failure” in its historical mission because it did not connect to its intellectual and cultural predecessors. I think the verdict of failure has to be rendered on the basis of the intrinsic qualities of the cultural phenomenon itself. My own criticism has been the valorization of the *Drum* writers in comparison to the preceding cultural periods. I doubt that these writers were of the same intellectual quality as their predecessors. Who among the *Drum* writers for example can compare to Dhlomo up to the age of 53 years when he died? I’m not so sure that this in and of itself would constitute a failure. I think the most thorough and comprehensive appraisal of the *Drum* writers has been undertaken by Paul Gready (“The Sophiatown Writers of the Fifties: The Unreality of Their World,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 16 no. 1, March 1990). Michael Chapman wrote a major essay on the *Drum* writers as Afterword, “More Than Telling a Story: *Drum* and its Significance in Black South African Writing,” to his comprehensive anthology of their short stories: *The Drum Decade: Stories From the 1950s* (1989). The inclusion of Jordan Ngubane in this anthology is questionable, even if his short story was published in *Drum* magazine in the 1950s. I take Ngubane to have belonged to the Zulu Intellectuals of the 1940s, which included among others, the Dhlomo brothers, Anton Lembede, Albert Luthuli, Benedict Wallet Vilakazi, Walter M. B. Nhlapo, Selby D. B. Ngcobo, C. L. S. Nyembezi, Jacob M. Nhlapo. Whether Rueben Caluza should be included in this group of Zulu intellectuals of this particular historical moment is an open question. Whether also Mazisi Kunene should be included in this constellation is intriguing. Perhaps Caluza was too early and Kunene was too late. The question of *periodization* is much more fascinating and interesting than the one of *canonization* as we all South Africans undertake the process of reconstructing our intellectual history.

The other issue which was first raised by Visser was to designate the *Drum* writers historical moment a “renaissance”. This matter was

taken up a decade later by Mbulelo Mzamane in the Introduction to the anthology he assembled together: *Hungry Flames and other Black South African Short Stories* (1986). In his periodization of South African literary history, from R. R. R. Dhlomo in the 1920s to Gladys Thomas in the 1980s, Mzamane divides it into several cultural periods: "The Pioneers," "The *Drum* Era," "The Sophiatown Renaissance," "The District Six School," "The 'Sharpeville' Era," and "The Soweto Era." I'm not so sure whether the *Drum* writers by themselves deserve the designation of "renaissance." Visser includes James Matthews and Richard Rive under the category of "Drum writers" which corresponds to Mzamane's "The *Drum* Era," whereas Mzamane himself designates them as belonging correctly to "The District Six School". I myself have fumbled with these questions of periodization in my website on the New African Movement.

Without entering into a full debate here with Mzamane on the structure and justification of the nature of his suggestive and stimulating periodization, I would like to make one or two observations. R. V. Selope Thema (in "Xhosa Nation Prepares The Way," *The Bantu World*, October 15, 1932) designated the earlier Xhosa intelligentsia of the late nineteenth century as the "pioneers" rather than Mzamane does in his category of "The Pioneers" which he locates in the 1920s and includes Benedict Wallet Vilakazi, Peter Abrahams, A. C. Jordan, H. I. E. Dhlomo, together with R. R. R. Dhlomo. I whole heartedly agree with Selope Thema that our modernist intellectual lineages originate in these intellectuals whom I have called the Xhosa Intellectuals of the 1880s in my website, which included among others, Elijah Makiwane, William Wellington Gqoba, James Dwane, Jeremiah Pambani Mzimba, Gwayi Tyamzashe, Walter Benson Rubusana, Isaac Willian Wauchope, John Tengo Jabavu. The problem of giving the pioneering credit to the Xhosa Intellectuals of the 1880s is that they a started the trend of deserting an African language (isiXhosa) for the hegemonic English language. Perhaps the real pioneer was S. E. K. Mqhayi who followed on the Xhosa Intellectuals of the 1880s but writing against them by writing in isiXhosa. But also Sotho writers and intellectuals of the Golden Age of Sotho Literature in the late years of the nineteen century and in the

early years of the twentieth century were also pioneers which included Thomas Mofolo, Everitt Lechesa Segoete, Zakea D. Mangoaela, Simon Majakathetha Phamotse, Azariel M. Sekese who wrote in Sesotho. Sekese began doing his pioneering work in the pages of *Leselinyana* newspaper in the early 1890s and Mqhayi was doing likewise in *Izwi Labantu* newspaper beginning in 1897. The historical conditions will have to be examined elsewhere as to the historical explanation of why The Xhosa Intellectuals of the 1880s deserted isiXhosa while the Golden Age of Sotho Literature intellectuals enriched Sesotho through their creative imagination. As already mentioned, in resisting his Xhosa intellectual predecessors, Mqhayi gave rise to a remarkable efflorescence of Xhosa literature.

Mbulelo Mzamane may argue justifiably that his periodization was predicated *only* on the literary genre of the short story form. But one could legitimately ask whether periodizing could not be better arbitrated when based on *force fields* that determine the conceptual structure of intellectual history. Whatever force fields one maps out across a particular intellectual history they are most likely to be imprecise and controversial, if for nothing else because *beginnings* and *endings* are always contentious zones.

Moving on to another matter: Mbulelo Mzamane makes fascinating distinctions between “the *Drum* Era,” “The Sophiatown Renaissance,” “The District Six School,” and “The ‘Sharpeville’ Era”, yet does not make compelling arguments for separating them into different force fields. I would argue that the legitimate force field is that of the *Sophiatown Renaissance* which subsumes all the other categories. Under it I would also include the contributions of such Jewish intellectuals and writers such as Ruth First, Nadine Gordimer, Sylvester Stein, Harry Bloom and others. It would also include Indian intellectuals, writers and artists such as G. R. Naidoo, Fatima Meer, and others. I tried to grapple with many of these issues in a three-volume *Sophiatown Renaissance: A Reader* which I have just assembled together. I expect Mbulelo Mzamane and other South African scholars to have much to criticize on its publication. Like so many

things regarding intellectual history, this upcoming anthology can only be a provisional critical appraisal.

*When a force field becomes truly conceptual and historical such as the Sophiatown Renaissance was or is, it has to be national, comprehensive, integrative, and not illegitimately exclusionary.* This is one fundamental intellectual and cultural lesson concerning intellectual history that I learned from H. I. E. Dhlomo and S. E. K. Mqhayi as I was writing the monograph. Both of them were brilliant cultural historians, very much different from each other. The impression I have is that they never interacted with each other at all, whereas Dhlomo was personally enthralled with Solomon T. Plaatje.

Tim Couzens's majestic biography indicated to all of us South Africans born after the Second World War of the *existence* of a great intellectual. This he amply and convincingly documented in a dazzling manner. My modest project was slightly different in that I sought not only to establish Dhlomo's modernity but also to use him as a *guide* to my navigation and construction of the New African Movement website. Without H. I. E. Dhlomo I would not have been aware of the existence of this Movement, particularly its complex nature. Many people when they view the website and ponder its extensiveness take as self-evident the complex interrelations of its historical connections, intellectual friendships and rivalries, and the intercrossing of political and cultural movements that map its structure, whereas for me it was not so self-evident. The website began with a piece of paper with two articles by Dhlomo on traditional dancing that I was looking for. When I photocopied all of his newspaper writings over a nine-month period, the necessity and structure of the website emerged.

My monograph on Dhlomo was written in part to remove a deep pain I felt when I read in Couzens's biography that Dhlomo had unending self-doubt about the importance of his great work, a self doubt which was triggered by his feeling that we African people were unable to appreciate what he was doing for us. This caused a lot of pain in me. The monograph was to assuage this pain. Writing it

had many lessons for me as I hope it will be the case with readers of the monograph. Let me enumerate a few of the lessons I have alluded to.

First, I think H. I. E. Dhlomo's *commitment to intellectual work* had few parallels within the annals of the New African Movement. I'm not claiming by this statement that he was necessarily the most intelligent or talented of all New African intellectuals, writers and artists. I think this commitment came from his belief which he uttered more than once that the defeat of Africans by Europeans (i.e. of African traditional societies by European modernity) was not so much through military means as by means of ideas (ideology). I take this to mean that Dhlomo believed that the defeat of Africans was due to the *absence of modernity in Africa*, not the absence of Christianity as the missionaries constantly argued. Dhlomo became interested in *ideas* (not ideologies) because he came to believe that by appropriating the *best* ideas of European modernity, specifically from the Enlightenment, he would be able to defeat the bad side of European modernity, specifically economic exploitation, political domination and racism. If there is one thing that Dhlomo believed throughout his life was that ideas or knowledge had the power to change human sensibility and transform societies and traditions.

Second, he absolutely believed in *progress*, and hence he completely embraced European modernity. He believed in *change* and *transformation*. He had no patience for chiefs, which does not mean therefore that he rejected traditional societies. In contrast to R. V. Selope Thema who completely rejected tradition, Dhlomo struggled to integrate tradition and modernity. This is evident in Dhlomo's brilliant essays on the *literary theory of drama*. No other New African intellectual wrote such powerful theory of literature. His *literary theory* of integrating modern drama and traditional drama was in effect a *social theory* of how to negotiate the historical relations between tradition and modernity. Artistically, Dhlomo associated modernity with Elizabethan drama, particularly Shakespeare, and Romantic poetry, specifically John Keats. Of course Dhlomo was passionate about Shakespeare because he was himself a playwright.

The passion for Shakespeare has a noble tradition within the history of the New African Movement: it began in a real sense with Solomon T. Plaatje passed through H. I. E. Dhlomo to Can Themba. I say in a real sense because although the Xhosa Intellectuals of the 1880s identified with Shakespeare, he was more as a *symbol* of modernity, rather than as an *intellectual force of creativity* in modernity, as was the case with Solomon T. Plaatje. When I mention that Dhlomo embraced European modernity, it is to indicate that his intent was to transform *European* modernity to *New African* modernity with eventual intent of creating *South African* modernity. *New African modernity is not necessarily synonymous with South African modernity.* Probably one of the reasons Dhlomo was so theoretical or speculative or philosophical in his outlook was because of the cultural *transformations* he wanted to effect. This is the reason he appropriated the idea of the New African from R. V. Selope Thema in order to articulate the changing historical consciousness from the “Old African” into the “New African”. Since Dhlomo subscribed to Thomas Carlyle’s theory that *individuals* make history and not the *masses*, he aligned or transformed the idea of the New African to reflect W. E. B. Du Bois theory of the “Talented Tenth”. This is the reason Dhlomo spoke of the “New African Talented Tenth”. It was in this context that he engaged, like other New African intellectuals, the issue of the historical lessons *New Negro modernity* had for the then emergent *New African modernity*.

Third, towards the end of his life Dhlomo tended to see politics and culture as inseparable from each other. In this regard, he seems to have sought to establish the *cultural politics of modernity*. Three political events seemed to have had a profound impact on him: the founding of the ANC Youth League in 1944 by Anton Lembede, together with Nelson Mandela, Jordan Ngubane, Oliver Tambo, Jordan Ngubane, Willian Nkosi and others; the beginning of apartheid in 1948; and the most important impact was the Defiance Campaign of 1952. In the context of these political events, there is a dramatic shift in all his writings in *Ilanga lase Natal* from largely cultural matters to cultural politics and then to *politics* and political issues. From 1943, when Dhlomo and his brother R. R. R. Dhlomo

took over editorial responsibilities of *Ilanga lase Natal* with the retirement Ngazana Luthuli, practically all of his writings appeared in this newspaper. With this shift from culture to politics in the last decade of his life, there emerged also an *internationalism* and *cosmopolitanism* in his philosophical outlook. Other than pan African references, there is a shift away from European references to American (W. E. B. Du Bois and Langston Hughes) and Indian (Gandhi and Nehru) references. His political writings are sharp and cutting whereas his cultural articles tended to be meditative and reflective. Here Dhlomo truly confronted the nature of *African nationalism*. This was the moment of the departing (death) of New African giants, S. E. K. Mqhayi in 1945, John Langalibalele Dube in 1946, and Pixley ka Isaka Seme in 1951. During what could be considered his *cultural period*, Dhlomo was close to Benedict Vilakazi, despite the intellectual quarrels between them, and during his *political period* he was associated with Jordan Ngubane. In his unpublished memoir or autobiography written in exile in Swaziland in 1963 Ngubane reveals that he and H. I. E. Dhlomo had a secret pact to destroy the political career of A. W. G. Champion in, respectively *Inkundla ya Bantu* and *Ilanga lase Natal*, with the intent of elevating that of Albert Luthuli to the occupancy of the leadership of the ANC in Natal. They succeeded beyond their wildest expectations. Of course Albert Luthuli was subsequently elected in the early 1950s to the national presidency of the ANC.

At this moment Dhlomo's political and philosophical vision was remarkably *integrative*. Let me add that in a sense that the triangular intellectual relationship between Dhlomo and Ngubane and Vilakazi for me marked the beginning of the historical moment of the Zulu Intellectuals of the 1940s in 1940-41 and came to an end in 1953 with a series of remarkable essays in *Ilanga lase Natal* by Dhlomo commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the newspaper by John Langalibalele Dube in 1903. The critical responses of H. I. E. Dhlomo ("*UDingiswayo ka Jobe: An Appreciation*," *Ilanga lase Natal*, December 14, 1940) and of Jordan Kush Ngubane ("*Valley Of A Thousand Hills: Story Of Feeling, Hope And Achievement*," *Ilanga lase Natal*, November 29, 1941), to respectively Vilakazi's Zulu

novel and Dhlomo's English language epic, were the beginnings of the Zulu intellectual constellation because they marked the emergence of *New African literary criticism*. Dhlomo's *cultural essays* of 1953 in *Ilanga lase Natal* ("Evolution of Bantu Entertainments," "Development of African Music" and "Developments And Achievements in the Field of Culture," the first two appeared in June 20 and the last one appeared earlier on June 13) marked the end of the era precisely because of their valedictory nature. These cultural essays of the 1950s were companion pieces to the essays on literary theory Dhlomo had written twenty years earlier in the 1930s.

These are some of the issues that my monograph attempts to grapple with.

To conclude with the last part of your question: I'm not so sure that I would concur with your implied view that R. R. R. Dhlomo was not a *modernizer* or a proselytizer for modernity like his younger brother H. I. E. Dhlomo. I'm aware that you use a complicated world *modernist*. For me a modernizer is preoccupied with matters of *historical consciousness*, consequently moves in the realm of politics, whereas a modernist is engaged with shaping *sensibility*, therefore is constantly attentive to cultural creativity. It is much more difficult to change sensibility than to change historical consciousness. There can be amazing disjuncture between the two. I do not know how legitimate this distinction is! Nonetheless, while I do consider practically all the New African intellectuals of the New African Movement to have been *modernizers*, there are very few I would consider to have been *modernists*. Roughly, in the latter category I would list H. I. E. Dhlomo himself, Ernest Mancoba, Benedict Wallet Vilakazi, Gerard Sekoto, Nadine Gordimer, A. C. Jordan, maybe Simon Majakathetha Phamotse, Rueben Caluza and a few others. Perhaps most of the members of the Sophiatown Renaissance were modernists. I would be very hesitant to consider S. E. K. Mqhayi as having been a modernist, whereas I would quickly pick William Wellington Gqoba as having been, who was at a least a generation earlier than Mqhayi and a member of the Xhosa Intellectuals of the 1880s. In the same way that I'm hesitant in designating Mqhayi a modernist, I would

shy away likewise from regarding Mazisi Kunene as one. To a large extent all of these distinctions are matters of intuition, though informed by knowledge. The *Voorslag* writers present a whole series of complexities, especially Roy Campbell. I would nominate Nontsizi Mqgqewtho as perhaps *our first great modernist*. It is truly sad that we practically know nothing about this extraordinary woman. She seems to have been a decade or two younger than Mqhayi. Her poems that have been translated by Phyllis Ntantala and Jeff Opland give me the impression that she must have been flamboyant, very sexy, very strong willed, very determined and just full of life. For some strange reason, I associate her intellectual flamboyance with that of H. I. E. Dhlomo, who seems otherwise to have been dour concerning his personality.

Given the distinctions I have just struggled with in the previous paragraph, although I would agree with you that R. R. R. Dhlomo was not a modernist like his younger brother H. I. E. Dhlomo, nonetheless I would argue that he was a modernizer of a different kind from his sibling. While the theoretical writings of H. I. E. (this is what the 18-year old Lewis Nkosi called him in a poem published in *Ilanga lase Natal* in 1955 as the great intellectual was lying in bed fighting death) are flamboyant in their commitment to modernity, R. R. R. was ambivalent about its advent. R. R. R. was in crisis about the way modernity seems to have had a death grip on tradition. Despite his pain, R. R. R. always intellectually positioned himself on the side of modernity despite his emotional attachment to tradition. There are several telling signs that convince me of this.

First, I do not believe that R. V. Selope Thema, who was the editor of *The Bantu World* and a fanatical proselytizer for modernity, would have given R. R. R. the editorial responsibility of the Zulu pages of the newspaper in the 1930s had R. R. R. aligned himself with tradition against modernity. Selope Thema's notorious hatred for tradition is well known to need elaborating here. I think this is also the condition or line that Selope Thema imposed on Guybon Bundlwana Sinxo when he gave him the Xhosa pages of the newspaper. Interestingly enough, I do not know to what an extent

Selope Thema can be held responsible for the fact that both Sinxo and Dhlomo shifted from writing their novels in 1930s, respectively in isiXhosa and in isiZulu, to writing short stories in English in the late 1940s and early 1950s. I'm aware that R. R. R. wrote satiric short stories in the English language. It should be remembered that Selope Thema surrounded himself in the pages of the newspaper with brilliant young New African intellectuals: beside these two, there was Peter Abrahams, Peter Segale, H. I. E. Dhlomo, Henry Nxumalo and Todd Matshikiza. Henry Nxumalo made his literary debut in the late 1930s in *The Bantu World* not in *Drum* magazine in the 1950s. As is well known, Nxumalo wrote for the *Pittsburgh Courier* in the 1940s.

This leads me to the second point. I would argue that R. R. R.'s Zulu historical novels, *UDingane kaSenzangakhona* (1936, Dingane, Son of Senzangakhona), *UShaka* (1936, Shaka), *Umpande kaSenzangakhona* (1938, Mpande, Son of Senzangakhona), *UCetshwayo* (1952, Cetshwayo), *UDinizuku kaCetshwayo* (1968, Dinizulu, Son of Cetshwayo), and the novels written isiZulu, *UNomalanga kaNdengezi* (1934, Nomalanga, Daughter of Ndengezi) and *Indlela Yababi* (1946, The Bad Path), could give one the mistaken notion that he aligned himself with tradition against modernity. But this is not the case at all. Here I could also mention his books of essays: *Izikhali Zanamuhla* (1935, Weapons of Today) and *Ukwazi Kuyathuthukisa* (1936, Knowledge Cause One to Progress). I would argue that rather than his being against modernity, R. R. R. had a profoundly *tragic vision* of the dialectic between tradition and modernity, a vision that was informed by what he believed to be the inevitability of the triumph of modernity. I think this tragic vision was apparent in his *first* literary work ever published in 1928, the novella he wrote in the English language, *An African Tragedy*, a work that concerns itself with the fault lines of this dialectic. The short stories of R. R. R. had written in the English language, many of which are in a satirical vein, which appeared in the late 1920s and early 1930s in Stephen Black's *Sjambok* magazine and in *The Bantu World*, are about these fault lines, but here in the context of gold mines of Johannesburg, where Africans were undergoing a profound transformation.

Third, his voluminous writings in the columns of *The Bantu World* in the 1930s and in the newspaper he was editing *Ilanga lase Natal* from 1943 onwards clearly show and articulate his modernizing ways. Again, I would like to indicate the inescapable influence of Selope Thema on R. R. R., in that as sub-editor of the former newspaper he was completely in agreement with Thema's project of using newspapers with intent of making modernity acceptable to African people as well as giving instructions of how one enters modernity by means of a changed historical consciousness. This is what captivated R. R. R. as a member of the circle of young New African intellectuals around Selope Thema in the 1930s. Selope Thema had a profound effect on R. R. R. as he did on Jordan Ngubane. Ngubane celebrated his mentor in a well-known portrait that appeared in the newspaper he himself edited, *Inkundla ya Bantu* ("Three Famous Journalists I Knew: Richard Victor Selope Thema," July Second Fortnight, 1946). Ngubane imbibed uncritically Selope Thema's hatred of Marxism and Communism. I think R. R. R. took something positive from Selope Thema: how to use newspapers as instructional manuals or pedagogical forums for modernity. I think it is because of this question of pedagogics that inspired R. R. R. to give H. I. E. Dhlomo ample space to meditate on modernity in *Ilanga lase Natal*. This is what really preoccupied H. I. E. Dhlomo in the last decade of his life.

There are other tell tales which one can legitimately assume as indicating the close affinity between Selope Thema and R. R. R. The most important is that R. R. R. wrote a weekly column "R. Roamer Esquire" in *The Bantu World* that commenced on March 4, 1933 and was terminated only on August 10, 1940. I have counted over seven enthusiastic letters during the duration of the column from common readers to the newspaper praising the content of R. R. R.'s columns. This seven-year stretch was in all probability only surpassed in its durability by the editorials of Selope Thema that appeared for a whole twenty-year period of his editing the newspaper. I have no doubt whatsoever of the symmetry between them regarding the philosophy of modernity they espoused. Elsewhere it will be necessary to refer to them. Even more remarkable, R. R. R. edited a Women's Page of the newspaper taking it upon himself seriously and

playfully instructing women on how a cultured modern woman carries herself in modernity. In this page he wrote two columns, "Over the Tea Cup" (from July 25, 1936 to March 9, 1940) and "Do You Know" (from October 17, 1934 to June 10, 1939), which usually alternated with each other on a weekly basis but now and then appeared simultaneously.

The "Rolling Stone" column that R. R. R. wrote immediately upon assuming editorial responsibility of *Ilanga lase Natal* as well as his editorials show him to have been a *modernizing man*. I would argue that his long career as editor of the newspaper from 1943 to 1960 was in the service of modernity. No doubt, a different understanding and reading of modernity than that of his brother! One brother writing his historical novels in *isiZulu* and the other writing his dramatic plays in the *English* language, at the same time in the decade of the 1930s, shows their different alignments within modernity.

*What is it that makes the New African Movement critical for South Africa today, and who are some leading lights in this direction?*

The most immediate and direct response to this question is that I do not believe the *idea* of the African Renaissance is realizable without the knowledge of the *history* of the New African Movement. A renewal or a rebirth in the present has to be on the basis of the achievement of this New African modernity that was terminated in the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960. In this context, I would characterize the apartheid era politically as our "Dark Ages." There are three areas in which I think the New African Movement is critical for South Africa today: first, it is the establishing and articulation of an *ideology* or ideologies that can give a sense of direction and cohesiveness to our nation that underwent a spectacular democratic transformation in 1994; second, the New African Movement was a political and cultural movement that created an enormous fund of *knowledge* and shaped a remarkable *sensibility* that still have relevance, meaningfulness and significance for the present as well as for the future; third, the *construction* of the African Renaissance in the present is not possible without the *memory* and *recollection* and

*reconstruction* of the lineages of the New African Movement. This triadic process is at the center of our historical experience in the present.

Regarding ideology: both Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral made prescient observations about the *absence of ideology in Africa*, respectively at the moment of the African Independent Movement in the 1960s and at the moment of the African Liberation Movement in the 1970s, an absence that has haunted Africa in subsequent decades and is presently hanging a Damocles sword over our continent. These sentences from Fanon's notebook jotted down while on a military mission with the militants of the FLN of Algeria in the early 1960s just before the country gained independence in 1962, have haunted me for four decades since I first read them while I was in High School in Nairobi, Kenya in the late 1960s. *It may be that in fact my construction of the New African Movement website over the last seven years or so was an unconscious response to them.* These are the words that appear in Fanon's *Towards the African Revolution* (1967), an anthology of his essays that was assembled and published posthumously: "To put Africa in motion, to cooperate in its organization, in its regrouping, behind revolutionary principles. To participate in the ordered movement of a continent----this was really the work I had chosen . . . Taking the West as a starting point, we had to prove, by concrete demonstrations, that this continent was one. . . The Africa of everyday, of not the poets' Africa, the one that puts to sleep, but the one that prevents sleep, for the people is impatient to do, to play, to say . . . That is the real Africa, the Africa that we had to let loose in the continental furrow, in the continental direction. The Africa that we had to guide, mobilize, launch on the offensive. This Africa to come . . . We have Africa with us. A continent is getting into motion and Europe is languorously asleep . . . Colonialism and its derivatives do not, as a matter of fact, constitute the present enemies of Africa. In a short time this continent will be liberated. *For my part, the deeper I enter into cultures and the political circles the surer I am that the great danger that threatens Africa is the absence of ideology*" (my emphasis). Cabral concurred in this observation of Fanon's. I understand that this issue of the absence of ideology in Africa to mean that

colonialism, imperialism and capitalism had created *a rupture between politics, culture and history* in the lived experience of us Africans as well as in our epistemology. Fanon's intellectual work, especially in *The Wretched of the Earth*, particularly the chapter "On National Culture", was an attempt to reestablish a dialectical reciprocity between politics, culture and history. Cabral's great essay, "National Liberation and Culture," in *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches of Amilcar Cabral* (1973), also sought to establish a unified process of these distinct fields of human knowledge.

*One of Cabral's constant refrains was that imperialism and colonialism had violently forced us Africans out of African history into European history. His intellectual thought as well as his revolutionary practice sought to realize a restorative process in that they aimed to return Africans back into African history. This was an extraordinary undertaking by any measure. Taking the cue from this great African Marxist, one could postulate that similarly in the context of the history of the New African Movement in South Africa, in as much European modernity's violent entrance into our country forced marched us into European history, the invention of New African modernity by New African intellectuals, succeeded in many ways in restoring us back into African history. My work on the New African Movement and the website I have constructed is an effort to contribute to the collective effort of re-inserting ourselves back into African history from European history.*

I think the issues that Cabral formulated in this extraordinary essay dealing with the *transformative role of culture* are the same or similar to those that the New African intellectuals sought to engage and resolve by inventing New African modernity. Cabral cogently argues the following: that the material foundations of military and political domination by colonialism lead to cultural domination on its part; that this political domination can result in cultural genocide; that military domination of a particular people is in effect the neutralization of their cultural life because culture can be a profound instrument of resistance to domination; that imperialism and colonialism invent theories of racism and white supremacy to weaken cultural resistance to foreign domination; that since culture is

a dynamic expression of the relationships that constitute society, the cultural situation and the political situation are integrated to each other; that culture is not only open to the historical reality of a nation, it is also a determinant of a nation's history; that imperial and colonial domination attempt to negate the historical process of a dominated country; given that culture is the history of the nation, in a free and democratic national culture history and culture are inseparably conjoined; that culture reflects the organic nature of society; given the unity of history and culture, cultural expression increases as a prelude to armed struggle; that every nation has an inalienable right to its own national history; that national liberation struggle is a process of the reclamation of a national culture; that although culture has a mass character, it is not uniformly or equally developed in all the sectors of society; that culture is splayed on horizontal and vertical levels, as well as on quantitative and qualitative levels; that imperial domination through class domination creates cultural alienation thereby creating a social gap between the people and the indigenous elite; that in the liberation struggle or in a postcolonial society, there must be a re-conversion or re-Africanization of the indigenous elite to its peoples values; that national liberation movement must base its cultural and political activities on popular culture; that the creation of a progressive national culture is through separating the essential from the secondary, the positive from the negative and the progressive from the reactionary; that African cultures should be judged by universal standards while recognizing its particularity; that a national liberation movement must be based on a thorough knowledge of the culture of the nation; *that the progress of African cultures should be measured in relation to modernity*; that in order to make manifest African culture, it must be the confluence of the levels of culture of the different social groups; and finally, that armed struggle is a product of culture as well as a determinant of culture.

Although *conservative modernizers* such as Pixley ka Isaka Seme, John Langalibalele Dube, R. V. Selope Thema and others would not have subscribed to the revolutionary project of Cabral's thesis regarding the intertwining of radical politics and revolutionary culture in a

democratic national culture, *progressive modernizers* such as Simon Majakathetha Phamotse, H. I. E. Dhlomo, Nontsizi Mqgqwetho, Sophonia Machabe Mofokeng and others would have been sympathetic. But the real supporters of Cabral's political view regarding culture and history would have been *revolutionary modernizers* such as Albert Nzula, Govan Mbeki, James La Guma and others who were defeated within the inner struggles of the New African Movement. But the real importance of Cabral's formulations today or in our time is that they provide one with a philosophical perspective from which to understand the inner essence of the history of the New African Movement.

First, in inventing New African modernity, the New African Movement was in effect engaged in a national liberation struggle but on an *intellectual plane*, in contrast to the one on the military plane which eventuated during the exile period in the 1960s with Umkhonto we Sizwe. On more than one occasion H. I. E. Dhlomo argued that the triumph of Afrikaner nationalism (white nationalism) over African nationalism was not so much a military victory as an ideological victory at the level of ideas. The fundamental issue regarding H. I. E. Dhlomo's observation for us today is the following: although the dramatic events and consequences of 1994 have rolled back the *military victory* of white nationalism, the *ideological victory* of white nationalism still prevails today in South Africa, especially as indicated by the hegemony of the English language over the African languages. *The military victory of African nationalism over white nationalism, however one may wish to articulate or define this matter in relation to the historic date of 1994, enabled the integration of politics and history but still left culture and class in a state of disjuncture from each other.* This unity or re-integration at one level and the persisting disunity at another level may have to do with the construction of African nationalism effected by R. V. Selope Thema, Pixley ka Isaka Seme, Solomon T. Plaatje, H. Selby Msimang in the 1920s and the 1930s and consolidated by Anton Lembede and Jordan Ngubane in the 1940s and in the 1950s. The critical person here may turn out to have been Jordan Ngubane, who was a great intellectual, but because of his political desperation or opportunism is half forgotten today, as

he perhaps deserves to be. We still need to write a complex history of African nationalism *within* the historical trajectory of the New African Movement.

This leads me to the second observation stemming from Cabral's brilliant formulations. The early founding figures of African nationalism made certain that the development of this ideology would be at the expense of separating *modernity and Marxism* from each other in South Africa. The person who made certain that modernity and Marxism were severed from each other within African nationalism was Pixley ka Isaka Seme during his reactionary and nearly incompetent leadership of the African National Congress (ANC) in the early 1930s. *This is very important because the ANC was the political instrument that gave direction to the New African Movement: the ANC and the New African Movement were inseparable from each other from the moment they found each other in 1912 through their momentary defeat in 1960 to the resurrection of the ANC in 1994.* It should be remembered that it was Seme who founded both the New African Movement and the ANC, respectively in 1904-6 and in 1912. Seme was unable conceptually, politically, and historically to understand that *Marxist politics* (political practice) were not same thing as *Marxist intellectual culture*. There is a famous statement by Georg Lukacs in *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) alluding to this distinction. The South African Communist Party and the Unity Movement largely concerned themselves with Marxist politics, respectively Stalinism and Trotskyism, and did not cultivate a serious Marxist intellectual culture in our country. *Their defeat by African nationalism may be explained by their failure to cultivate a particular Marxist intellectual culture.* A study of the political history of I. B. Tabata will have much to tell us about this matter one day in the future. Politics are always striving towards the future, a utopian direction, but culture is anchored in the present, in the soil of the nation. It is perhaps in this sense that culture is more important than politics.

Strangely enough, the separation of modernity and Marxism in relation to African nationalism by Pixley ka Isaka Seme through the New African Movement was the obverse of the separation of African

nationalism from Pan Africanism by the African National Congress. This all the more strange because Pan Africanism and Ethiopianism as ideologies had precedence since they were brought in or invented in relation to New African Movement before the invention of African nationalism. It is possible to argue or postulate that the ANC and African nationalism as a *political sensibility* emerged simultaneously in 1912; it was only in the 1930s that African nationalism as an *ideology* was seriously first theorized by Seme himself no less. In the late 1860s Tiyo Soga expressed a profound *political desire* for Pan Africanism as an intellectual bridgehead between Africa and the African Diaspora. In writing the manifesto “Founder’s Declaration of Independence” that founded Ethiopianism in 1892, Mangane Maake Mokone sought to bring this *first* political ideology invented by New Africans closer to the intellectual edicts of Pan Africanism. A conservative modernizer like John Langalibalele Dube sought to destroy Ethiopianism in the pages of his *Ilanga lase Natal* newspaper in the 1900s, in the same manner that another conservative modernizer R. V. Selope Thema twenty years later in the 1920s in the pages of *Umteteli wa Bantu* sought to terminate Pan Africanism by mistakenly reducing it to Garveyism, which was just only one of its variants . Although Pan Africanism had been brought to South Africa as an *intellectual tradition* and *organizational structure* in 1900 on the arrival of F. Z. S. Peregrino and articulated in his *South African Spectator* newspaper, it was James Thaele upon his return from studying in United States in the 1920s who made it a *political force* in the country by giving perception that Garveyism and Pan Africanism were synonymous with each other. Selope Thema could not accept in many ways that the philosophy of his master, Booker T. Washington, had evolved and taken the mantle of Garveyism. To *conservative modernizers* like Dube and Selope Thema the black radicalism of Garveyism was viewed as a threat to their conservative and middle-class construction of African nationalism. To Selope Thema, his appropriating of and seeking to bring New Negro modernity in South Africa was not understood as a Pan Africanist project but rather as a neutral undertaking of taking lessons from a particular black modernity. All of these things show Selope Thema to have been a deeply reactionary but complex figure.

By attending the Universal Races Congress in London in 1911 and meeting some of the Pan Africanists from the Diaspora such as Du Bois, Walter Benson Rubusana was in a position to have reinforced an understanding of Pan Africanism as an intellectual tradition thereby making possible a rapprochement in South Africa when African nationalism and Pan Africanism encountered each other the following year in 1912. It is very surprising that Benson never wrote anywhere about his participation at this Congress. Although *Izwi Labantu* newspaper had already by this time folded up, having done so in 1909, he could certainly have been given space in either John Dube's *Ilanga lase Natal* or in Solomon T. Plaatje's *Tsala ea Batho*, especially given his great reputation as the compiler of the Xhosa classic *Zemk' Inkomo Magwalandini* (1906). Another missed opportunity was when Charlotte Manye Maxeke returned to South Africa after obtaining her BA degree from Wilberforce University in 1900. She had been a student of W. E. B. Du Bois at that academic institution. But both these missed opportunities are understandable since they occurred before the real organizational birth of African nationalism. A surprising missed encounter was the publication of Silas Modiri Molema's *The Bantu: Past Present* in 1920. The reason here may be that the book was published in the United Kingdom. It postdates the arrival of African nationalism. This brilliant book explicitly makes clear its inspiration from Du Bois' *The Soul of Black Folks* (1903), among other books. Another missed earlier opportunity was Solomon T. Plaatje's appreciative response to Du Bois's book: "Negro," *Tsala ea Beconoana* [Tswana Gazette], Loete [September] 7, 1904. Although Peter Abrahams portrays in his memoir/autobiography *Tell Freedom* (1954) the indelible impact of Du Bois's great book on his intellectual formation in the 1930s, it did not succeed in bringing in Du Bois to the country to counter the deep influence of Booker T. Washington on a substantial number of New African intellectuals. Having gone to voluntary exile in 1939, fifteen years before the publication of the book, Abrahams could not bridge the absence of so many years from African nationalism. While for Du Bois Pan Africanism was first and foremost an *intellectual tradition* then a *political philosophy*, for Booker T. Washington it was a mere

*ideology*. These missed opportunities have had vast consequences for South African intellectual history, even though some of them are invisible.

The incomparable reflections of Cabral give me an opportunity to broach the third issue, that is of historically establishing the connection between the *idea* of the African Renaissance and the *history* of the New African Movement. I will say a few words here since I will respond more fully to this issue in your following question. I think when Amilcar Cabral speaks of “re-conversion” and “re-Africanization,” this is one of the things the African Renaissance should be centrally concerned with. In other words, what European modernity *converted* in its imperializing and colonizing ways, the African Renaissance should *re-convert* in its Africanizing ways. If the African Renaissance is to ever occur, let alone succeed, there has to be a profound *re-conversion* from the English language to the African languages. The works around which this possible cultural and historical transformation should occur *today, right now*, are the Zulu epics of Mazisi Kunene. *That is, the approximately ten epics and other anthologies of poems by Mazisi Kunene that have not as yet been published should be published immediately in their original in isiZulu, then translated into the other African languages.* There is no way of going around Mazisi Kunene in the early years of the twenty first century as it could have proven impossible to do so around S. E. K. Mqhayi in the early years of the twentieth century. Perhaps the clear indication of this impossibility is the recent (March 2005) bestowing on Mazisi Kunene the glorious mantle of “National Laureate” by the Minister of Culture, Pallo Jordan, on behalf of the nation. It should be remembered that the New African Movement, specifically D. D. T. Jabavu, in the 1920s or in the 1930, bestowed on Mqhayi the mantle of “Imbongi Yesizwe Jikelele,” that is National Poet. Clearly, there is a direct connection between *izibongo* of the great Xhosa poet and the epics of the great Zulu poet.

To bring the matter of the African Renaissance to a conclusion here, I would like to quote a whole paragraph towards the end of Cabral’s majestic essay which I think clearly defines what the African

Renaissance should be about: “From all that has just been said, it can be concluded that in the framework of the conquest of national independence and in the perspective of developing the economic and social progress of the people, the objectives must be at least the following: *development of a popular culture* and of all positive indigenous cultural values; *development of a national culture* based upon the history and the achievements of the struggle itself; constant promotion of the *political and moral awareness* of the people (of all social groups) as well as *patriotism*, of the spirit of sacrifice and devotion to the cause of independence, of justice, and of progress; development of a technical, technological, and *scientific culture*, compatible with the requirements for progress; development, on the basis of a critical assimilation of man’s achievements in the domains of art, science, literature, etc., of a *universal culture* for perfect integration into the contemporary world, in the perspectives of its evolution; constant and generalized promotion of feelings of humanism, of solidarity, of respect and disinterested devotion to human beings” (emphasis in the original). This is what I think the historical project of the African Renaissance should be about. I believe that this mandate from the great Marxist revolutionary will make the African Renaissance not a *national project*, but rather, a *continental project*, as it should be. We, South Africans, have a privileged perspective on Amilcar Cabral because the first major scholarly essay appreciating his importance, written within a few months of his assassination in 1973, was by our brilliant compatriot Bernard Makhosozwe Magubane which appeared in a special issue of *Ufahamu* (1973, UCLA) dedicated to this great revolutionary. It needs to be recalled that Magubane was one of the extraordinary intellectual pillars of the African National Congress during the exile period. In fact, it needs to be recorded in the annals of our national and intellectual history that Magubane’s first important essay written after obtaining a doctorate from UCLA in 1965 was in direct response to the opening of the armed struggle launched by Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) of the ANC in Wankie in 1967: the essay was called “The Crisis in African Sociology” which appeared in the *East African Journal* (December 1968), a year after the launching of the armed struggle. Reading it in Nairobi, the very city in which it was

published, within a matter of days of its publication when I was in High School, was intellectually electrifying.

Moving on to the final portions of your question, regarding some of the leading lights of the New African Movement, I would like to mention two or three: Clement Martyn Doke, Nontsizi Mqgqwetho and A. C. Jordan. I could easily have chosen ten others without even thinking about it. But these three will serve our immediate purpose here. I apologize for using superlatives with regard to them.

Doke arrived in South Africa in 1902 at the age of 9 years from England via New Zealand with his missionary parents. His father Joseph J. Doke, a novelist of no mean talent, was not only Mahatma Gandhi's best friend while the great Indian nationalist was in South Africa, but was also his first biographer. Clement Martyn Doke began his South Africaness as a missionary in his teens, became a formidable scholar in his middle years and in retirement in his senior years reverted to doing missionary work again. From 1923 when he joined the Department of Bantu Languages of what later became the University of Witwatersrand to his retirement thirty years later in 1953, Doke was the greatest scholar within the New African Movement, thereby in the whole country. *In fact, let us pay homage to this great man by stating unambiguously that he was the greatest South African scholar across the twentieth century.* Mqhayi recognized this greatness at the very moment of its emergence by dedicating a poem to him ("U-Professor Doke," *Umteteli wa Bantu*, March 19, 1932). I think what enormously pleased Mqhayi was Doke's commitment to, and championing of, *African languages*. For example, in a review of Solomon T. Plaatje's English language novel, *Mhudi*, Doke demanded to know why Plaatje had written it in the English language rather than in Setswana. Doke was not averse to fighting and dueling with the intellectual giants of the New African Movement, because he rightly saw himself as a legitimate member of it. A. C. Jordan wrote his Master's thesis, "Some Features of the Phonetic and Grammatical Structure of Baca" (1942) and his doctoral dissertation, "A Phonological and Grammatical Study of Literary Xhosa" (1956) in direct response to Doke's formidable linguistic theories. This literally

means that Jordan was engaged in a stimulating intellectual disagreement with Doke across nearly two decades. Phyllis Ntantala (Mrs. Jordan) informed me recently that Jordan wanted Doke to be on his doctoral committee but the great linguist demurred feeling that their theories of linguistics diverged so strongly from each other that their close encounter would be intellectually unproductive. Doke worked very closely with Benedict Wallet Vilakazi, conjointly writing the great *Zulu-English Dictionary* (1948), as well as with Sophania Machabe Mofokeng, conjointly writing *Textbook of Southern Sotho Grammar* (1957). Given these extraordinary entanglements of Clement Martyn Doke with the central figures of the New African Movement, how could he not be one of its exemplary figures? *It is necessary to view his astonishing intellectual productivity as an attempted defense and strengthening of African languages against the imperializing European languages.*

But Doke deserves to be recognized in his own right as an incomparable scholar. Even an abridged version of his scholarly work is breathtaking: *The Grammar of the Lamba Language* (1922); *The Phonetics of the Zulu Language* (1926); *Textbook of Zulu Grammar* (1927); *Report on the Unification of the Shona Dialects* (1931); *A Comparative Study in Shona Phonetics* (1931); *The Lambas of Northern Rhodesia* (1931); *Bantu Linguistic Terminology* (1935); *Textbook of Lamba Grammar* (1938); *Bantu: Modern Grammatical, Phonetical and Lexicographical Studies since 1860* (1945); *The Southern Bantu Languages* (1954); *Zulu Syntax and Idiom* (1955); *English-Lamba Vocabulary* (1963); *Trekking in South-Central Africa* (1975). His other scholarly work is not mentioned in this cataloguing: his many scholarly essays that appeared in books of other scholars, as well as those that appeared in *African Studies* journal (earlier known as *Bantu Studies*), a journal he edited for many years; the many translations he realized. His scholarly religious work is truly outstanding on any terms. Only one biography of Clement Martyn Doke has been written: Sydney Hudson Reed's *Clement Martyn Doke: Man of Two Missions* (1998). The title of the book alludes to both his scholarly and missionary work. Though it is a needed effort, it hardly does justice to the monumental achievement of this scholar. As long as we do not have a major study on the colossal

achievement of Doke, we shall never grasp the full complexity of the conceptual structure of the New African Movement. This is equally true of outstanding figures like R. V. Selope Thema, Benedict Wallet Vilakazi, Silas Modiri Molema, Mazisi Kunene, J. J. R. Jolobe, just to name a few.

I would like to conclude this consideration of Doke by quoting an essay of 1925 he wrote in the early years of his career which I take to be a prolegomenon to his emerging scholarly undertaking or enterprise: "Many centuries ago was propounded the old saying *Semper novum ex Africa* [something new always comes from Africa]. This has proved a true saying down to the present day, and, if South Africans would only realise it, it will prove true for many a long day to come . . . It may be asked: What are the particular subjects of study which are of such importance? I would suggest the following: the study of native habits and customs, psychology, religious beliefs, law, industries and social systems---all these would come under the general heading of Social Anthropology. Then there is the study of the numerous native languages, with attention to the phonetics, grammar, lexicography, proverbs, songs and folklore---these would come under the general heading of Philology. Further, there are the important subjects of Native History and Native Music. Here surely is a wide field of research, and one the mere fringe of which has hitherto been touched. But I am concerned here with Philological Research only, and that in the Union of South Africa alone. And yet, though this greatly narrows both the area to be covered and the subjects to be undertaken, there still remains a wide field of research to be explored . . . *I would digress here to make a plea for the recognition of the Bantu language family as one which can hold up its head with any other language family on earth. Bantu languages are extremely rich in vocabulary, and in grammatical, phonetic and syntactic structure, and their study presents a theme as noble as that of Semitic, Romance or Teutonic. But they have a unique grammatical system---one which it is impossible to treat adequately except according to its own genius.* Hitherto investigators have come to the Bantu languages with the readymade moulds of European or classical grammar, and have endeavoured to fit the Bantu languages into these moulds. The result is that much of the

intrinsic beauty has been lost, and seeming exceptions abound throughout this type of treatment” (“A Call to Philological Study and Research in South Africa,” *The South African Quarterly*, July 1925---February 1926, my emphasis). *I take this remarkable statement as one of the philosophical credos of the New African Movement.* I consider this historic document as an *intellectual manifesto* of the Movement; just as seminally important as Pixley ka Isaka Seme’s “The Regeneration of Africa” manifesto of 1904-6. We, the latecomers, who are studying the *history* of the New African Movement, are still very much beholden, exactly 80 years after it was written, to its *philosophical principles of cultural history*. Clement Martyn Doke is still very much *our contemporary*. I view this prescient document as predicting the necessity of an African Renaissance.

Clement Martyn Doke was a contemporary of Nontsizi Mqgqwetho. What he achieved on an *intellectual* (scholarly) *plane*, she achieved on the *cultural* (poetic) *plane*. The approximately 90 poems Mqgqwetho published in *Umteteli wa Bantu* beginning with “Imbongi u Chizama” appearing on October 23, 1920 to “Zemk’ Inkomo Zetafa--Vula Ndengeni (1928) (1929)” appearing January 5, 1929, show this woman to have been an extraordinary poet. Nothing is known about her except for some basic information about where she was born to which clan she belonged which can be extracted from her brilliant poems. Sadly, she has somewhat disappeared from our cultural and literary history. As to the date of her birth and that of her death, these are unknown to us. In parenthesis: I would like to add that she was still alive in the late 1940s because R. V. Selope Thema mentioned in one his *The Bantu World* columns that Nontsizi Mqgqwetho had attended an ANC political event at the Bantu Men’s Social Center with her sister. She seems to have been a younger contemporary of Mqhayi, probably about twenty years younger than the great Xhosa poet. One is fascinated by the possible relationship that existed between them. It is hard for me to believe that they did not know of each other. I’m fascinated to know what they might have discussed regarding the art of poetry: while Mqhayi was an *imbongi* (praise poet), Mqgqwetho seems to have been a modern lyrical poet. I would like to have known what each of them thought

of William Wellington Gqoba, a member of the Xhosa Intellectuals of the 1880s, and arguably the *first modern African poet*, in the sense of being historically conscious of the historical divide between tradition and modernity.

Although Mqhayi consciously wrote against the Xhosa Intellectuals of the 1880s, in that whereas they were enthralled with the English language he himself sought to revive the Xhosa language as an instrument of historical representation in modernity. Nonetheless, one can see how Mqhayi was spiritually close to Gqoba. This spiritual connection between Mqhayi and Gqoba is indirectly confirmed by the affinity A. C. Jordan felt for both of them. The judgment of Jordan is fundamental since he was the author of the one true great novel in the Xhosa language: *Ingqumbo Yeminyama* (1940, *The Wrath of the Ancestors*). Jordan was probably the first important New African literary critic of Xhosa literature. In thinking of Jordan as perhaps the first major literary critic of this literature, I'm not overlooking J. J. R. Jolobe who was a major intellectual in his own right and wrote Xhosa epics that have only been matched by the Zulu epics of Mazisi Kunene. Although A. C. Jordan's *Towards An African Literature* concerned itself with many issues, it is easy to see that at its center is a celebration of William Wellington Gqoba. Regarding Mqhayi, A. C. Jordan's obituary essay of 1945 which appeared in *South African Outlook* ("Samuel Edward Krune Mqhayi," December 1945) is too well known to necessitate comment from me. What is very surprising about this obituary notice is the very critical tone Jordan adopts against Mqhayi. This critical tone of Jordan reminds one of the equally critical tone the young Mazisi Kunene intoned towards Benedict Wallet Vilakazi in his Master's thesis of 1959: *An Analytical Survey of Zulu Poetry: Both Traditional and Modern*. There are some symmetries between A. C. Jordan and Mazisi Kunene that would be fascinating to investigate and analyze.

Xhosa literary lineages are complex yet fascinating to behold. Whereas one can see a certain line of poetic continuity from Gqoba to Mqhayi, there is another one from William W. Wauchope, member of the Xhosa Intellectuals of the 1880s, which leads directly to

Nontsizi Mqgqwetho. That is because Mqhayi was a *sublime* poet of the landscape, rivers, oceans and traditional customs, whereas Mqgqwetho was a *rhetorical* poet of the outer horizons, be they political, social and cultural. Let me add in parenthesis that Mqgqwetho anticipates David Diop, the Senegalese poet who died at a young age in a plane crash in 1960. This is not to imply that Mqhayi was not a political poet or a poet not concerned with political matters. One needs only look at one of Mqhayi's early poems which appeared in *Izwi Labantu* in September 17, 1901 "Wolokohlo Kwelimnyama: Hay' Ukuwa Kwe Gorha!!," to be abused of the idea that he was not a political poet. This poem was translated by Phyllis Ntantala (Mrs. Jordan) a few weeks ago, as well as translating other earlier poems by Mqhayi. I commissioned her to do this translation work; her acceptance of this offer has enormously privileged me. The rupture between the generation of Elijah Makiwane and that of Mqhayi's explains why younger Xhosa intellectuals founded *Izwi Labantu* to counter the reactionary politics promulgated by John Tengo Jabavu through his newspaper *Imvo Zabantsundu* in the 1890s. In rendering this poem into the English language, Phyllis Ntantala has given this telling title: "Into The Abyss He Fell!! How Are The Mighty Fallen!!". The political distance and differences, which in many ways define the conflict of generations, between John Tengo Jabavu and S. E. K. Mqhayi reminds one of the crucial role of newspapers in defining the cultural climate of particular historical periods. In as much as Mqhayi was defined by the cultural politics of *Izwi Labantu* at the turn of the twentieth century, Mqgqwetho was defined by cultural politics of *Umteteli wa Bantu* in the 1920s. Given their particular historical moments, it is not surprising that Mqhayi had inclination towards *African nationalism* and Mqgqwetho towards *Pan-Africanism*.

Here I would like to quote a few stanzas from a remarkable poem by this great woman, Nontsizi Mqgqwetho. The English translations are by Phyllis Ntantala and Jeff Opland. The poem I would like to consider is "Maibuye! Afrika! Awu!" ("Oh! Bring Africa Home") which appeared in *Umteteli wa Bantu* on December 8, 1923. I have selected three stanzas from it, which are in the sequential order of

their appearance in the newspaper, with a few stanzas in between left out as well as a few after:

Kede simmeza naso isijwali sako ke  
Afrika! Ntsimi ye Afrika,  
Wadliwa zintaka ke wahlakazeka uni  
Kodwa wena ungazange unke  
Amazwi atshile kuk'uk'waza wena  
Sigqibe lamazwe sikwaz' inikisi,  
Yonanto ifunwa zintaka inkuku kusa  
Ziqondele kuhlwe zingay' boni

Uti Maibuye? Makubuye wena izizwe  
Zomhlaba zix'witana ngawe.  
Zipuma e Node zipuma e Sude kwas'  
Empumalanga nase ntshonalanga.  
I Afrika ihleli ayiyangandawo kangela  
enc'eni wofik' isahluma,  
Kangel' imitombo yamanz' isatsitsa  
kangela youk' into imi ngendlela.

Nikony' izililo? Niti maibuye nopala  
nisopa makubuye nina  
Akuko nasiko lakumisa umzi akuko  
bukosi akuko ntwisento.  
Seninje ngekumbi zisele kwezinye na-  
shiywa bubuzwe nashiywa bubuntu  
Nashiywa yimfuyo zonke ezo zinto se-  
nizixolisa ngo Cimizingqala.

(For a long time now we've been calling, Africa.  
Hear our wailing, Garden of Africa!!  
Your crop was consumed and scattered by birds,  
but you stood firm and never left us.  
Our voices are hoarse from imploring you;  
we track through countries, appeal to phantoms,  
nothing more than chicken's scratchings,

eager at dawn, at dusk empty-handed.

You say "Bring her home?" *You* must come home!!  
All the earth's nations profit from you,  
they come from the north, they come from the south,  
from the east and from the west.  
Africa stayed still! She's nowhere else:  
look how the grass continues to sprout.  
Look at the springs still bubbling with water.  
Look everywhere, all's as it should be!

Are you raising a cry, "Bring her home?"  
You'll cry yourselves hoarse: *you* must come home!  
Gone are our customs for setting up homesteads,  
royalty, values, nothing is left!  
You live like locusts left by the swarm,  
you've lost all dignity, your sense of a nation,  
lock, stock and barrel, everything's lost:  
you seek balm in the bottle that blots out all pain.)

First thing that should be noted is the totalizing poetic vision of Nontsizi Mqgwetho that is uncompromisingly hostile to particularism, provincialism and individualism. Her comprehensive vision may be the product of the intersecting point of the then emerging black ideologies of modernity in the late nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century: respectively, in South Africa the ideology of Ethiopianism, and in the black New World the ideology of Pan Africanism. Given that Ethiopianism was ostensibly about religious matters, and Pan Africanism about political affairs, it is not surprising that the poem is suffused with religious symbolism and imagery as well as secular ones. The refrain of the poem "Bring her home" is a deliberate misprision of Pan-Africanism's ideology of "Africa for the Africans". There is a third ideology invented by black people in the context of modernity that resonates in this poem, that is the Unity of African People, as opposed to black unity which is narrowly focused. This ideology was singularized in Enoch Sontonga's "Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika" (God Bless Africa!) which today

is the national anthem of quite a few African countries, and of course including also our own nation. In articulating these ideologies in poetic form, Nontsizi Mqgqwetho was voicing her opposition to the domination of African people by European nations through imperialism, colonialism, capitalism and racism. Quite a few of her poems are a refrain on the necessity of *African Unity*, consequently I would characterize her as the great poet of *African Patriotism*. I do not know of any other African poet who has equaled her intensity and passion about this fundamental matter. She undoubtedly belongs to the pantheon of major African poets of the twentieth century.

The third person I would like to consider who symbolizes the brilliance of the New African Movement is A. C. Jordan, about whom I have already said much. There is a personal connection to him. When my Mother, my three younger brothers, and I left South Africa in 1962 to join my father who was in the doctoral program studying industrial psychology at the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA), A. C. Jordan was then a professor of African languages and literatures at this institution. Consequently, he used to come and visit with my parents frequently at our Los Angeles home. Phyllis Ntantala (Mrs. Jordan) who has informed me of this a few weeks ago was then living in London with the children. I have no recollection of A. C. Jordan since I was about thirteen years old then. Although my father was six years younger than A. C. Jordan, they may have crossed paths at Fort Hare. My family left Los Angeles in 1965 for Kenya where my father died in 1968. Also A. C. Jordan passed away in 1968, by then he had moved from UCLA to the University of Wisconsin at Madison. When A. C. Jordan vacated his position at UCLA, he was replaced by Daniel Kunene, who had been his student at the University of Cape Town in earlier years in South Africa. When A. C. Jordan passed away in Wisconsin, Daniel Kunene moved from Los Angeles to take his position in Madison. Alosi Moloi, who wrote a major dissertation on Sesotho literature, took the position in 1974 at UCLA that had been vacated by Daniel Kunene a few years earlier. After one year, Mazisi Kunene replaced Alosi Moloi and occupied the position for approximately seventeen

years from 1975 to 1993. When I think about it, there is a connection between A. C. Jordan and Mazisi Kunene, in that they both occupied the same professorship at UCLA, separated by approximately a decade. I would be surprised if they did not meet at all in exile, most likely in London. Strangely enough, when Mathabo (Mrs. Mazisi Kunene) brought Mazisi Kunene to Los Angeles from Durban in January 2003 for medical attention at UCLA, she informed me that when she was in High School in Cape Town in the middle 1950s, if I'm not mistaken, she used to cross paths with Pallo Jordan (the son of Phyllis Ntantala and A. C. Jordan), the present Minister of Culture in our country. The many intellectual worlds of the New African Movement have unexpected interconnections to each other, even in the afterlife of this cultural movement.

But continuing with this colossus known as A. C. Jordan: I have already said much about him in the context of speaking about others. Nonetheless, he merits words in his own right. I would see Jordan and Guybon Bundlwana Sinxo and J. J. R. Jolobe as the direct literary descendants of S. E. K. Mqhayi. In fact, I would say they come directly from Mqhayi's short novella *Ityala Lamawele* [The Case of the Twins]. As already mentioned, Mqhayi wrote this prose piece as an ideological struggle against the emergent hegemonic English language enabled by the Xhosa Intellectuals of the 1880s who were enamored with William Shakespeare, John Milton and Francis Bacon. I would say that Sinxo and Jordan in the 1930s aligned themselves with Mqhayi and Mgqwetho against the 1880s intellectuals. This drawing of ideological and generational lines, for instance, of Mqhayi, Sinxo, Jordan and Mgqwetho on one side, against Elijah Makiwane, Isaac W. Wauchope, John Tengo Jabavu and Pambani Jeremiah Mzimba on the other side, was a clear indication that there were many *continuities* and *discontinuities* in the history of the New African Movement. But to be fair to earlier generations of our intellectuals, it is invariably imperative to *historicize* matters regarding our cultural history, in that each generation confronts different and particular *historical problems*. For instance, the generation of Makiwane standing at the borderline

between tradition and modernity, a borderline imposed by colonialism and imperialism through the violent entrance of European modernity into African history, were preoccupied with the historical issue as to what were the political and cultural *facilitators* of entrance into modernity. The so-called option of remaining within traditional societies was no longer a historical choice since European modernity had just defeated and shattered African traditional societies. Makiwane's generation choose the only viable historical option of entering modernity. Inspired by the great African American intellectual Alexander Crummell as well as beckoned by the missionaries they came to the realization that the *English language, Christianity and modern education* were the *cultural facilitators* of entrance into modernity. The English language, because of the towering achievement of Shakespeare, was chosen by this generation of intellectuals as the *principal* facilitator towards modernity. It is not accidental that New African intellectuals from Solomon T. Plaatje through H. I. E. Dhlomo to Can Themba have been rightly bedazzled by the achievements of the English playwright.

Having taken this decisive step that we Africans must enter modernity for our *own* historical, political, cultural and economic survival, the *historical divide* between modernity and tradition disappears in *absolute* terms, but only remains in the *relative* sense. With this momentous decision of entering modernity, practically all the Xhosa Intellectuals of the 1880s became proselytizers of modernity. Just taking two examples emanating from this crossing of the historical divide: Gwayi Tyazamshe leaves the Cape in the 1880s to go proselytize in the Kimberley and Thaban Nchu area, thereby becoming the first New African to seriously engage the issue of *orthographies* for the African languages---it is therefore not accidental that this issue was to preoccupy Solomon T. Plaatje so deeply and emotionally in the early decades of the twentieth century, given his connection to Kimberley. The sixty year old Elijah Makiwane undertook a proselytizing journey into the northern Transvaal in 1902 or 1903, and there encountered the sixteen year old R. V. Selope Thema who was to become arguably the foremost proselytizer of

modernity in the decades of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s---I relate the historic nature of this “meeting” in the essay “New Negro Modernity and New African Modernity” (2003). The central point here is that the generation of Makiwane had settled the matter of the historical divide in New African history; the next generation of Mqhayi and successive generations had to confront different historical issues or problems as a result of this decision. Later writers faced the historical problem of *African languages as instruments of historical representation in modernity* in the context of an emergent African nationalism. The proximity between the founding of the African National Congress in 1912 and the publication of *Ityala Lamawele* in 1914 is not just a matter of coincidence. In as much as 1912 signaled the emergent matter of *African nationalism*, so likewise 1914 was a semaphore of the question of *African languages*. As already indicated, Mqhayi was explicit in the preface to the novella that his choice of writing in isiXhosa was to make evident that the African languages were just as complex and capable as the European languages of literary representation of modernity. *One could say that Mqhayi was declaring or articulating his African nationalism inside or through his literary practice and literary form*. I think this was an extraordinary combination: articulation of African nationalism through literary form expressed in the African languages.

How did the next generation of Xhosa intellectuals react to this explosive combination effected by Mqhayi? Born within four years of each other, both Sinxo and Jolobe in 1902 and Jordan in 1906, they did not hesitate in aligning themselves with the master by writing their *creative work* in isiXhosa. One can safely assume that in writing in the 1930s in R. V. Selope Thema’s *The Bantu World* that Mqhayi had brought about a *literary Renaissance* in Xhosa literature, both A. C. Jordan and J. J. R. Jolobe agreed with Guybon Bundlwana Sinxo’s appraisal. Both Jordan and Jolobe attempted to outmatch or approximate the achievement of Mqhayi: Jordan by writing the *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya*; Jolobe by writing the finest Xhosa epics such as *Ingqawule* (in Wandile Kruse’s dissertation, *The Form and Themes of Mqhayis’ Poetry and Prose*, University of Wisconsin, 1978) and

*uThuthula* (in *Poems of an African*, Lovedale Press, 1946). Jolobe and Sinxo will concern us on another occasion.

Our main concern here is with Jordan. He makes a series of extraordinary moves in his intellectual trajectory in South Africa: first, after writing his remarkable novel he abandons *literary practice* for nearly two decades to concern himself with *linguistic issues*; second, in contrast to Mqhayi who could be said attempted to effect rapprochement between *African literary modernity and African nationalism*, Jordan sought a unity between *African literary modernity and Marxism*, the Marxism of I. B. Tabata of the Non-European Unity Movement and the literary modernism of William Wellington Gqoba; third, his shift from his master's African nationalism to Marxism may be the reason that Jordan in his obituary notice in 1945 expressed such deep ambivalence towards him; fourth, he pays homage to Benedict Wallet Vilakazi on the tenth anniversary of his death in 1957 by translating the Zulu poet's greatest poem "Ezinkomponi" from isiZulu into the English language (in *Africa South* journal); fifth, in the later stages of his intellectual journey, by writing *Towards An African Literature* (1973), arguably the first synthesizing of Xhosa literary history, and *Tales From Southern Africa* (1973), Jordan seems to have attempted to fulfill the mission statement or manifesto that Tiyo Soga had spelled out in *Indaba* newspaper in 1862.

Where to begin given this complex slate of Jordan! Although Phyllis Ntantala's *A Life's Mosaic: The Autobiography* (1993) does give a fascinating glimpse of the lived experience of a brilliant intellectual like Jordan, his intellectual trajectory still needs to be fully delineated. Hopefully, with younger scholars in South Africa beginning to write dissertations on his work, a full intellectual portrait of Jordan seems to be in the offering. Professor Daniel Kunene, in writing what could be taken as an obituary notice, has offered a personal encounter with Jordan as his teacher in Junior High School in Kroonstad in 1938 and as his graduate teacher in the Department of Bantu Languages at the University of Cape Town in

the late 1940s and in the early 1950s (“1907-1968,” *African Arts*, Winter 1969; actually, Jordan was born in 1906).

Reverting to the points just mentioned above, I think the fundamental reason why Jordan after writing his major novel shifted to linguistics as indicated by his Master’s thesis (“Some Features of the Phonetic and Grammatical Structure of Baca,” University of Fort Hare, 1942) and doctoral dissertation (“A Phonological and Grammatical Study of Literary Xhosa,” University of Cape Town, 1956), was to support Mqhayi’s belief on a *scientific basis* that the African languages were just as capable as European languages in articulating the historical experience of modernity. I think this is the historical reason of Jordan simultaneously endorsing and challenging the work of Clement Martyn Doke. It is for our future scholars to determine the consequences of this, whether in the long run it would have been better if Jordan had continued writing creative work rather than going in the direction of linguistics. But Jordan had no choice really because doctoral work in the Departments of African Languages in South Africa were predicated on *linguistics*, rather than on *creative work in the African languages* or on *African literary history*.

Moving on to the other point, I’m not aware of Jordan’s political essays or philosophic ones in which he spells out his understanding of Marxism; or cultural essays in which he reflects on his understanding of the relationship between African literary modernity and Marxism. I think he is one New African intellectual, among others, from whom a memoir or a autobiography would have been so invaluable. I’m very much interested in knowing whether such documents exist among his papers archived at the University of Fort Hare.

Moving to the last point, I’m very much interested in his intellectual relationship with S. E. K. Mqhayi, on the one hand, and with Benedict Wallet Vilakazi, on the other hand.

All of this indicates to me that we still need to do serious archival work on the history of the New African Movement.

*President Thabo Mbeki is widely credited for bringing the idea of an African Renaissance to modern African and South African public discourse. Is he on the right track and is Africa and the world generally reading the man right?*

As I have already alluded above in answering the previous questions you posed, I believe that in South Africa the *idea* of the African Renaissance can only be *actualized* on the basis of an understanding of the *history* of the New African Movement. This is what I said in an essay "Is there a South African National Cinema" which appeared in a German book: *Jahrbuch 2000 fur Kunst und Apparate*, eds., Thomas Hensel, Hans Ulrich Reck and Siegfried Zielinski, Koln, 2000. I would like to quote a paragraph from this essay in which I attempt to broach this subject in relation to the cinema: *"It is necessary here to revert to the ideas formulated by Thomas Crow. Simultaneous with the necessary breakage of white supremacy in film production, the Africans in South Africa will need to re-acquire the 'consciousness of precedent' of the intellectual and cultural heritage of the New African Movement. This acquisition is made all the more necessary by the recent calls of the former President Nelson Mandela and the present President Thabo Mbeki for the creation and forging of an 'African Renaissance'. In actual fact, the African Renaissance is the rebirth and renewal of the intellectual and cultural legacy of the New African Movement which never completed the construction of modernity in South Africa because of its defeat by white supremacy. The African Renaissance is a call for completion of the modernist project of the New African Movement. The New African Movement covers the whole expansive historical space from the Sesotho novels of Thomas Mofolo through the Xhosa poetry of S. E. K. Mqhayi to the political practice of Bram Fischer and pedagogics of Harold Cressy. Indeed, a convoluted cultural field. This is the mirror of the future of the South African national cinema. How can this necessary but monumental project be possible? At a significant moment in the process of the Russian Revolution Vladimir Lenin asked: What is to be done? Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Dziga-Vertov, Dovzhenko, Medvedkin and others gave an eloquent response. A comparable response was given in the context of the Cuban Revolution by Sara Gomez, Tomas Gutierrez Alea, Santiago Alvarez, Julio Garcia Espinosa, Humberto Solas*

*and others when Fidel Castro postulated that the duty of the revolutionary is to make a revolution. To argue that Russia and Cuba were in the midst of a socialist revolution and South Africa is not, hence the applicability of their historical lessons is not valid, is not a real argument, or at least is not complete, since what is central here is the possibility of a correct reading of a particular historical experience by intellectuals and artists facilitating the complete opening of the imagination. Gomez, Pudovkin and others dared to be completely imaginative and original. Paradoxically, to be original and imaginative is to be historical. And to be historical is to possess a 'consciousness of precedent.'*" I still believe in this statement five years later.

I'm not in a position to know whether Africa or the world in general is reading President Mbeki correctly. I do not know anything about the politics of diplomacy. These are matters for people more competent than I'm.

I do believe that President Thabo Mbeki is on the right track. I think he has a focused historical vision; he has strong administrative skills; he has exemplary leadership qualities; and above all, he is a democratic leader. I have never met our president, but I would very much like to be privileged with meeting him.

I think these qualities he possesses reflect the success of the tradition of modernity created and established by the New African Movement in our country and the spirit of the African National Congress before it was banned in 1960 and went into exile. I mentioned earlier that the African National Congress was the political instrument of the New African Movement. *But it does not follow that the New African Movement was the intellectual and cultural instrument of the African National Congress. The New African Movement has much greater significance than the African National Congress.* I say this as a loyal member of the political organization. Given their inseparability in our political and cultural history, before the debacle of 1960, I would say that President Mbeki possesses the *intellectual culture* of the New African Movement and the *political vision* of the African National Congress. This observation is based on his famous "I am an African" speech

that seems to have had a profound effect on the country when it was given in Cape Town on behalf of the African National Congress on the occasion of the adoption by the Constitutional Assembly of The Republic of South Africa Bill 1996. For me the most important aspect of this speech, which is now assembled in his book *Africa: The Time Has Come* (1998), is where he gives recognition to the *Khoi* and the *San* people as the *First People of South Africa* who must be integrated into the democratic process as well as acknowledging the suffering they have endured as a direct consequence of the construction of modernity in our country: "I owe my being to the Khoi and the San whose desolate souls haunt the great expanses of the beautiful Cape--they who fell victim to the most merciless genocide our native land has ever seen, they who were the first to lose their lives in the struggle to defend our freedom and independence and they who, as a people, perished in the result. Today, as a country, we keep an audible silence about these ancestors of the generations that live, fearful to admit the horror of a former deed, seeking to obliterate from our memories a cruel occurrence which, in its remembering, should teach us not and never to be inhuman again." I wholeheartedly support this great and noble gesture because approximately twenty years ago, when I was living in exile in West Berlin, I wrote a long essay, "The White South African Writer in Our National Situation," which was published in a West German scholarly journal *Matatu* in 1986, in which I argued that one of the fundamental national projects of the post-apartheid and democratic South Africa would be the placing of the Khoi and the San people at the center of the reconstruction of a new South Africa. I still hold on to this view.

Another aspect of Mbeki's intellectual and political outlook that has some resemblance to the majestic nobility of the New African Movement is in having called for an "African Renaissance" in his inaugural address as chancellor of the University of Transkei in 1995. In this address, "At the Helm of South Africa's Renaissance," also assembled in his aforementioned book, he noted the following: "I believe that we should not confine the achievement of intellectual and academic excellence to the narrow realm of individual success.

Rather, we should link that excellence to the objective of the emancipation of the people from the darkness that derives from ignorance and poverty, for the spiritual and material fulfillment that is the prerogative of all human beings. Our country is going through a revolution. It is experiencing a national renaissance. As a generation, we have been thrust into the forefront of that revolution and placed at the helm of that renaissance . . . we are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding an accelerated as well as sustainable social, economic and cultural renaissance." This is foresighted thinking of the first order that would have been endorsed by many members of the New African Movement. I find the quality of Thabo Mbeki's thinking similar to that of Guybon Bundlwana Sinxo who celebrated S. E. K. Mqhayi for having created a *literary Renaissance* among the Xhosa people ("Notable Contribution to Xhosa Literature: Mr. Mqhayi Creates Xhosa Renaissance," *The Bantu World*, July 20, 1935) and to that of H. I. E. Dhlomo who thought Zulu writers like Benedict Wallet Vilakazi, R. R. R. Dhlomo, C. L. S. Nyembezi and others had initiated a great *Renaissance in Zulu Literature* ("[R. R. R.] Dhlomo's *Indlela Yababi*," *Ilanga lase Natal*, May 25, 1946). Given these direct links between the past and the present, this is the reason that I have always insisted that the *idea* of an African Renaissance can only be realized on the basis of the rediscovery, renewal and rebirth of the *history* of the New African Movement.

That the *idea* of the possibility of the African Renaissance came from *political leaders* such as Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki, not only bespeaks to their intellectual and political seriousness, but also, tragically enough, to the absence of a serious intellectual culture among contemporary *South African intellectuals* comparable to that that was manifest at the historical moment of the New African Movement.

Given Thabo Mbeki's intellectual seriousness and political acumen, it is not surprising that in Africa as well as in the rest of the world, he is taken as the foremost African political leader. When the late former President of Tanzania Julius Nyerere came to visit the Claremont

Colleges in Los Angeles in 1997, where I teach, he noted that he had high hopes that Thabo Mbeki would assume the presidency of our country and give direction to the whole African continent in the twenty first century. I think President Mbeki has more than fulfilled this great expectation wished for by the great *Mwalimu* of East Africa.

*You work closely with Ngugi and you may in fact be on one panel with him at the Cape Town Frankfurt Book Fair in June 2006, what in your view makes Ngugi such a potent phenomenon in world literature today? If you may, please in brief, try to trace your early contact with him at the University of Nairobi.*

I have “known” of Ngugi for approximately forty years from my High School days in Nairobi in the late 1960s to knowing him personally as a great African intellectual and friend in my present professional academic days here in Los Angeles in the early years of the twenty first century. In my essay, “Nairobi, The Capital of African Exiles in the 1960s,” (1996) I did mention in passing that when I was in High School in Nairobi I would now and then see Ngugi chatting with Okot p’ Bitek and other African intellectuals at Norfolk Hotel, which is just adjacent the University of Nairobi. I knew of him as the author of *Weep Not Child* and other books. I was about seventeen and Ngugi would have been around twenty-seven years old. This was an extraordinary time in Nairobi and the rest of Africa. Umkhonto we Sizwe of the African National Congress led by Chris Hani had just launched the first major military offensive against the citadel of fascism in Southern Africa in 1967. Ben Magubane at this time also launched an intellectual offensive against Functionalism in African Studies in his celebrated essay “Crisis in African Sociology” (*East African Journal*, December 1968). If Lewis Nkosi believed that the 1950s were fabulous in South Africa, I would want to argue they could not compare to the spectacular things that happened in Africa in the 1960s.

It was when I returned to Kenya in January or February 1979 when I completed my doctoral studies at UCLA in 1977 that I came to know Ngugi for the first time just a little bit more. I returned to Kenya a

few months after Ngugi had been released from political detention and imprisonment that had occurred from December 1977 to December 1978. In fact, the position I was given in the Department of Literature at the University of Nairobi in June 1979 was the one that “opened” due to Ngugi’s arrest by Kenyatta’s regime. There was a major difference, Ngugi had left the position as a full Professor, I came in as a Lecturer or as an Assistant Professor.

Strangely enough, I came to know Ngugi better not in Africa but in Europe. I left Kenya for Poland in September 1980. When I left Poland in 1983 I lived for one full year in Bayreuth in the then West Germany. Bayreuth is of course Wagner’s city where he constructed his great Opera House so that his operas could be performed on an annual basis. During the Summer Bayreuth was filled with opera lovers from all over the world there to see Wagner’s great creations. The University of Bayreuth was then a relatively new institution concentrating on Africa. Ngugi was then living in London in exile; his exile period began in 1982 with the failed coup de’tat in Kenya. He came to Bayreuth quite often from London as a Visiting Distinguished Scholar at the University of Bayreuth that was then in the process of developing its African Studies program. Another reason for Ngugi’s visits was that he was preparing the Robb Lectures that he gave at Auckland University in New Zealand that he subsequently assembled in *Decolonising the Mind* (1986). I spent one Christmas day in 1984 or 1985 at the house of a mutual friend from Uganda seriously talking with Ngugi about the crisis in Africa. This was the beginning of our knowing each other. Three years later in 1988 when I was living in West Berlin, Ngugi came to a major conference on African literature organized by a German Foundation. I inadvertently precipitated a violent clash between Ngugi and Chinua Achebe at the Conference regarding the question of *African languages*. Chinua Achebe launched into an uninformed and unprincipled attack on the question of African languages. I think it was this event that began making us, Ngugi and myself, know each other in profound ways. From this moment on, I think, a bond was forged unbeknownst to both of us. I think it was about a decade later that both of us came to recognize that something deep between us

had occurred at this Conference. I remember that Ngugi gave his presentation in Berlin in Kikuyu, thereby compelling all us Africans in the audience to follow his presentation in the German translation that had been made available to us. *The English language was not a mediating instrument, as it is nearly always is.* The next occasion our paths crossed in a serious way was when Ngugi was appointed Director of the International Center for Writing and Translation at the University of California in Irvine in 2002. When Ngugi arrived at Irvine I had been an Adjunct Professor for seven years at this institution. I was permanently employed at Pitzer College, one of the six colleges that make the Claremont Colleges, located in the suburb of Claremont in Los Angeles. I left West Berlin for Los Angeles in early 1989, just six months before the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the beginning of the disintegration of socialism as a world experience.

It is here in Los Angeles, specifically in the suburb of Irvine, that Ngugi and I became very close to each other. It is hard for me to convey in words how excited and enormously happy Ngugi was when I *first* visited him in his office at the International Center. As we all know, or should know, Ngugi is a very reticent person. His face changed dramatically in a complete state of shock and pure joy when he saw me. I knew my visit would completely catch Ngugi off guard since I knew that he did not know that I was a member of his new institution, albeit an adjunct one. I attended each of the classes of the *first* Graduate Seminar Ngugi ever taught at Irvine as a visitor not saying a word in his class. I did this as a welcome gesture! I believe this must have touched Ngugi very deeply. A few weeks later I showed him the CD ROM of my "New African Movement" construction. This was two years before I launched it on the Internet. I knew Ngugi would react positively to it. His reaction exceeded all my expectations. I think that what this said to him is that I was concretizing through new technologies of website construction regarding South Africa what we had spent hours and hours talking about in Bayreuth and in West Berlin approximately fifteen years earlier: *the question or matter of African languages.* I had specifically told Ngugi privately at the Conference in West Berlin that should he ever change his mind that African literature should be written *only* in the

African languages, he should either shut up and not say anything or preferably commit suicide. I think when I showed him the CD ROM he came to recognize how serious I had been when I told him that he should choose one of these options should he ever change his mind.

It is on the matter of *African languages* that I *came* close to Ngugi. Two passages from the voluminous writings of Ngugi have had a profound effect on me. The first text I would like to make reference to is *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* (1981). I think this is the book by Ngugi that means the most to me because it is profoundly *historical*. Ngugi wrote it in deep pain trying to explain to himself as to what had gone wrong in Kenya, or for that matter, in the whole continent. In this book Ngugi in a state of terrifying agony bared his soul to Africa. In my own words, I think Ngugi was trying to understand what European modernity had done to Africa, and why Africa had failed to construct a coherent and cohesive counter narrative to it. I should remind my South Africa compatriots that I consider myself both Kenyan and South African. *My intellectual and cultural formation was Kenyan not South African*. This can never be replaced from one's intellectual soul, no matter in later years of maturity one may try politically to revert to the country of one's birth. This bespeaks to the question of what is a nationality. Fanon has written the most coherent pages on this matter in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961).

While in Kamiti Maximum Security Prison, there on the direct orders of the president of the country, Ngugi heard that Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, the man who had jailed him, had just passed away. This elicited from him while in prison this extraordinary historical judgment jotted in *Detained*: "My reception of his death was then one of sadness: here was a black Moses who had been called by history to lead his people to the promised land of no exploitation, no oppression, but who failed to rise to the occasion, who ended up surrounding himself with colonial chiefs, home guards and traitors; who ended up being described by the British bourgeoisie as their best friend in Africa, to the extent of his body being carried to the grave, not on the arms of the Kenyan people, but on a carriage provided by the Queen of England, the symbolic head of the British exploiting

classes. Kenyatta was a twentieth-century tragic figure: he could have been a Lenin, a Mao Tse-Tung or a Ho Chi Minh; but he ended being a Chiang Kai-shek, a Park Chung Hee, or a Pinochet. He chose the Liliputian approval of the Blundells and the Macdonalds of the colonial world, warming himself in the reactionary gratitude of Euro-American exploiters and oppressors rather than in the eternal titanic applause of the Kenyan people, sunning himself in the revolutionary gratitude of all the oppressed and exploited. For me, his death, even though he had wrongly jailed me, was not an occasion for rejoicing but one that called for a serious re-evaluation of our history; to see the balance of losses and gains, and work out the options open to us for the future of our children and country." Indeed, in this book Ngugi undertook a most thorough re-appraisal of the cultural and political history of Kenya. From this moment onwards, many of Ngugi's critical works began to acquire the texture of *lived experience* rather than only being informed by *analytical frameworks*. I think there were two reasons for the impact of this book, particularly this passage, on me. The first is that on reading *Detained*, it became immediately clear to me that Ngugi was indicating that the dangers that Fanon had pointed out in his book, particularly in the chapter called "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness," had tragically come into realization: the African ruling classes had betrayed Africa and the African Revolution. Reading Fanon's book in the late 1960s in Kenya was a great political education in that what he had written prophetically was actually happening in front of one's eyes. In other words, Kenya was a tragic laboratory of neo-colonialism in the making. The second reason for the impact of the book is that it portrayed history as a *living process* in the present. This resonated with my passion for history.

The other passage that had enormous impact on me is from Ngugi's *Decolonising the Mind*, a book principally concerned with the issue of *African languages*. The passage is in the Preface: "Inevitably, essays of this nature may carry a holier-than-thou attitude or tone. *I would like to make it clear that I am writing as much about myself as about anybody else. The present predicaments of Africa are often not a matter of personal choice: they arise from an historical situation.* Their solutions are not so

much a matter of personal decision as that of a fundamental social transformation of the structures of our societies starting with a real break with imperialism and its internal ruling allies. Imperialism and its comprador alliances in Africa can never develop the continent” (my emphasis). This passage is crucial in Ngugi’s intellectual and cultural history because it reveals him historically trying to come to terms with the thesis formulated by African writers at the Kampala Conference of 1962 in which they argued that the European languages were the correct, proper and legitimate instruments for writing and creating African literature, not the African languages. The writers who promulgated this false historical position were mainly from South Africa (Ezekiel Mphahlele, Lewis Nkosi, Cosmo Pieterse, Bloke Modisane) and Nigeria (Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Christopher Okigbo, John Pepper Clark). James Ngugi (later Ngugi wa Thing’o) from Kenya, Bernard Fonlon from Cameroon, David Rubadiri from Malawi, also participated. There was also naturally a large contingent of Ugandan writers, Okot p’Bitek among them. Langston Hughes represented the United States.

The only African writer and critic to disagree with this promulgation was Obi Wali, a Nigerian who was then a student at Northwestern University. Being the youngest in this contingent of writers, approximately twenty two years old, for certain Ngugi supported this ideological position at this particular historical moment because he had no understanding of its political implications. It was the encounter with Fanon in 1965 (this was the year of the publication of the English translation of *The Wretched of the Earth* by Routledge) that unleashed a major political and cultural crisis in Ngugi. In 1967 Ngugi talks in interviews of his intent to abandon the writing of novels, though he does not state the reasons for wishing to do so. With the hindsight of twenty-five years, in our private extensive conversations in 2002 and 2003 Ngugi has repeatedly mentioned to me that his wish to abandon the novel in 1967 must have been the first manifestations of the crisis regarding the issue of *African languages*. A decade later in 1977 he declared that he will no longer write novels in the English language but rather in Gikuyu, his African language.

Since his 1977 decision, Ngugi seems to have been haunted by the 1962 promulgation. This was still resonating within Ngugi approximately forty years later in 2003 when he came to South Africa to give the Steve Biko Lecture in Cape Town. In meeting the contingent of South African writers in Kampala, Ngugi for the first time encountered the issue of the *situation* in South Africa as a *historical problem* for African intellectual and cultural history. The South African group was seemingly the most sophisticated, talking about jazz and film culture. Not only had Mphahlele organized the Kampala Conference from his base in Paris, he had just published a critical study called *The African Image* (1962), beside the classic autobiography *Down Second Avenue* (1959), which he had published several years before. Bloke Modisane, who supervised short story workshops, which Ngugi attended, was about to publish his autobiography *Blame Me on History* (1963). Ngugi has informed me that he took some of his short stories to Modisane for feedback. The criticism of Bloke was very constructive which helped him to resolve certain technical complications. At this time Lewis Nkosi was writing for the *Guardian* newspaper in London. Ngugi has informed me that this achievement of Nkosi was impressive, since what he was doing was the preserve for whites.

The Nigerian contingent was also impressive. Since here we are concerned with South African matters, not Nigeria, I will not say anything about this formidable constellation of West African intellectuals. Mphahlele in his second autobiography, *Afrika, My Music* (1984) makes clear that he always considered the Nigerian intellectuals and writers to be made of much sterner material than our intellectual compatriots. Posterity has not disagreed with this judgment. The fundamental point here is that for Mphahlele only the *literature written in English* by African writers was worthy of serious comparison across national boundaries. The elephant in the room, *African literature in the African languages*, was not deemed worthy of serious critical discussion at the Kampala Conference of 1962. *One of the great paradoxes of African cultural history in the twentieth century is why South Africa produced the most formidable literature in the African*

*languages given the extensiveness of the penetration of European modernity exceeding that occurred in any other African country. Concomitant to modernity is why we South Africans have so easily turned our back on this great cultural patrimony!* I think this is what preoccupies Ngugi in the twenty first century regarding the matter of our country, South Africa. I believe Ngugi has drawn his final battle line, or the latest one, in South Africa concerning the issue of African languages. Will he succeed in what may be his final and last battle! Time hopefully will tell. I think the 2003 visit by Ngugi to our country was the drawing of the lines for the last battle or for the last war, if there is any finality in cultural and literary wars.

The historical logic of the visit of 2003 has to be seen or understood within the purview of an encounter concerning South Africa that occurred fifty years earlier, approximately in 1953, when Ngugi was a student at Alliance High School, the best school for Africans in colonial Kenya. In parenthesis: as an indication of how “Kenyan” the Masilela family is, my youngest brother, went to this school twenty years later in the 1970s, who today as Dr. Temba (Sipho) Masilela, is Special Advisor to the Minister in the Department of Social Development; my bother who follows me obtained his medical degree in the 1970s from the University of Nairobi; my father, who died in 1968, lies buried at the Langata Cemetry in Nairobi, not far from the grave of Ras Makonnen from Guyana, the great Pan-Africanist. The meeting with South African writers and intellectuals in 1963 in Kampala was not the first time Ngugi encountered the question of South Africa. Although in all probability the first South African novel Ngugi read was Alan Paton’s *Cry, The Beloved Country* (1948), it was the encounter with writings of Peter Abrahams, especially the autobiography *Tell Freedom* (1954), that gave *historical meaning* to the question of South Africa to him. I have had many discussions with Ngugi regarding Abrahams. When I told Ngugi that I had had many conversations on the telephone with Abrahams, who presently lives in Kingston (Jamaica), for several years in the late 1990s up to 1999, he was in total disbelief!

I would venture to say that it was Peter Abrahams' exemplary *literary practice* that led Ngugi to the Kampala Conference of 1962 infamous position that literature written by Africans in the European languages was the *normal and legitimate* African literature. So it was Abrahams who culturally and politically prepared Ngugi emotionally for the 1962 Kampala Conference with some members of the Sophiatown Renaissance or the *Drum* writers of the 1950s. From this encounter Ngugi was to educate himself into acquiring a deep knowledge of the writings of the *Drum* writers as well as their historical moment, that is the cultural politics of apartheid. Ngugi has an amazing knowledge of South African literary culture of the 1950s, of the 1960s, and of the 1970s. With the hindsight of the 2003 visit, it is *very* surprising that Ngugi's first book of cultural and literary criticism, *Homecoming* (1974), does not include an appraisal of South African literary culture or a particular individual belonging to it, given his extraordinary knowledge of our country he then possessed. The book displays Ngugi's engagement with the Caribbean literary culture that I believe no African writer and intellectual would have approached at this time given its depth and its intensity. I think it was at Leeds University that Ngugi acquired this remarkable knowledge. I would be surprised if the knowledge he had of the Caribbean literary culture exceeded that he had of South African literary culture at the time. He meditates on George Lamming and on Wole Soyinka in the book, yet there is absolutely nothing about Peter Abrahams, for example! These are some of the issues future literary historians of African literature will have to engage with regarding Ngugi.

The third instance in which I think Ngugi engaged South African literary history in a central way was in the late 1970s when he abandoned the *English language* for creative writing, replacing it with an *African language*, in his particular situation with the Gikuyu language. *I believe that when Ngugi turned away from the hegemony of the European languages in the African imagination towards the African languages he had to search for the origins and structure of African literary history in African languages.* Intuitively, it could have been in the direction of Nigeria, given the Yoruba writer Daniel Olorunfemi Fagunwa, or in the direction of Tanzania, given the Swahili poet and

writer Shabaan Robert (not Roberts, as it is usually misspelled), or in the direction of our country, given so many writers who wrote in African languages from S. E. K. Mqhayi to Nontsizi Mqkwetho. Turning in the direction of our country was the only logical historical choice given the lineage of African literature in the African languages that began with Tiyo Soga in isiXhosa and Lydia Umkasetemba in isiZulu and Azariel Sekese in Sesotho in the nineteenth-century, and across much of the twentieth-century to Mazisi Kunene in isiZulu and David Livingstone Phakamile Yali-Manisi in isiXhosa. With the death of Phakamile Yali-Manisi in 1999 and C. L. S. Nyembezi in 2001, and with Mazisi Kunene having entered his autumnal years in 2003, it would seem that this great lineage has come to an end or is coming to an end in the early years of the twentieth century. Can this tragic situation be prevented from happening! How can it be prevented! Given this situation, and in this context, I view Ngugi 's intervention in the form of Steve Biko Lecture of 2003, "Consciousness and African Renaissance: South Africa in the Black Imagination," on the invitation of Xolela Mancu and Njabulo Ndebele, *as an attempt to prevent this tragedy from happening*. Without going into many complex details, Ngugi has always been puzzled by *why* and *how* the hegemony of the Sophiatown Renaissance or the *Drum* writers who wrote in the English language rendered invisible South African literary culture in the African languages! In my farewell address given on the occasion of Mazisi Kunene's retirement from the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA) and his return home in 1993 I tried to explain why this great poet had prevented this from happening: "The Return of Mazisi Kunene to South Africa: The End of an Era Intellectual Chapter in our Literary History"; the address was published as an essay in the same year in *Ufahamu Journal* (1993).

*As I mentioned before, I think what may appear to be Ngugi's last major battle or war on the issue of African languages is happening presently inside South African cultural, intellectual and political history. The historical logic determining the choice of this battlefield is clear. Aligning himself with the historical example and legacy of Benedict Wallet Vilakazi, Ngugi has been intervening in our country to restore this*

patrimony of African literature in the African languages. The alignment with Vilakazi is clear from the statement he made on the occasion of the release of Nelson Mandela from a 27-year political imprisonment published in 1990: "Why have Mandela's name and personality captivated so many people? . . . Mandela has been such a torch for the South African people. The black people of South Africa are reflected in Mandela . . . There have been pioneering successes in black South Africa . . . In literature too: the names of Thomas Mofolo, Vilakazi, Peter Abrahams, Es'kia Mphahlele, Alex la Guma, Mazisi Kunene, Miriam Tlali to mention just a few are virtually inseparable from the development of literature in the rest of the continent . . . Black South Africa cannot accept, or indeed afford, the replacement of the 1910 neo-colonial arrangement under white-minority supervision by a 1990s refined neo-colonial arrangement to be run by a black minority. The history of the last four hundred years calls upon them to overthrow forever and completely the triple burdens of colonialism, neo-colonialism and racial oppression and to start on a genuine march toward social justice for all" ("Many Years Walk to Freedom: Welcome Home Mandela!", in *Moving the Center: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*, 1993). With hindsight, I think this statement was the beginning of Ngugi's effort to restore South Africa's political and cultural history *to itself*. I think Benedict Wallet Vilakazi was the central figure through whom he saw himself participating in the restoration project in our country. Why Vilakazi: because for Ngugi Vilakazi symbolizes the question of *African languages* in South African cultural history as well as in African intellectual history.

The restoration project Ngugi has undertaken in our country is because his journey of 2003 to South Africa had a much profounder impact on him than that one he undertook in 1991. I think in his imagination, parallel to the theme of the lecture on the South African Black Imagination, *he confronted the issue of the historical meaning and legacy of S. E. K. Mqhayi*. I think it is this that has given him a strong sense of legitimacy in intervening in South African intellectual and cultural history. So his coming to the Cape Town Frankfurt Book Fair in June 2006, and my possibly being on the panel with him, is part of

his continuing intervention that began in 2003 on the issue of African languages in South Africa. Most of my compatriots are not aware of the great impact of the journey to our country in 2003 had on Ngugi himself as much as the effect he himself had on the intellectual circles in South Africa. On the day after his arrival here in Los Angeles, he called me to come to Irvine from Claremont, as soon as possible. I immediately did that on the following day. On immediately seeing him and before we exchanged any words I could tell that the journey had intellectually excited him and was very much rejuvenated for more battles and wars concerning the question of African languages. Before the journey I thought Ngugi was somewhat exhausted by this question although his convictions remained very strong. Among the many things he related to me on that day of our meeting, he made the following revolutionary statement, that honestly shocked me, which I took to be what he really wanted to tell me: "*Masilela, in good conscience, I can no longer accept the literature by Africans in the European languages as African literature. I simply cannot!*" This is truly a revolutionary statement that has profound implications as to how we appraise the legacy of modernity in Africa and how we appraise African cultural history in the twentieth century. I immediately disagreed with him explaining that he had always, at least since 1977, considered the literature written by Africans in Africa about Africa in the *European languages* a distorted form of African literature that he characterized as "Euro-African Literature". Mazisi Kunene has always referred to *this* literature as a "Literature of Occupation". Mazisi Kunene has been unyielding about this characterization. *Ngugi had never said before that African literature in the European languages by Africans themselves was not African literature.* The encounter with the cultural space of Mqhayi, Mqgwetho, Khaketla, Nyembezi and others had radicalized and revolutionized his thinking even further on this question. The logic of Ngugi's position is clear when viewed in the context of Cabral's statement that imperialism, colonialism and capitalism had forced Africans *out of* African history *into* European history. Cabral believed that revolutionary practice and transformation of colonized African societies would restore Africans back into African history and return them to their African cultural sources. Following on the logic of

Cabral, I think the argument of Ngugi is that literature in the European languages by Africans which is mis-characterized as “African Literature” can *never restore Africans to their proper place in African history*. I think this new revolutionary thinking of Ngugi deserves to be the theme the Cape Town Frankfurt Book Fair. Perhaps the panel in which I might possibly share with Ngugi will discuss this extraordinary departure in his thinking.

I would like to conclude to this response to your question by indicating two instances of Ngugi intervening in the unfolding contemporary debates in our country. He has made it clear to me that he has much at stake as to *about what* and *how I’* going to present my lecture “What Was the New African Movement” in February 2006 at the Human Sciences Research Council in Tshwane. This is as it should be, because I too had much at stake about what he said in Cape Town in 2003 about *my country* in front of *my compatriots*, even though I consider him my compatriot on my Kenyan side. Another instance, is that on the occasion Ngugi and his wife, Dr. Eunice Njeri Sahle, took Xolela Mancu and myself to lunch in Irvine on September 7, 2005, he explored with Dr. Mancu whether the upcoming conference in June 2006 commemorating the thirtieth-anniversary of the Soweto Uprising of 1976 which Xolela as head of a unit within the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) is organizing with Dr. Jordan, the Minister of Culture, would be about the issue of *African languages*. The argument of Ngugi was compelling and profound: he believed that the students thirty years ago were not revolting against the Afrikaans language and the social order of the day with the aim of entering the English language, but rather, *with the intent of re-entering African history through the African languages*. Xolela completely accepted the logic of this argument. After all the students’ revolt changed South African history thereby making it possible for all of us South Africans to re-enter African history.

*Your other area of special interest and expertise is film, are you getting a sense that South Africa's film scene is improving for the better? Have you watched Drum and The Zulu Love Letter for instance? Is there an aesthetic that is ours as South Africans and how do you think we are using Africa as*

*a point of departure? Is Hollywood avoidable? Is Hollywood a diversion or we just cannot do without until we have a booming film industry?*

You are correct in believing that I have a passion for film. My other two passions are jazz and dance. I believe film and jazz to be the greatest artistic inventions of the twentieth century. I will not say anything about dance here because one of the other interviews in the preceding pages I mention in passing how I came to work as a dance critic for the German magazine *Tanz Aktuell* in West Berlin in the 1980s, when I was closely associated with Mbukeni Herbert Mnguni and Vusi Mchunu around their two magazines *Awa-Finnaba* and *Isivivane*. One day I hope to write about this stimulating experience working with my two compatriots in exile. I will not talk about jazz here because in the forthcoming book I have edited, *Black Modernity* (forthcoming, Africa World Press, 2008), I have a long conversation about jazz with Stanley Crouch, the brilliant albeit conservative African American cultural and jazz critic.

In the cultural history of our country in the twentieth century, when the “Old Africans” were being transformed into “New Africans” by particular historical imperatives jazz and film were *cultural facilitators* of Africans’ entrance into modernity, despite the fact that practically all the *middle-class* New African intellectuals such as R. V. Selope Thema, A. C. Jordan, R. R. R. Dhlomo, H. I. E. Dhlomo, Mark Radebe and hundreds of others hated jazz because they literarily believed it to be the devil’s music. In this hatred our middle-class New African intellectuals were in all probability just imitating the American *middle class* New Negro intellectuals. The major difference was whereas the New Negro middle class was wedded to Negro Spirituals, thereby misjudging the importance of the blues, our middle class was mesmerized by *European classical music*. The consolidation of jazz in the decade of the 1950s, the moment of the Sophiatown Renaissance or the *Drum* writers era, was because of the great *cultural class struggles* in 1930s and in the 1940s in which the working-class New Africans defeated the middle-class New Africans, thereby preserving this great art form as a patrimony for the whole South African nation. The victory of the working class was enabled by New African

intellectuals like Walter M. B. Nhlapo and Todd Matshikiza who deserted their class position at this time regarding matters of culture. We know much about Matshikiza because of having belonged to the school of the *Drum* writers, and having composed the music for *King Kong* musical before his death in Zambia in 1968. But a major New African intellectual like Nhlapo is today forgotten. He wrote about cultural history of marabi and jazz in *The Bantu World* in the 1940s and *Ilanga lase Natal* in the early 1950s and then suddenly disappeared from our cultural history. Just before disappearing he collaborated with the young Ezekiel Mphahlele in the late 1940s and in early 1950s on the African National Congress Youth League monthly or newsletter published in Orlando (Soweto) called *The Voice of Africa*. Nhlapo was a serious intellectual and important poet. *This is the reason we need to re-establish the position of Walter M. B. Nhlapo in the pantheon of New African intellectuals*. When I visited Ezekiel Mphahlele with you and Keoropatse Kgositsile in Polokwane (formerly known as Pietersburg) in March 2004, this last lion of the New African Movement agreed with me on the question of the importance of Walter M. B. Nhlapo.

As cultural facilitators into modernity, jazz and film are inseparable in the intellectual and cultural history of the New African Movement. But I will concentrate on film here. The first historic encounter with film as a cultural process by New Africans out of their free choice was enabled by Solomon T. Plaatje in the early 1920s when he came back from United States. Plaatje showed documentary films around the country which he had obtained from United States showing the advancement of New Negroes in matters regarding education, religion, professional life and the middle class status of African Americans. The New Africans had always been amazed as to how within 40 years of the freeing of blacks from enslavement in United States through Emancipation Proclamation Act of 1863, the New Negroes had achieved so much *within modernity* by becoming medical doctors, lawyers, nurses, writers, professors, waiters, etc. What was truly captivating to the New Africans was the *culture of music* invented by the New Negroes from *Negro Spirituals* through *blues* to *jazz*. I think the fundamental aim of Solomon T. Plaatje in

showing these documentary films to the emergent New Africans was to show that blacks were capable of negotiating modernity even under very adverse conditions. Clearly then, for Plaatje film was first and foremost a *cultural product* for enlightening the imagination and mind and not a *commodity* for gratifying our senses. For Plaatje film was a cultural product for transmission of *knowledge*. I think in a deep sense, Plaatje's preference for *documentary films* over *fiction films* was a daring revolutionary act with tremendous foresight. The basis of this historical choice is not so much whether Plaatje despised fiction films, as much as what he perceived to be primary or secondary in influencing *the formation of modernistic imagination and sensibility of the New Africans*. By the virtue of the way she wrote her great book, *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa*, Thelma Gutsche seems to me to have been in total agreement with Solomon T. Plaatje regarding the primacy of films in forging modernistic sensibilities. Although this book was published only in 1972, it was researched in London in 1936 and submitted as a doctoral dissertation at the University of Witwatersrand in 1946. Thelma Gutsche was one of the extraordinary cultural historians within the New African Movement. Other equally formidable cultural historians within the Movement were H. I. E. Dhlomo and S. E. K. Mqhayi. The importance of these three *cultural historians* was complemented by the achievement of two *intellectual historians*: Z. K. Matthews and T. D. Skota Mveli.

This is our encapsulated historical engagement with film culture which must not be forgotten at this critical moment when a democratic film culture seems to be truly emerging in our country in this *year of 2005*. 2005 may possibly be regarded by future generations as a watershed moment in the development of South African cinema. It is very surprising that in 2005 three different "South African" films have won top prizes at three film festivals: U-Carmen eKhayelitsha ("Carmen in Khayelitsha") by Mark Dornford-May which won the Golden Bear, that is the top prize, at the Berlin Film Festival; Tsotsi ("Thug") by Gavin Hood won the top prize of People's Choice at the Toronto International Film Festival----it also won top prizes at the Edinburgh Film Festival; Drum by Zola Maseko won the Top Prize at

the Fespaco Film Festival in Burkina Faso. Tsotsi has recently been selected as South Africa's official nomination for the 78<sup>th</sup> annual Academy Awards (2006) in the foreign language category. Tsotsi was shown here in Los Angeles a few days ago, actually in Hollywood, at Americasn Film Institute Film Festival. Unfortunately I missed the film. There is already a buzz here in Los Angeles that the film is the front-runner in this category. I congratulate my country on this extraordinary achievement. Having not seen the films, I cannot say anything about them. I'm very anxious to see them. But there are issues these films immediate bring forth. First, to what extent are these truly South African films, and to what extent are they merely films taking place in South Africa without engaging the complexity of our history. Second, how about the *African languages*? The history of the authentically African films in the twentieth century was made in the African languages, from Sembene Ousmane in Senegal to Haile Gerima in Ethiopia, from Souleymane Cisse in Mali to Idrissa Ouedraogo in Burkina Faso. *If the South African cinema continues to be made in the European languages, we might have to raise the issue that it has betrayed its historical mission and is no longer part of the African cinema. It would not make any sense whatsoever that some of us who are struggling for the survival of African literature in the African languages not to advocate that South African cinema should be made in the African languages.* In order to understand ourselves historically through film practice, we need to have a thorough evaluation of the historical meaning of the late Lionel Ngakane. Since our greatest poet, Mazisi Kunene, believes that African literature in the English language in our country is a "Language of Occupation," we have to ask ourselves seriously whether the "South African" cinema in the English language is not also a "Cinema of Occupation." One thing I know for certain is that no *national cinema* was ever founded in the twentieth century based on the imitation of the Hollywood film industry! This is true whether it be *Soviet cinema* of the 1920s, or the *French avant-garde cinema* of the 1930s, *Neo-Realism* in Italy in the 1940s and in the 1950s, or the *Nouvelle Vague* in France in the 1950s and in the 1960s, or the *Cinema Novo* in Brazil in the 1950s and in the 1960s, or the *New Latin American Cinema* in the 1960s and in the 1970s, or the *New Iranian Cinema* in the 1980s and in the 1990s, or the *Argentina New Cinema* of the 1990s, or

the *New Korean Cinema* of the 2000s. Hollywood film industry is a *strangler* of national cinemas of other countries. I need to make a serious distinction here without elaborating further, because of lack of space, that the Hollywood film industry should not be totalized into being representative of the American cinema.

*The exile chapter is over, are you at all considering a return to Africa or South Africa in the near future?*

Indeed, and thankfully, the exile chapter in our political, intellectual and cultural history is over! As I mentioned to you and Keorapetse Kgositsile when we were driving back from Ezekiel Mphahlele in Polokwane to Tshwane in April 2004, during my first visit in forty two years, I will be coming back home permanently in the near future. This is still true. As you know also, Dr. Xolela Mancu, Executive Director of the Social Cohesion and Identity Research Programme at the Human Sciences Research Council, visited Ngugi and I for a three days here in Los Angeles in September 2005. He offered me a position in his research unit that I thankfully accepted. I told him I needed about two years to bring to a closure here in United States concerning my family responsibilities, my academic responsibilities to my beloved Pitzer College and the University of California in Irvine, and lastly my intellectual responsibilities of assembling about five anthologies on the New African Movement. Lastly, although it may seem like a small thing, I need to put my archives in order which are central in my constructing the website on the New African Movement over the last decade or so before I transport them home. Xolela Mancu understood this and put me on the consultancy basis with his unit. I'm thankful for this incredible offer. Let me emphasize that he is not obligated to give me this job should he decide otherwise in the near future. As you are well aware Sandile, in my Keynote Address which I gave on July 25, 1993 in a big Farewell Dinner at University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA) on the occasion of Mazisi Kunene's return home, I argued that Kunene's action of returning home was the definitive closure to the intellectual chapter of exile which had been opened by Ezekiel Mphahlele when he went to Nigeria in 1957. In parenthesis: Ernest

Mancoba going into self-imposed exile in France in 1938 or Peter Abrahams doing likewise in 1939 to England were complicated but different matters. The address was published a few months later in *Ufahamu: Journal of the African Activist Association* ("The Return of Mazisi Kunene to South Africa: The End of an Intellectual Chapter in our Literary History," vol. XXI no. III, Fall 1993). I transcribed for this issue of the journal Mazisi Kunene extemporaneous speech, which was extraordinary and very emotional, about what exile had meant to him. Ezekiel Mphahlele has published in an American academic journal his own appraisal of this remarkable episode. Hopefully, future scholars will have their say on this question of exile.

*Dorothy Masuka, the composer of Patapata, Kawuleza and Nontshokolo among some, turns 70 this year, what is the significance of her legacy?*

Your bringing the name of Dorothy Masuka in this context of our conversation is really astute and wonderful because it underlines the tremendous work we still need to do in order to have a comprehensive understanding of our cultural history in the twentieth century. We should all salute her outstanding achievement in having been one the great voices that provided the soundtrack to the Sophiatown Renaissance cultural experience of the 1950s and to the political manifestations of the Defiance Campaign and the Congress of the People which wrote the Freedom Charter. Over the last few years I have been buying many CD compilations here in Los Angeles of the music of the 1950s. I reacquainted myself with her voice as well as that of many others: Dolly Rathebe, Miriam Makeba, The Manhattan Brothers. I use to hear this music quite a lot in the late 1950s when I was about ten years old attending Sunday soccer matches at Orlando East Stadium. I remember many of the teams I saw at this time: the Alexander Hungry Lions, the Orlando Pirates, the Moroka Swallows, the Kronstadt Shamrocks, the Durban Bushbucks and many other teams. Many hours before the matches began the great voices of these stars of the 1950s would be blasting through the stadium. The combination of the voice of Dorothy Masuka and the dribbling magic of Diffa of the Moroka Swallows or the voice of the Skylarks (with the very young Miriam Makeba) and

the magic feet of Scaramouche Sono of the Orlando Pirates when I was about nine or ten years old is what I think made me a soccer fanatic which I'm still in my middle age. One of the greatest matches I saw in my life took place at Phefeni playground, which was just below Phefeni Railway Station, between the Alexander Hungry Lions and the Mzimhlope Aces. This match took place in 1959 or in 1960 when I was about eleven years old. The Hungry Lions were leading three to nothing at half time. In the second half the Aces ripped the Lions apart scoring four goals and winning the match. Living in Orlando West, not very far from Mzimhlope, I was a partisan of the Aces. One of my greatest soccer heroes was "Qurry" who played for Orlando East High School, although he lived in Orlando West; this was before Orlando West High School was built. Over the past forty five years I have always wondered as to what ever happened to "Qurry". I believed he played on the same High School team as King Kaizer, who later started the Kaizer Chiefs team. The reason I pleaded with you to take me to Soweto in April 2004, after the absence of forty- two years in exile, was to see whether the playground was still there. Of course it had disappeared long time ago.

The reason I'm talking so much about the soccer matches of the 1950s is that your mentioning the name of Dorothy Masuka reminds me that we too readily associate the Sophiatown Renaissance with the relatively *high culture* of the *Drum* writers but very tenuously with the *popular culture* of that decade. We tend to believe that many things are settled regarding the Sophiatown Renaissance fifty years after the fact, when in fact they may still be very much open.

First, because the periodizing concept of the Sophiatown Renaissance tends to be too easily associated with the literary productivity and journalism of the *Drum* writers, we tend to valorize literariness over other artistic forms of expression. I'm not so certain that the journalism and the literary practice of the *Drum* writers will be given primacy by posterity over the photographic practice of Alfred Khumalo, Bob Gosani, Peter Magubane and others, as is the case in the present.

Second, again unthinkingly, we tend to look at the Sophiatown Renaissance from the *male gender* perspective of its literary practitioners. The recent publication of autobiographies by women in exile who *belonged* to this historical moment may alter this in a dramatic way: I have in mind Maggie Resha's *Mangoana o tsoara thipa ka Bohaleng* (My Life in the Struggle, 1991); and Miriam Makeba's two autobiographies *Makeba: My Story* (1988) and *Makeba: the Miriam Makeba Story* (2004); and Noni Jabavu's *The Ochre People: Scenes from a South African Life* (1963). I can not see any justification whatsoever for not including these two autobiographies within this profile: Ruth First's *117 Days* (1963) and Helen Joseph's *Side by Side: The Autobiography* (1986). It may be possible that Gonarathnam "Kesaveloo" Goonam's *Coolie Doctor: An Autobiography* (1991) merits inclusion here. I think the central concerns of Goonam's autobiography was the decade of the 1940s, particularly in relation to Yusuf Dadoo and G. M. Naicker, with both of whom she studied medicine in Edinburgh in the 1930s. Should not, Miriam Tlali's *Muriel at Metropolitan* (1975) which largely takes place in Sophiatown and was originally viewed as fiction which now is thought to be an autobiography, also be included here. In this context, I hope Dorothy Masuka does write and publish her autobiography.

Third, the name of Dorothy Masuka raises the issue of how legitimate it is to regard the Sophiatown Renaissance historical moment through the perspective of *Drum* magazine, when there were equally excellent political and cultural venues or forums such as Ruth First's *Fighting Talk* periodical and the *Liberation* monthly magazine which had superb political analyses of the crises of the 1950s. Quite a few of the then progressive *Drum* writers were found in the pages of *Fighting Talk* such as Lewis Nkosi and Ezekiel Mphahlele. In many ways *Fighting Talk* was a much better periodical than *Drum* magazine, although the latter had a better understanding of the popular culture of the working class, despite the fact that the former was a left wing journal. This is a fascinating paradox. I think the mistake of *Fighting Talk* is that it preached to the converted, largely the self-satisfied leftist middle class. *Liberation* magazine is a fascinating review

because it straddled the intellectual borderline between Marxism and African nationalism in the contentious 1950s.

Fourth, what is urgently needed is a cultural history of the great music that was made in this decade. The sad thing is that many of the important musicians of this “Fabulous Decade,” as Lewis Nkosi famously characterized it, are constantly and permanently disappearing.

*Fifth, we need to analyze how the triumph of the Sophiatown Renaissance represented the devastating defeat of African literature in the African languages in South Africa. We are still living with the consequences of this epochal cataclysm. Astonishingly, Mazisi Kunene, alone and in exile, attempted to reverse this wrong turn in our intellectual history. In this valiant struggle, Mazisi Kunene and David Livingstone Phakamile Yali-Manisi were in solidarity with each other despite not knowing each other.*

Let me conclude by making this seemingly controversial statement, that no combination of poets who wrote in the English language across the twentieth century can equal in intellectual power and artistic excellence that of the poets who wrote in the African languages such as S. E. K. Mqhayi, Nontsizi Mgqwetho, J. J. R. Jolobe, Benedict Wallet Vilakazi, Stanley Nxu, K. E. Ntsane, David Livingstone Phakamile Yali-Manisi and Mazisi Kunene.

These contentious and fascinating issues of *just* the decade of the 1950s show how extraordinarily vibrant the New African Movement was across the first half of the twentieth century.

Johannesburg, South Africa-----Claremont [Los Angeles], California, October, 2005.