

THE MODERNITY OF H.I.E.

DHLOMO.

One must be absolutely modern.

-Arthur Rimbaud, **A Season in Hell** (1873).

At the time it was thought that the black people were incapable of adapting themselves to the changes of thought, of environment, of social life, and of outlook brought about by modern civilization. . . Today, more than ever before, Europeans [whites] realise the absurdity and impossibility of attempting to check Bantu [African] growth and development. It cannot be done. It runs counter to the order of modern society, and is opposed to principles of natural evolution. . . This process of fermentation amongst Natives [Africans] is the prelude to emancipation, achievement, success and progress. . . A new era in outlook has come.

-H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Past and Future" (1930).

What is modernity? It is, first of all, an ambiguous term: there are as many types of modernity as there are societies. Each society has its own. . . Modernity is a word in search of its meaning. Is it an idea, a mirage or a moment of history? Are we the children of modernity or are we its creators? Nobody knows for sure. . . Modernity has been a universal passion. . . Modernity is the spearhead of historical movement, the incarnation of evolution or revolution, two faces of progress.

-Octavio Paz, **In Search of the Present**, The Nobel Lecture in Literature, 1990.

Modernity is a reality they cannot wish away, but engaging it creatively requires a critical appraisal of indigenous culture, and the retention of the good as well as the jettisoning of the bad.

-Mamphela Ramphele, **A Life** (1995).

White supremacy is an integral component of European progress, with the evil of African slavery a precondition of progressive breakthroughs in the modern world. The great paradox of Western modernity is that democracy flourished for Europeans, especially men of property, alongside the flowering of the transatlantic slave trade and New World slavery.

-Cornel West, "The Ignoble Paradox of Western Modernity" (1997).

The present essay is purposely and deliberately entitled "The Cultural Modernity of H. I. E. Dhlomo" as a homage to Roberto Fernandez Retamar's "The Modernity of Marti".¹ This homage is a way of acknowledging that Frantz Fanon was correct when he called on Africa to examine and look at Latin America for certain fundamental historical lessons of our time. Although the specific intent of Fanon was as a negative illustration, in that he wanted Africa to avoid the mishaps into which Latin American countries had been forced to by imperialism, one could also see the other side of the positive illustration in that Fanon saw the Cuban Revolution as the best exemplification of the greatness that continent was capable of achieving.² It was this positive self-remaking of Latin America which Fanon felt held deep lessons for Africa. The central point of Fanon's argument was that Latin America had much more serious lessons for Africa than Europe could possibly have or impart. It is extremely unfortunate that this profound prescience of Fanon has never been taken seriously, if one can judge by the absence in Africa of intellectually theorized political and cultural interlinks between the two continents. In a certain sense Fanon was prophetic in that African Revolution from 1974 to 1994 (the social revolutions in Angola and Mozambique, and the recent political revolution in South Africa) has been carried on the shoulders of the Cuban Revolution.

In a fascinating way, Fanon's solidarity with the Cuban Revolution was so profound and influential that when Retamar constructed the political and intellectual profile of Latin American culture(s), "Caliban: Notes Toward a Discussion of Culture in Our America", arguably his most renowned essay, he paid homage to Aime Cesaire and Frantz Fanon by highlighting the Africanness of Latin American culture.³ In contrast to Jorge Luis Borges who saw Latin America culture as a historical product of Europeanism, Retamar postulated it as a mestizo culture combining the unity of the Indigenous, the European and the African.⁴ And in contrast with Octavio Paz who largely articulated Latin American literature as a linguistic formation emanating

¹ Roberto Fernandez Retamar, "The Modernity of Marti", in **Jose Marti: Revolutionary Democrat**, (eds.) Christopher Abel and Nissa Torrents, Duke University Press, Durham, 1986, pp.1-15. See also: "Jose Marti: A Cuban for All Seasons", *The Washington Post* (Book World), May 14, 1995, pp.8-9.

² Frantz Fanon, **The Wretched of the Earth**, trans. Constance Farrington, Grove Weidenfeld, New York 1968 [1961], p.97.

³ I should point out that Abdias do Nascimento rejects the designation Latin America since he believes it excludes the Africanness or Africanity of the South American continent: "The African Experience in Brazil", in **African Presence in the Americas**, (eds.) Tanya R. Sanders and Shawna Moore, Africa World Press, Trenton, 1995.

⁴ Roberto Fernandez Retamar, "Caliban: Notes Toward a Discussion of Culture in Our America" (1971), in **Caliban and Other Essays**, trans. Edward Baker, foreword Fredric Jameson, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1989, pp.3-45; Jorge Luis Borges, "The Argentine Writer and Tradition", in **Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings**, (eds.) Donald A Yates and James E. Irby, A New Directions Book, New York, 1964, pp.177-185.

from adapted European languages, for Retamar it was predicated on the historical synthesis of the lived experiences of Latin American people.⁵ I mention these few contrastive viewpoints (I leave unmentioned for example Angel Rama and Antonio Candido) on the genealogy of Latin American literature as rich interpretative forms that could enrich our already dense African historical perspectives on literature. It is because of these positionings that Roberto Fernandez Retamar can be affiliated with the political and intellectual vision of Frantz Fanon.⁶

Retamar on Jose Marti and Octavio Paz on modernity as a worldly experience (unfortunately a shade too Eurocentric) are reflections which inspire my present preoccupations with Dhlomo and modernity: lessons of theoretical approach for Africa from Latin America as Fanon had hoped and wished. There will be no direct applications of these experiences from one continent to another; my concern is partly to foster a certain spiritual ambience. Roberto Fernandez Retamar defines the modernity of Marti as consisting of five vectors: the interrogation of the practicality and realizability of the present; an unwavering commitment to the liberation of his people; a constant preoccupation with the historical meaning of the past, in the concrete instance of Marti of how to continue the tradition of Simon Bolivar, and with H. I. E. Dhlomo of how to make meaningful the monumentality of Shaka to South African history; the importance of defining the spiritual world of the people; and lastly, a deeply felt aspiration to continental unity.⁷ Concerning Paz on modernity I would like to quote two passages defining it in his remarkable, probably I should say very astonishing book, **Children of the Mire**, which as the subtitle states it is a study of modern poetry from Romanticism to the Avant-Garde. On the very first page of the book Octavio Paz jolts one with this definition: "Modernity is a polemical tradition which displaces the tradition of the moment, whatever it happens to be, but an instant later yields its place to still another tradition which in turn is a momentary manifestation of modernity. Modernity is never itself; it is always *the other*. The modern is characterized not only by novelty but by otherness." Two pages later he elaborates and specifies his understanding of this historical construct: "What distinguishes our modernity from that of other ages is not

⁵ Octavio Paz, "A Literature of Foundations" (1961), **The Siren and the Seashell**, trans. Lysander Kemp, University of Texas Press, 1976, pp.171-179; Roberto Fernandez Retamar, "Some Theoretical Problems of Spanish American Literature", **Caliban and Other Essays**, op. cit., pp.74-99.

⁶ As one of the ideologues of the Cuban Revolution and as editor of *Casa da las Americas* for the last quarter of a century, Retamar has been at the center of Latin American exchanges and duels between its great writers: for instance the exchange between Julio Cortazar and Jose Maria Arguedas on the social responsibility and self-identification of the Latin American writer: Julio Cortazar, "Letter to Roberto Fernandez Retamar", in **Lives on the Line: The Testimony of Contemporary Latin American Writers**, (ed.) Doris Meyer, University of California Press, 1988, pp. 74-83; Mario Vargas Llosa, "Social Commitment and the Latin American writer", op. cit., pp.128-136.

⁷ Roberto Fernandez Retamar, "The Cultural Modernity of Marti", op. cit., p.2-3.

our cult of the new and surprising, important though it is, but the fact that it is a rejection, a criticism of the immediate past, an interruption of continuity. Modern art is not only the offspring of the age of criticism, it is also its own critic. The new is not exactly the modern, unless it carries a double explosive charge: the negation of the past and the affirmation of something different."⁸ It is such passages that have compelled me to re-read the book so many times over the last twenty years. Again I quote the following from this incomparable book on modernity: "Opposition of the modern age works within the age. To criticize it is one of the functions of the modern spirit; and even more, one way of fulfilling it. The modern age is the age of schism and of self-negation, the age of criticism. It has identified itself with change, change with criticism, and both with progress. Modern art is modern because it is critical. Its criticism unfolded in two contradictory directions; it rejected the linear time of the modern age and it rejected itself. By the first it denied modernity; by the second affirmed it. Faced with history and its changes, it postulated the timeless time of the origins, the moment, or the cycle; faced with its own tradition, it postulated change and criticism."⁹ I do not intend here to place Dhlomo's modernity under Paz's conceptualization of European modernity, but rather, to make Paz's poetics of modernity serve the historical project of Dhlomo, even if obliquely, in the same way that Césaire said that Marxism should be made to serve African people, and not the African people forced marched to Marxism.

Dhlomo and modernity: the historical and cultural geography of this encounter mapped out in his writings scattered in largely two newspapers *Umteteli wa Bantu* and *Ilanga lase Natal*, is wide, deep and vast. Although R. V. Seloape Thema was perhaps the first and most persistent among the New African intellectuals to indicate the challenge of modernity, H. I. E. Dhlomo was arguably the most successful in constructing the theoretical, political and epistemological instrumentarium for meeting this challenge: while Seloape Thema drew attention to the historical significance and historical lessons of African American modernity for African modernity in South Africa, Dhlomo actually constructed the theoretical edifice of South African modernity.¹⁰ Having a stronger sense of the geography of various modernities in the world and the cultural textures of many modernism(s) as worldly experience, Dhlomo saw European modernities as having central importance to any comparable undertaking in South Africa. It is not accidental that, although Du Bois' concept of "The Talented Tenth" had a most profound impact on him, indicated by many allusions to it in many of his essays, Dhlomo saw

⁸ Octavio Paz, *The Children of the Mire*, trans. Rachel Phillips, Harvard University Press, 1974, p.1-3.

⁹ *ibid.*, p.148-9.

¹⁰ cf., "The Trans-Atlantic Connection of the New African Movement", in *United States and South Africa: The Historical Field of Social and Cultural Interaction*, (ed.) Ntongela Masilela, Verso, London, 1997.

himself as having closer cultural affinities with Countee Cullen because of their passion for the English Romantic poets, the American absorbed with Keats and the African focused on Shelley.¹¹ Comparing Cullen's "Thoughts in a Zoo" to his own poem (in the essay Dhlomo does not reveal that it is actual his poem involved in the comparison), Dhlomo argues that both poems are preoccupied with similar issues: the problems of Nature and Man [!]; the relation of the Soul of black people to intellectual freedom, their similar preoccupation with beauty and expression, and the nature of the social systems under which their respective people live. Reading the poems politically in relation to the poetic form derived from Romanticism, Dhlomo writes: "The problem that these poets raise is no small one. It concerns the freedom of the mind and the Soul of the people. Enslave the mind and the Soul of a people, and you have destroyed them. Now, the most tragic thing about the process of enslaving the Mind and Soul of a people is that you cannot do it by assailing them or their liberties straight and openly".¹² For

¹¹ The original essay of 1903 by W. E. B. Du Bois is reprinted as an appendix in a recent book by Henry Louis Gates and Cornel West: **The Future of the Race**, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1996, pp.133-157. The rest of the book consists of two major essays by Gates and West on the contemporary significance of "The Talented Tenth". H. I. E. Dhlomo alludes to Du Bois' essay in many of his own: Weekly Review and Commentary (a column), *Ilanga lase Natal*, February 17, 1945; "Freaks, Potatoes, Mice, Swan Song", *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 7, 1950; "Native Policy in South Africa, Part III", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, April 5, 1930; "Education", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, June 7, 1930; "Revolution", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, August 27, 1932; "Bantu Culture and Expression", *Ilanga lase Natal*, July 24, 1948. Dhlomo more than anyone among the New African intelligentsia, with the possible exception of Allan Kirkland Soga, was influenced by the African American experience in his articulation of race: in his writings one encounters many references to the Race Man, Race Problem, Race Civilization, etc. Soga writing under the by-line of The Cult of Race Leadership and R. V. Seloape Thema under Along the Colour Line in the 1920s in *Umteteli wa Bantu* precede Dhlomo in incorporating African American intellectual culture into South Africa. Allan Kirkland Soga may have been the first African in South Africa to make a series of contributions to an African American publication beginning with a contribution of 1903 protesting the exclusion of Africans in the Treaty of Vereeniging: "Ethiopians of the Twentieth Century", *The Colored American Magazine*, May/June, July/August, 1903.

¹² H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Apartheid, Flora And Fauna", *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 23, 1950. Simultaneously with establish connections across the Atlantic, Dhlomo, aligning himself with Pan-Africanism, exhorted South Africans to always think in terms of Africa (see: "Africans and Bantu", X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 23, 1943). He saw Africa as representing a new horizon of thought for South Africans, that would make possible the rediscovery of the beauty, immensity, possibilities and challenges of the continent. Emphasizing salvation in cultural activity, Dhlomo called on African writers, scholars, creative artists to organize an All-African Cultural Movement. Ezekiel Mphahlele was to partly realize this approximately twenty years later in 1962 when he organized the Kampala Conference in which 30 African writers who express themselves in English participated (see: Ezekiel Mphahlele, "The Makerere Writers' Conference", *Africa Report*, vol.7 no.7, July 1962). Dhlomo had already seen the intellectual importance of Mphahlele by selecting his first published book, a collection of short stories called **Man Must Live and Other Stories** (1946), as a significant text published in the English language by an African, to be placed alongside Silas Modiri Molema's **The Bantu** (1920), Solomon Plaatje's **Native Life in South Africa** (1916) and **Mhudi** (1930), D. D. T.

Dhlomo then, a trans-Atlantic connection to African American literary culture had to be made unavoidably or inescapably through a European poetic cultural movement.

There are several instances in which Dhlomo specifies his understanding of modernity. In one contextual definition modernity is articulated as the struggle between the New and the Old within the ambience of the conflictual nature of South African history: white vs black and Afrikaner vs Briton. He postulates: "There is a struggle between old ideas, orthodox thought, and tradition on the one hand; and the new scientific outlook, evolutionary thought, and rapid progress on the other. Some looking backwards and seeing the old order changing and giving birth to the new feel ill at ease, and are striving to stay the passing of the life of yesterday; while other[s] with clearer vision and more courage see better days ahead, and are endeavoring to hasten the pace. . . There is a frantic struggle to keep apart and distinct the races of the country, while the inexorable hand of Fate points to a common destiny. Nor can it be otherwise with people who live under the same conditions of life and are acted upon by like influences. A situation midway between bedlam and chaos has been created."¹³ Denouncing in this essay the segregationist policies that were emanating from white Parliament in 1930, which were aimed at denying Africans full citizenship, autonomy and self-organization, Dhlomo believed that modernity was in the process of bringing prosperity, progress and civilization to Africans.

Elsewhere undertaking a simultaneous task of criticizing some leisurely ways of African life as well as castigating the deleterious effects of European colonialism in Africa, Dhlomo expresses his profound faith in the possibilities of modernity enabling Africans overcome their intractable problems stemming from traditional life and from imperial domination: "Most important of all Africa calls for a new spirit of tolerance, conciliation, service and understanding; for a vision of the stupendous task awaiting us; of the future potentialities of this our country; of the spiritual material and psychological needs of the Bantu. . . The rapid march of science and medicine, the marvels of invention, transformation of the world by beautiful cities and farmsteads, outlawry [sic] of war, cultivation of deserts, and above and beyond and before all else the growth of the spirit of international patriotism, lead me to refuse to believe in the ultimate catastrophical destruction of this lovely world. . . Imperceptibly we are marching nearer the Golden Age; we are drawing closer and closer to the realisation of the Call of Africa." Calling on the New African Upper Tenth to fight ignorance with enlightenment,

Jabavu's **The Black Problem** (192), and a few others (see: Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review and Commentary "Books in English by Africans", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 25, 1950). In these short reflections Dhlomo was sketching the primary texts of the then emerging African intellectual tradition.

¹³ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Down To The Roots: Cure v Prevention", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, May 17, 1930.

superstition with Christianity and civilization, arguing that reason should replace sentimentality, merit replacing exclusion, substituting conscientious responsibility for unreasoning obedience, Dhlomo states that it is merely folly on the part of the Talented Tenth to think they could succeed in solving the problems facing Africa with the mass of unsophisticated, indifferent and backward people merely tagging behind them.¹⁴ With these expositions, following on the intellectual tradition founded by Xhosa intellectuals like Elijah Makiwane, Walter Rubusana, John Tengo Jabavu and others in the late nineteenth-century through the Native Education Association and consolidated by R. V. Selope Thema and H. Selby Msimang in the 1920s in *Umteteli wa Bantu*, Dhlomo also theorizes modernity as a historical challenge.

In the construction of the general principles of modernity, Dhlomo was guided by a dialectics of history which he had occasion to formulate in several instances. In one major exposition on his conception of history and the lessons which could be drawn from it, Dhlomo argues that emotions, thoughts, customs, hopes and fears which are ruled by ideas are more central to the drama of life than action or praxis. Crucial to what makes history is not so much the conglomeration of facts, which can be given various interpretations, as the ideas which govern the interpretative (ideological) system of the historian or reader. It is ideas which are more vital and mightier than laws or force, because they are concerned with inner life, rather than the superficial external forms of life. For him consequently history teaches that social life is inseparable from ethical life: hence ethical and moral issues are unavoidable. Dhlomo states that although society depends on commerce, it is ethical principles which are the governing force of life. From this conception of history as ruled by ideas, Dhlomo draws two dramatic conclusions: that politics depends on and is part of ethics; and that one of the fundamental lessons of history is that individuals are more important than the masses in its making.¹⁵ For him the great changes, originality, and the social movements in history are the products of individuals.

¹⁴ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Africa's Call", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, November 16, 1929. This call to Africa on the issue of modernity reflects his commitment to the continent: "My creative writing is the greatest thing I can give to my people, to Africa. I am determined to die writing and writing and writing. And no one. . . can stop, fight or destroy that. It is the soul, the heart, the spirit. It will endure and speak truth even if I perish. . . I have chosen the path to serve my people by means of literature, and nothing will deflect me from this course" (cited by Nick Visser, "H. I. E. Dhlomo [1903-1956]: the re-emergence of an African writer", *English in Africa*, vol.1 no.2, September 1974, p.10).

¹⁵ Perhaps one of the reasons explaining Dhlomo's unwavering belief that ideas determine history and not material conditions is that his examination of South African history in the nineteenth century convinced him that it was not so much the military of Africans by Europeans which profoundly incapacitated the former as much as the Europeans succeeding in getting African intelligentsia's consent to the superiority of European ideas: "The history of South Africa is the story of battles between Boer and Briton, between Black and White and between the forces of Light and Progress and those of Darkness and Destruction. . . It was the subtler

Damning racial oppression and segregation, Dhlomo believed that Europeans (whites) oppressed Africans (blacks) because they judged them by means of the African masses rather than by the achievements of outstanding individuals.¹⁶ Dhlomo strongly asserted that nations should be judged through the achievements and products of its most gifted. With this theorizing of history, it is clear why Dhlomo would find Du Bois' idea of the Talented Ten so persuasive since it confirmed his own reading of history as made and driven by individuals rather than by social and material forces.¹⁷ Secondly, this explains why Dhlomo looked at the conflict between modernity and tradition through Benedit Vilakazi and Shaka as symbolic representations of these great historical forces, respectively one a great scholar and poet and the other a great warrior and statesman. At the moment of the onset of apartheid politics in South Africa, Dhlomo designated Albert Luthuli as a great hero who would lead Africans to eventually prevail against white domination. Dhlomo had no doubt that it was the action stemming from the praxis of great individuals that make and constitute the greatness of a nation, as well as the greatness of a nation calls forth for great heroic action.¹⁸ Thirdly, for Dhlomo the great achievements of world literature and culture were represented by Shakespeare, The Greek dramatists (Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes) and the Bible, because in each of these representations the great strivings and achievements of historical and fictional individuals were pitted against fate and destiny; ideas were central in their overcoming their

agencies that really conquered the Bantu--the missionaries (religion, medicine, education). . . These were victories over the mind and spirit and upon ways of living. . . The conquest of the Bantu by these subtler agencies was his salvation. He changed, learnt and multiplied, and South Africa remained a Blackman's country" ("Bantu, Boer and Briton", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 20, 1954). In a way, and with profound ambivalence, Dhlomo exemplifies the melancholic celebration of the entrance of European modernity into African history.

¹⁶ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "History and Human Behaviour" *Umteteli wa Bantu*, September 24, 1932.

¹⁷ Dhlomo was so captivated by Du Bois' essay of the "The Talented Tenth" that forty-five years after it was written he wrote his own essay synthesizing the central points of Du Bois' thesis that a nation is saved or best ably represented or served by its few talented individuals: "Personal and Cultural Achievement", *Ilanga lase Natal*, August 14, 1948. In this essay Dhlomo formulates an idea to which practically all the New African modernizers subscribed: "Africans are fond of the American Negroes and often look upon the rapid progress and achievements of this group as an indication, an example, of what the black man here can and must do." Praising Paul Robeson and W. E. B. Du Bois for having established The Council of African Affairs as which was a continuation of the Pan-Africanist project of struggling for the decolonization of Africa, Dhlomo arguing for the essential unity of Africans and African Americans writes: "There is no doubt that in this post war era there will be many direct and useful cultural, economical [sic], and political links between Negroes and Africans. Let it be so" (Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "U. S. A. Support", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 9, 1946).

¹⁸ X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Greatness", *Ilanga lase Natal*, May 29, 1943. It seems that whenever Dhlomo articulated his Carlylean theory of great individuals, it necessitated an expression of his hostility toward Marxism: "Some socialist modernists or modernists socialists are amused if not impatient with our theories of Great Men".

particular situations.¹⁹ To these three highest literary and cultural attainments, Dhlomo added the Romantic poets for they represented the incomparable achievement of the individual imagination.²⁰ Fourthly, this also explains Dhlomo's deep fascination with Thomas Carlyle's theory of the role of heroes in history.²¹ Fully agreeing with Carlyle's "Heroes and Hero Worship" that the conception of hero as a god and prophet in modern times is untenable given the progress of science and culture, Dhlomo also assents to the view of Carlyle that a hero in the era of modernity is an individual possessing innate genius or innate greatness which do not require divine inspiration; such an individual would be great in any domain he or she had

¹⁹ Since Dhlomo was creatively first and foremost a dramatist, these choices were presumably critical in the formation of his dramatic imagination. There are many instances in which Dhlomo repeatedly states that Shakespeare, the Bible and the Greek dramatists were the greatest artistic achievements of human civilization: "Words", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, September 21, 1929: "Give to Karl Marx 26 letters to form into words, and he sets people at one another's throats, ruins countries, and overthrows governments and dynasties. But give the same letters to Shakespeare---and the world looks as gorgeous as the hues of heavens, as odorous as all Arabia, and as merry as Fairyland"; "Inconsistencies", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, August 16, 1930: praising the wisdom of Shakespeare, Socrates and Paul, Dhlomo speaks of the Bible as 'the Book of books'; "'Hamlet' Without the Prince", *Ilanga lase Natal*, November 27, 1954; "African drama and Poetry", *South African Outlook*, vol. 69, April 1939; "Why Study Tribal Dramatic Forms?", *Transvaal Native Education Quarterly*, March 1939; "Zulu Folk Poetry", *Native Teachers' Journal*, April 1948 [the last three essays appear in a special issue of *English in Africa, Literary Theory and Criticism of H. I. E. Dhlomo*, (ed.) N. W. Visser, vol.4 no.2, September 1977; "Woman", X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], *Ilanga lase Natal*, August 26, 1944; "The Peace of the Soul", X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 18, 1947. To this canon, Dhlomo also included the Homeric epics. Dhlomo would have wholeheartedly assented to the canon of Western civilization that Harold Bloom has attempted to construct and justify in **The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages** (Harcourt Brace & Company, New York, 1994).

²⁰ Reflecting on a poem by John Keats, Dhlomo writes an essay on the nature of remembrance: "Remembering", X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], *Ilanga lase Natal*, August 16, 1947; "Freaks, Potatoes, Mice, Swan Song", op. cit. There is a general consensus in South African scholarship that Dhlomo's poems were marred by his striving for Romantic sensibility and poetic form.

²¹ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "The Individual and the Group", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, November 5, 1932. Reflecting on a Jan van Riebeeck Festival of 1951, Dhlomo laments that its representation of South African history is false since it reflects only a European perspective in exclusion of other South African viewpoints; arguing that partiality in the writing of history is unavoidable given the political situation in the country at the time, he urges Africans to write this history from their particular vantage point: "What Africans should do is to write their version of the story of South Africa and of its great men [and great women]. And African great men may not be what is now accepted as great men. In order to do this, we must learn to appreciate, even dig out and be proud of the greatness of our men, past and present. We must not allow Europeans to create, choose, and build for us our heroes and great men" (*Weekly Review and Commentary*, "Riebeeck Festival and History", *Ilanga lase Natal*, September 29, 1951). The two decades separating these two pieces clearly show that Dhlomo never changed or deviated from his Carlylian conception of the poetics of history.

chosen other than the field in which that greatness was exemplified. Continuing on these reflections, Dhlomo writes: "These and many other points suggest that some one should continue where Carlyle left and write about heroes and hero-worship today, giving us the religious and the psychological background."²² And fifthly, this explains why from his Carlylean perspective of history, as essentially being made by great individuals in a heroic mode, he was unrelentingly hostile to the Marxist theory of history, which he understood as an irrational revolutionary philosophy of the masses, intent on replacing rational social orders through violence and fear.

In several passages in numerous essays, Dhlomo criticizes Marxism for postulating that it is the masses who make history, rather than heroic individual figures.²³ Given his deep affinity for Mathew Arnold, Dhlomo had reservations about revolutions and the spontaneity of the masses; a complex attitude as will be apparent later in the essay. Despite these fears, the great merit of Dhlomo is that although paradoxically he thought historical materialism incompatible with the essential philosophical principles regulating the lived experience of modernity, he had a deep awareness, though not directly articulated, that Marxism was inseparable from modernity itself. Because of his wrenching ambivalence to this philosophy of the Enlightenment of modern times, and because he amplified his views on

²² Busy Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review and Commentary "Tyrone Power and Hero-Worship", *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 4, 1947. In the subsequent issues of the newspaper Dhlomo was to write Weekly Letters to outstanding individuals such as H. Selby Msimang, Albert Luthuli, Rueben C. Caluza, Albert Luthuli, E. H. A. Made and others, commending them for their contributions to the progress of African people, which Dhlomo invariably characterized as the "Race", as a way of paying homage to W. E. B. Du Bois. In other instances Dhlomo attempted to synthesize the ideas of Thomas Carlyle with those of Mathew Arnold as can be seen from the following sentence: "Western thinkers who believe in the theory of the Great Man have always held that although the masses play their significant role, progress is largely the result of individual effort of the best and most gifted spirits in the community" (Busy Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review and Commentary "Sacrificing our Best?", *Ilanga lase Natal*, June 18, 1949). Now and then Dhlomo would lament in his columns that Africans never fully appreciated the significance of great individuals and gifted minds among their own people: "Negroes and Indians on the other hand are loud in praising and building the reputations of their men of talent" (Busy Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review and Commentary "Is It Not Strange?", *Ilanga lase Natal*, July 17, 1948).

²³ *ibid.*, "Conferences"; it is necessary to caution here that Dhlomo never wholly counterposed the individual heroic figure against the masses, for elsewhere he argued that the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, and the national struggle for the independence of India had been successful because highly intelligent heroic individuals had led and worked together with the masses (Busy Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review and Commentary "Higher Education", *Ilanga lase Natal*, May 21, 1949). Dhlomo held Pandit Nehru in high esteem as exemplifying one of the great heroic figures in the twentieth century (Busy Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review and Commentary "Nehru's U. S. A. Visit", *Ilanga lase Natal*, November 26, 1949). He saw India as holding many lessons for Africa.

Marxism, socialism and revolution on numerous occasions, it is perhaps necessary to pause for an extended consideration of these matters.

Dhlomo gives exposition of his philosophy of history by arguing that ideas (human thought) were the causes of, and invariably preceded, historic upheavals be they in the nature of social and religious reformations or political resolutions and social revolutions. In other words, these transformations were external manifestations of, and necessitated by, deeper psychological changes in human beings. For Dhlomo social, political and industrial changes were not possible without first of all ideas and thoughts of transforming the consciousness of the masses.²⁴ Dhlomo was very conscious that his philosophy of history was projected against the Marxist interpretation of history which postulates that social being determines social consciousness. He inverted this Marxian historical perspective. Even though Dhlomo never fully engaged Marxism in its total complexity and the nature of its continuation of the legacy of the Enlightenment, it is evident that of all the New African intellectuals he was more conscious of the fact that intellectually and politically historical materialism and modernity were not so easily separable as many of the Talented Tenth of New Africanism had thought. Whereas R. V. Selope Thema, H. Selby Msimang, Solomon T. Plaatje, Walter Rubusana, Jordan K. Ngubane and others were content to dismiss or ignore Marxism because of its adversarial stance in relation to Christianity, Dhlomo as a great intellectual felt the need to conceptualize his opposition to historical materialism.²⁵

In the main Dhlomo understood Marxism as a destructive force (process) because of its revolutionary political perspective, as we saw earlier when he compared the supposed violent anarchism of Marx to the great creative genius of Shakespeare. We will not dwell on the merits of such a comparison. What is essential is to register the philosophical reasons for his aversion to Marxism. Although like the other members of the New African Movement, the real reason for his antagonism to Marxism was because of his Christian religious beliefs (i. e. antagonism to the atheism of historical materialism), Dhlomo was profoundly immersed into modernity as a world experience to

²⁴ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "... Be They Still Carry Passes", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, August 22, 1931.

²⁵ Dhlomo was dismayed that practically none of these New African Talented Tenth members as well as others kept adequate records of their work and life, thereby hindering and disabling themselves in writing their autobiographies as well as making it difficult for later scholars to evaluate their individual roles in South African history ("Weekly Letter: To H. Selby Msimang", *Ilanga lase Natal*, April 29, 1950). Given these reflections and judgements, it is perplexing why Dhlomo never his autobiography. But one could argue that his three columns in *Ilanga lase Natal*, sometimes appearing simultaneously within a particular week, constitute his spiritual autobiography.

know that such a reason was insufficient for a serious intellectual in the twentieth-century.²⁶

Dhlomo understood history as a creative process characterized by evolutionary movement, not by revolutionary upheavals which now and then expressed its most profound manifestations.²⁷ Part of the explanation for this perspective is that he wanted to believe in history as an artistic process which emitted unending controllable creative energies. This view of history as an evolutionary process was determined by his philosophy of life, which he characterizes as Humanitarianism. Dhlomo defines this philosophy as a synthesis of Christian idealism and Platonic philosophy: "A human being, merely by virtue of being human, had fundamental rights. Plato and Christ believed in a plastic and creative society of virtue and vice, good and evil, greed and co-operation, truth and error. They did not believe in and teach

²⁶ For Dhlomo, like the other New African intellectuals engaged with the historical meaning of modernity, the achievements of Christianity and missionaries were real enough given their Manichaean perspective of the struggle between civilization and heathenism (barbarism): Christianity brought a new glorious Africa into being from the old dark continent; missionaries brought with them light among the 'primitive' peoples; the Church brought knowledge, science, civilization to bear on ignorance, superstition and barbarism; Christianity has maintained civilization against ignorance and superstition; Christian ethics have brought a higher code of morality into Africa, making possible love and life to triumph over fear and force ("Bantu and the Church", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, August 23, 1930). Concluding in uncertain terms, Dhlomo writes: "To deny the Church this position would be gross stupidity and base ingratitude." It is necessary to counterpose the observation of Neville Alexander to the combative certainties of Dhlomo: "From the point of view of the process of world history, most scholars are agreed today that the main task of the missionaries was that of colonising the mind of 'their' native wards" (**Language Policy and National Unity in South Africa/Azania: An Essay**, Buchu Books, Cape Town, 1989, p.17). For Dhlomo the fundamental role of the Church was to control the primeval instincts of mankind through Christian ethics. R. V. Selope Thema, the leading thinker among the intellectuals working in the *Umteteli wa Bantu* weekly in the 1920s, would have assented to all of these views; for he intended to entitle his unpublished autobiography "Up From Barbarism" in homage to Booker T. Washington's **Up From Slavery**. Given his great intelligence, Dhlomo will unintentionally and unconsciously modify some of these views when he celebrates the uniqueness and originality of traditional cultures of yesteryear, as we will observe in a moment.

²⁷ Dhlomo's disbelief in a revolutionary perspective may be associated with his observation that the new is not necessarily better than the old: "Many people regard each and every change that takes place as something better just because it is new. Changes may or may not be improvements. Consequently care should be taken before change is accepted" ("Inferiority Complex", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, November 23, 1929). Even the issues he was passionate about had to be subjected to the evolutionary process: "One thing is certain; that the solution of the Race Problem must be a slow gradual; methodic process" ("Aspects of the Race Problem", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, March 14, 1931). Even though Dhlomo disowned the concept of revolution in social life and social history, hence his rejection of Marxism because it exemplified this understanding of history, he was fascinated by the nature of revolutionary breakthroughs in epistemology, history of ideas and in the arts: hence his constant preoccupation with how geniuses such as, for example, Shakespeare, Newton, Michealangelo, Jesus, Buddha, Hume, Darwin and others transformed human thought (X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Smuts On The Colour Problem, II", *Ilanga lase Natal*, January 18, 1947).

about an atomistic and deterministic society of permanently and inherently superior beings and groups on the one hand and inferior ones on the other. Men could and should live and work together in peace and happiness, co-operate, cherish and love one another. And men must distinguish between things that endure and those that happen; eternal and occurring things; end and means or process. Strife is but a path towards the Harmony of harmonies when human immaturity will be perfected."²⁸ Believing in this dramatist perspective of history which is based on the philosophy of humanism, Dhlomo felt compelled to articulate the rational reasons for the philosophical implausibility of the Marxian historical viewpoint.²⁹

Dhlomo opens his case against Marxism by arguing the impossibility of achieving a classless society³⁰ or a non-race conscious society,³¹ let alone a non-racist society in which Africans (blacks) and Europeans (whites) form a nation. He also criticizes dialectical materialism for what he supposes to be its extremism in linking politics and economics, which has the merit in his eyes for being the exact opposite of apartheid predicated on the extreme denial of this possible unity.³² To him it was evident that nationalism was the political philosophy of modernity, and not Marxism, however much the latter was imbricated into modernity.³³ From a relatively early period in his intellectual

²⁸ X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Smuts On The Colour Problem, I", *Ilanga lase Natal*, January 11, 1947.

²⁹ In Dhlomo's estimation, the soundness, the durability and correctness of humanism, which is predicated on the primacy of ethics, had been proven by history itself: whereas the Roman Empire based on the politics of realism had perished, the Christian Empire contingent on an ethical philosophy had survived into the present (Weekly Review And Commentary "Frisco and Victory", *Ilanga lase Natal*, May 12, 1945).

³⁰ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Essays In Tribal Culture, Part III: Inkomo in Zulu Life", *Ilanga lase Natal*, December 6, 1947.

³¹ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "An Outstanding Trade Unionist", *Ilanga lase Natal*, December 16, 1944.

³² Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Economics and Politics", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 7, 1953.

³³ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Re-Alignment of Political Forces?", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 28, 1953. Dhlomo argued in this fundamental essay that African nationalism(s) would eventually triumph over European colonialism(s). He felt it imperative that African nationalism should always align itself with Pan Africanism. This essay was part of the historical shift Dhlomo had made beginning with the founding of the African National Congress Youth League in 1943/44 from a predominant preoccupation with literary and cultural matters to an emphasis on the politics of change and political philosophy generally; with the beginning of official apartheid in 1948 Dhlomo becomes the most authoritative intellectual voice of the African National Congress. This serious entrance into active politics is signaled by his support of Luthuli against Champion for the Presidency of the Natal African National Congress, and by his unrelenting attacks on apartheid in his *Ilanga lase Natal* columns. In the early 1950s when some of the intellectual giants of New Africanism and founding members of the African National Congress had become disillusioned and left, such as H. Selby Msimang and R. V. Selope Thema, Dhlomo became arguably the intellectual pillar of the organization founded by Pixley ka Isaka Seme. It is at this time that he defends the political philosophy of the African National Congress from attacks by I. B. Tabata and Mahabane, leaders of the Non-European Unity Movement, and those by D. D. T. Jabavu,

career addressed himself to the presence of socialism in the history of the twentieth century. The context of his reflections in the late 1920s was the controversy over the presence of Communists in Clement Kadalie's Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union in Africa (I. C. U.). At this time the ICU was the most powerful organization among Africans, by far surpassing the ANC which had been founded a decade earlier than the ICU. The struggle over its ideological direction or orientation was of fundamental importance. Dhlomo begins his essay, "Socialism", by making a distinction between socialism and communism. The differentiation is made not show that socialism will eventually lead to communism, but that communism uses socialism as cover for its impracticable aims. Since communism can only be achieved through revolution, the very method or process of its realization is catastrophic, taking the French Revolution as an example, Dhlomo argues that revolutions by their very nature destructive because although they strive to bring about greater democracy, they invariably lead to oligarchy, accompanied by massacres, tortures and abductions. Arguing against communism as a social order, Dhlomo makes several points: taking Russia as a concrete instance, he indicates that wherever communism has triumphed, pandemonium in social life has reigned supreme; distribution according to need rather than ability, Dhlomo sees as unjust and impracticable; there can be no such as "natural equality", for individuals are endowed with different qualities and capabilities; the abolition of social classes is an impossibilities, for even after the revolution has leveled them, they would again spontaneously re-emerge.³⁴ Not content with a theoretical critique of communism, Dhlomo, three years later, examines its possible actualization, in an essay with an ideologically charged title: "Russia: Redeemer or Renegade". Writing the essay after having read many books about the Russian experiment, Dhlomo observes that although the books are written from different angles and based on diverse principles, most of the authors seemed to have gone to Russia with preconceived ideas about the goodness and evilness of the experiment. Stating his reasons for investigating the nature of Soviet society as more concerned with ideas behind the movement, rather than predictions about the future, he makes three criticism of the literature on the Russian socialist project: they neglect the bare conditions and facts, particularly the explanation of facts; the authors are more concerned with theories and systems rather than with human experience (how the people are, what they do, and how they actually appear; discoursing on

president of the All-African Convention. All this will be apparent in moment. When the young Lewis Nkosi in his poem "H. I. E., H. I. E.", published in *Ilanga lase Natal* in 1955, pleaded with Dhlomo while the great man was laying in his death-bed to exercise his literary pen again, the interlocutor of the to be Sophiatown Renaissance was unaware that the great essayist had largely forsaken literary matters a decade earlier. It would be wrong to conclude from all this that Dhlomo was an uncritical supporter of the African National Congress: he criticized the incompetence of some of its leaders as well as his perception some of the cadres of being enamored with Marxism.

³⁴ Herbert I. E. Dhlomo, "Socialism", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, January 19, 1929.

actions and plans of officials, they do not say much about the qualitative nature of the actual lived experience of the Russian people. Dhlomo concludes his reflections on this literature by stating that it does convince him that a classless is actually achievable, let alone that it is being instituted in the Soviet Union. Revealing his profoundly conservative nature he writes: "We believe in evolution, not revolution."³⁵ It is clear from these observations that Dhlomo feared that the attempt to create a classless society is a levelling process which would encourage mediocrity, for he closes his argument saying that the conditions post the Russian Revolution have not been conducive to the making of great thinkers. For Dhlomo the question of understanding history is posed in very unambiguous theoretical framework: Carlyle or Marx? It is clear to Dhlomo who was a redeemer and who was a renegade.

Indicating a profoundness awareness of the interconnection between modernity and Marxism, Dhlomo reflected on the concept of the revolution. While hostile to the revolutionary process bringing about socialism and communism, he was very positive of its possibilities of ushering in modernity. This is the reason that posits the revolution as taking five forms: active military operations; religious reformations; economic upheavals; industrial changes; and spiritual and mental awakening of the masses. It is the role of revolution in the transformation of ideas, rather than in the transformation of the material conditions of existence. Rehearsing his phobias of a spontaneous revolution that it would lead to "absolutism", "terror", "despotism", "mass psychology", Dhlomo articulates the kind of revolution which he sees as feasible and based on right and not on might: "Revolutions have the further advantage of pushing through a scheme that it would physically and morally be impossible for the gifted few to [have] executed. . . . Revolutions are profitable when they crop up at this juncture and help the schemes of the talented. . . . The Bantu [African] need an industrial, social and intellectual revolution with no shedding of blood. . . . We need two kinds of leaders. First the leaders of thought who will prepare and educate the people; then leaders of action to carry on their work."³⁶ Dhlomo was positing

³⁵ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Russia: Redeemer or Renegade", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, July 23, 1932.

³⁶ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Revolution", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, August 27, 1932. In another essay of this year Dhlomo opposes communism because he believes it subsumes individual initiative to collective effort: "If by communism we mean enforced uniformity amongst all and sundry, then it is nothing but a recrudescence of primitive despotism or of mediaeval religious intolerance." He believed that it destroyed the spark of genius. Emphasizing again and again his constant theme, progress depends of the effort and action of gifted individuals ("The Individual and the Group", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, November 5, 1932). Dhlomo's belief in elitism was so extreme that sometimes it was blatantly anti-democratic: "If the vote is given to all and sundry, irrespective of qualifications, democracy has little hope; and we may be excused if we agree with Plato that the intellectual aristocracy should alone vote and rule. In this country the age of deeds, as Carlyle said of England once, has been succeeded by the age of words" ("The Poor White Problem", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, November 19, 1932). Later in life, responding to the events Czechoslovakia in 1948, Dhlomo continued expressing his deep hostility towards Communism.

a unity between the "Talented Tenth" and the masses. His preoccupations with Marxism and modernity, wedded to the notions of the gifted individual and heroic figure in the process of change, respectively W. E. B. Du Bois and Thomas Carlyle, lead him to the idea of evolutionary revolution. It is with this idea that Dhlomo theorized the dialectic between modernity and tradition in South Africa.

One of the major statements by H. I. E. Dhlomo at the early phase of his intellectual project was an essay in *Umteteli wa Bantu*: "Evolution of the Bantu". This document was part of the expositions by intellectuals working for the newspaper, such as R. V. Selope Thema, H. Selby Msimang, Mark S. Radebe, Allan Kirkland Soga, in their construction of South African modernity. Beginning with this essay, and others which concerned themselves with tradition, Dhlomo was engaged with what Roberto Fernandez Retamar saw as having been constant in Jose Marti's practice in the construction of modernity, a preoccupation with the historical meaning of the past. In this engagement Dhlomo was exemplifying an awareness of what Octavio Paz theorized as essential to an understanding of modernity, a consciousness of the nature of the dialectic between tradition and modernity. In the four-part essay, Dhlomo examines the nature of misrepresentation of Africans by white South African historiography in its attempt to make sense of the encounter and contact between blacks and whites.³⁷ Criticizing this historiography for its racialism and political bias of white nationalism, and its failure to incorporate a humanistic and inter-racial perspective, he argues it has failed to register the complex stages in the evolution of the African people. Worse for Dhlomo was its failure to recognize that African societies had been thrown out of joint within from outside pressures by the incompatible historical forces of tradition and modernity. He was later in the 1940s and the 1950s to give unconditional support, backed by brilliant analyses, to the African National Congress, because he felt it was aware of the profound consequences of this diachotomous unity with African societies. Continuing his criticism of white South African historiography as

In one instance he is enthused that, because of their firm belief in nationalism, Africans have no sympathy for Communism at all, except for lost intellectuals leading the Non-European Unity Movement (Weekly Review And Commentary, "Communism", *Ilanga lase Natal*, April 3, 1948). Just six years before his death in 1956, appraising the achievements and problems of the annual meeting of the ANC in 1950, Dhlomo was gratified that the organization was free of what he perceived to be major Communist influences: "Communism does not motivate African thinking, action and political movements. There is a growing tide of African nationalism" (Weekly Review And Commentary "Bloemfontein in Retrospect", *Ilanga lase Natal*, January 14, 1950). Later still, Dhlomo is enthusiastic that the political leaders he greatly admires, Kwame Nkrumah, Mnandi Azikiwe, Pundit Nehru, are free of Communist influence (Weekly Review And Commentary "Communism and Africans", *Ilanga lase Natal*, February 21, 1953). The hostility to Communism never abated.

³⁷ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Evolution of the Bantu, I", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, November 14, 1931; "Evolution of the Bantu, II", November 21, 1931; "Evolution of the Bantu, III", November 28, 1931; "Evolution of the Bantu, IV", December 5, 1931.

characterized by the failure of nerve, because of the absence of self criticism, he argued that South African historiography would always be incomplete and one-sided until Africans are given the opportunity to write it positioning the African perspective at its center. Dhlomo lamented that segregation had verboten Africans from having access to libraries, archives and state institutions with records; a theme that was to fuel him with tremendous anger and resentment throughout his career.³⁸ Despite these problems Dhlomo urged Africans to construct historiography through oral history, a construction informed by anthropology, thereby enabling Africans to achieve three things³⁹ : redemption of the past in order to construct the structure of African historical evolution with a clear aim of showing that African cultures were never primitive and barbaric as white South African historiography supposed; reveal how the present is in the process of preparing the future; indicate that while South Africa was entering modernity through progress, white nationalism which was hegemonic among the white ruling classes and elites, was hindering that progress because of warped race relations it had forged. These propositions inspire Dhlomo to reflect on the deflections that have hindered the construction of proper history through the ages: in the Middle Ages history had been distorted and tainted by theology and religion;

³⁸ Dhlomo's writings are replete with utter contempt for so-called European experts on African affairs. For a representative sample see: "What we want to refer to are the problems of the trend and nature of African development. We shall confine ourselves to things cultural and spiritual. This is a point that worries many African observers today. It is that even in art, literature, music and thought, the European is trying to direct and dictate African development. In this country, for instance, European experts are not only trying to dominate in these fields, but are dictating to the African what and what not to do" (Weekly Review And Commentary "Problems of African Development", *Ilanga lase Natal*, August 18, 1951); "Indeed, the common opinion among Africans is that the linguists, anthropologists and 'experts' are the worst enemies of African progress and emancipation. . ." (Weekly Review And Commentary "The Third Language", *Ilanga lase Natal*, August 25, 1951).

³⁹ In his voluminous writings, Dhlomo seems not to have been aware of the efforts of African historians contemporaneous with him: John Henderson Soga, **The South-Eastern Bantu**, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1930; **The Ama-Xosa: Life and Customs**, Lovedale Press, Lovedale, 1931. Slightly earlier there were two historical works: Magera M. Fuze, **The Black People: And Whence They Came**, trans. H. C. Lugg, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1979---originally published privately in 1922 as: **Abantu Abamnyama: Lapa Bavela Ngakhona**; John Knox Bokwe, **Ntsikana: The Story of an African Convert**, Lovedale, 1914. Both the latter books were ostensibly the products of the conflict between modernity and tradition in the actual lived experiences of the authors. Probably the book that would have Appealed to Dhlomo because of its supposed scholarly rigour is Walter Rubusana's **History of South Africa From a Native Standpoint**, a book which does not seem to be traceable. Dhlomo's insistence on the necessity of the construction of African historiography parallel and in opposition to European historiography in South Africa was based on his observation that a history of a people is in a better position of being realized if it is written from many sides and perspectives. Given that within the context of segregation and white political dominance, the gulf between Africans and Europeans was real and unbridgeable, because of the clash in interpretations, customs and meanings, African historiography should struggle to challenge white historiography which through administrative fiat had in effect become South African historiography.

during the Renaissance history was depended upon, and compromised by the passion for literature, with the consequence that history was appreciated the more it proximated literary aesthetics; Rousseau wanted history to be subsumed by natural history; and Isaac Newton was enthused by the possibility that the construction of history would be influenced by the physical laws he had discovered. Reverting to his familiar credo, Dhlomo concludes by saying that history is the record of the evolution of human thought. For Dhlomo white South African historiography had failed to see that human history is one process. In his estimation African history must concern itself with the idea of progress and the quest for modernity. He was disturbed that the evolution of the African people toward modernity had been slow, yet the Europeans thought it had been too fast, and hence instituted forms of hindering it.

To Dhlomo it was self-evidently absurd that whites could ever succeed in halting Africans' entrance into modern civilization or modernity by means of racism, discrimination, segregation and oppression. He observed that he was witnessing on a practically daily basis the transformation of the social life and outlook of Africans, as well as the changes in their patterns of thought. Africans were with relatively remarkable speed adapting themselves to Western culture, which Dhlomo supported wholeheartedly without reservations. He thought it absurd, insane and sacriligious that Europeans thought it possible they could and would be able to stop African growth and development. Were they to succeed in halting Africans' march into modernity, it would be counter the historical order of modern societies and attempting to contradict the principles of natural evolution. Dhlomo was uncompromising in his support of Africans confronting the challenge of modernity, for he believed it was a prelude to their attaining political emancipation, cultural achievement, economic success and historical progress.⁴⁰ For him a new era of outlook had come. Eighteen years later after his reflections on the unstoppable of Africans' entrance into modernity, Dhlomo enumerated the factors accounting for the velocity of change which was transforming South Africa. Taking as a point of demarcation the Constitution of 1910 which although political disenfranchised Africans, he nevertheless saw as ushering in a New South Africa. From this point onwards, first and foremost, there had been the growing emergence of the African middle class which was adopting the Western ways of living and thought. Secondly, thousands and thousands of Africans were becoming urban dwellers, with cities being their only place of abode. Thirdly, there was an accelerated intake of Africans into many professions. Fourthly, trade unionism had awakened and unified the masses. And lastly, there had been a growing movement of trade unionism which awakened and unified the

⁴⁰ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Past and Present", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, February 15, 1930.

masses.⁴¹ Critiquing the Constitution which he considered feudalistic because of discriminatory provisions against Africans, Dhlomo demanded their removal.

Although Dhlomo in many ways saw himself as an apostle of modernity, he did not wholly subscribe to the position of R. V. Selope Thema, arguably the principal ideologue of New Africanism after its founding by Pixley ka Isaka Seme, that tradition should be unrelentingly negated in order for modernity to triumph, for he believed that Africans can only possess a sense of coherence about modernity if the two are held in equipoise in relation to each other. This is the reason he pleaded with those Talented Tenth Africans who agreed with the view of Selope Thema, by making a riposte that it is essential to distinguish between a useful and a useless usage of custom and tradition within modernity.⁴² He undertook a modernistic critique of custom. Dhlomo makes it clear that modernity will not be achievable without heavy social costs if the New African intelligentsia does not lead the masses from the reactionary and unsavory aspects of custom into the freedom of intellectual life by interpreting the new by means of the new. That is, old ideas must be given a new interpretation. Dhlomo was profoundly conscious that without any unity between the New African intelligentsia and the New African masses modernity would not be easily and completely realizable.⁴³ Fearful that a concerted effort to destroy old customs and beliefs would destabilize social heritage and consequently lead to chaos and anarchy (again echoes of Mathew Arnold, though not even once in all of his writings does he refer to him), Dhlomo believed that the masses should be encouraged to outgrow them. The dangers of allowing the 'tyranny of custom' to have a stronghold on the imagination of African people were obvious to him. Within its mode, Africans: are led by the senses rather than thought and abstract philosophical reasoning; do not think seriously about the art thinking; become the captives of routinization; their minds are captured by religious mysticism; make everything sacrosanct; are less preoccupied with thought than with feeling; they accept the old with credulity and the new with scepticism; and they should be disabused of the uncritical respect for authority and unending tolerance of custom. The New African intelligentsia should politically and culturally struggle together with the African masses to realize and appreciate the benefits of modernity: that people are the measure, the cause and the explanation of all things; the art of criticism should be respected and embraced; independence, autonomy and disobedience are essential values; that a sin is social rather than a matter of personal ethics.⁴⁴ Since Dhlomo was

⁴¹ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review and Commentary "The Constitution", *Ilanga lase Natal*, January 3, 1948.

⁴² Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Tradition and Custom vs Progress", *Ilanga lase Natal*, September 13, 1947.

⁴³ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo],

⁴⁴ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Modes of Bantu Thinking", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, July 9, 1932.

a man of the letters, he explored tradition much deeper through artistic practice, literary form and literary theory.

With the essay "Developments and Achievements in the Field of Culture [And] Literature", taking Zulu literature as a literary system having many similarities with other African literary culture(s), H. I. E. Dhlomo maps the position of literary figurations within tradition.⁴⁵ Oral Literature---which Dhlomo theorizes as constituted by folk tales invariably about history, animal tales about nature and sagas, narrative epics about heroes, kings, battles and tribes-- was the central literary cultural expression of tradition. Poetic epic narrations known as "Izibongo", arguably the highest form of literary expression within tradition, made and forged the richness of African languages into such into such a rich medium, with a range, depth, and variety so expansive that when missionaries translated the Bible (for Dhlomo the central book of Western civilization) into African languages, they found them eminently capable of rendering the complex linguistic and philosophical structure of The Book. Dhlomo attributes the richness of Oral Literature, inspired by African Mythology, Nature, Superstition, Knowledge, Customs, Laws and Social System, to its preoccupation with the African Past. Dhlomo believes that although modern African writers are mainly concerned with problems of transition into nationhood and modernity, creating new literary forms thematizing the clash and struggle between the new and the old, light and darkness, tragedy and comedy, they have much to gain from a serious acquaintance with orature, if for reason that literary originality stems from a confrontation with a clash between the Old and the New, the traditional and the modern. Dhlomo was convinced that a deep knowledge of Oral Literature would teach modern writers and New African intelligentsia that a construction of modernity without awareness of tradition is unrealizable. That Dhlomo's search for the patterns of African of history was not a romanticizing of tradition, as will be evident in moment when we encounter his understanding of the role of the African National Congress in the project of modernity. His enthusiasm for the ANC and the Zulu Cultural Society⁴⁶ was because he viewed them as forums for discussing the dialectic between tradition and modernity. This question of the old informing the new, the traditional being inseparable from the modern, was also a historical perspective of cultural production that one of his other important later essays, on the historical development of African music.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Anonymous [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Developments and Achievements in the Field of Culture [And] Literature", *Ilanga lase Natal*, June 13, 1953.

⁴⁶ X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Zulu Society", *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 16, 1943. The reason for his support in the formation of Zulu Cultural Society is made clear in this document: "If our literature is to hold its own among the literatures of the world, offer something distinct and unique and reflect the soul of Africa, it must spring from indigenous tribal culture. . . The pr

⁴⁷ imitive is the embodiment of the fundamental." Perhaps constant emphasis on the indigenous and the so-called primitive is because of what they enabled: "In fact, it has been said that what is truly original in South Africa has come or has been inspired by African life

In another of his late essays he emphasizes again that the new (modernity) cannot be created or constructed on the basis of discarding of the old (tradition): "These tribal art forms are very important."⁴⁸ This principle of theorizing the construction of modernity as a process of synthesizing and transcendence was already evident in what was probably his first published essay marking the beginnings of his great career, a quarter of a century earlier: "Towards Our Own Literature". Despite his celebration of the progress being made by Africans in the field of musical studies which has the possibility of garnering prestige for black culture abroad, Dhlomo cautions against music dominating the creativity of the African imagination. He suggests that visual culture and literature should also be cultivated. Concentrating on literature, Dhlomo argues that what Shakespeare has done for English national culture, likewise what Whitman has achieved through poetic form in the formation of American national spirit, and the ushering in of the Irish renaissance by its great writers, can be done through emulation in South Africa by African writers: Africans should cultivate and foster a national literature informed by an inclusive and expansive national and racial spirit. Although such a national literature would be created from individual experience(s), Dhlomo felt strongly that it should forge common aspirations as well as foster the brotherhood [and sisterhood] of the heart. Coming to his most crucial suggestion, he suggested that this national literature cannot be created spontaneously, but rather, it must be cultivated by means of "two splendid languages, . . . the precision of Zulu and the elasticity of English." Putting his reflections to a close he writes: "I know we have the heart to hew our literature out of the solid rock of experience. So, remembering the value of some self-consciousness and of the right sort of local colour, let us set to work."⁴⁹ There can be little doubt that with the words 'local color' Dhlomo

and culture" ("African Contribution To South African Life And Culture", *Ilanga lase Natal*, January 31, 1953). Anonymous, "Development of African Music", *Ilanga lase Natal*, June 20, 1953. See also: "Evolution of Bantu Entertainments", *Ilanga lase Natal*, June 20, 1953. Although both essays were written anonymously on the 50th anniversary celebration of the publication of the newspaper, it is clear from internal evidence that they were written by Dhlomo. If nothing else, the concept of evolution is a clear indicator.

⁴⁸ Editorial, "The Bantu in South Africa", *Ilanga lase Natal*, May 29, 1948. At this time, Dhlomo alternated with his brother, the Editor, R. R. R. Dhlomo, in writing editorials for the newspaper. The Editorial's mention of the concept of the New African and its emphasis on the necessity of establishing African Research Academies, preoccupations in many of his other essays at this time, clearly prove that they could only have been written by H. I. E. Dhlomo.

⁴⁹ From A Special Correspondence, "Towards Our Own Literature", *Ilanga lase Natal*, December 21, 1923. Three factors make one believe with certainty that it was written by H. I. E. Dhlomo: his fascination for, and estimation of, Shakespeare has previously been indicated; Dhlomo's reference to Walt Whitman was a recognition of what R. V. Seloape Thema had formulated earlier in *Umteteli wa Bantu*, that the creation of South African modernity should be modelled on American modernity, particularly African American modernity. Above we should the nature of Dhlomo's homage to Du Bois concerning the concept of the Talented Tenth and his appreciation of Countee Cullen's passion for the Romantic poets, which reflected his own mesmerization; and lastly, his mentioning of the Irish writers who had created a

was alluding to tradition, and with 'self-consciousness' he was aligning himself with the great expressive forms of literary tradition: Izibongo (heroic praise poems) and Izibongelo (tribal dramatic forms). Both of these forms, poetry and theater, were the essential forms in expressing his creative imagination. From his observation in 1923 that both Zulu and English would be crucial in the making of a national literature, it was not that historically distant from his 1947-8 reflections that a synthesizing of modernity and tradition was essential in the making of the new. Dhlomo set himself to work in the great essays of the 1930s and 1940s to theorize and construct the historical space of South African cultural modernity in the twentieth century.

A week later Dhlomo followed this remarkable debut with an editorial revealingly entitled "Native Literature", in which he calls to attention his wish that Africans should preserve folklore and historical records of the African people. He was vociferous that folklore and other traditional forms should not be allowed to die. He complained that African languages were being damaged and corrupted by importation of unnecessary and foreign words. Dhlomo praised John Knox Bokwe and Rueben T. Caluza for having created pure African songs. He urged that these songs should be compiled and published in a book form. But his central message was the following: "Our folklore and historical records must be preserved from dying out, anything of racial pride, by means of a literature, otherwise these will be lost forever and our connection with the past forgotten."⁵⁰ The past history of tradition should inform the creation of modernity. In order not to seem that his call for the appreciation of tradition has anything to do with his possible romanticizing of it, rather than the lessons that can be derived from its understanding, Dhlomo wrote a three-part essay, "Three Essays In Tribal Culture", in which he shows how beads, the shield, and the cow are part of, and define the aesthetic and historical world of tradition.⁵¹ The analysis of the aesthetics of beads enables Dhlomo to situate the role of decorative arts in Zulu society. Dhlomo shows how an understanding of the design structure of beads enables one to appreciate the history and poetry of decoration in Zulu culture. For him bead making is more than a decorative art, since it is fundamentally an expression of the aesthetic, poetic and spiritual life of the people. The patterns of bead work, their color and rhythm design, and color sequence configure a bead language that is in many ways universal among tribal people. The construction of the patterns is influenced by birds and

renaissance, must be a reference to Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw, who both influenced his playwright style. In subsequent decades, Dhlomo was to make many allusions to Shaw. Moreover, Dhlomo's play, **Nonqgause** was profoundly influenced by Shaw's **St. Joan**. In the last decade of his life, Dhlomo wrote brief essays on Richard III, Hamlet and St. Joan.

⁵⁰ Editorial, "Native Literature", *Ilanga lase Natal*, December 28, 1923.

⁵¹ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Three Essays In Tribal Culture: The Zulu and His Beads, Part I", *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 4, 1947; "Three Essays In Tribal Culture: The Shield In Tribal Life, Part II", October 11, 1947; "Three Essays In Tribal Culture: Inkomo In Zulu Life, Part III", December 6, 13, 1947.

flowers, i. e. flora and fauna. Dhlomo sees the design patterns of bead work as indicating a deep appreciation of beauty among the Zulus. Since some of the designs of beads are reflective of Zulu folk-tales and fables, Dhlomo believes the beads symbolize the spiritual and mystical world of Zulu culture. Socially the beads define social rank and were used as amulets and charms. In effect the bead culture is a symbolic representation of the unity of the Spiritual, the Social and Natural in Zulu culture. Given this apparent central importance of bead culture in Zulu cosmological world, Dhlomo is concerned that a disintegration of the traditional order under the pressure of emerging modernity would have the consequence of depreciating the sense of beauty and aesthetics so essential to the making of important cultural products.

Dhlomo writes that in Zulu culture a shield was a coat of arms through which honour, patriotism, ideals of a society could be measured and represented. Although the shield was a defensive weapon more than an offensive one, paradoxically, in Zulu society the defensive strategy was of secondary importance to the offensive one. Shields were thought to possess medicinal efficacy since they were sprinkled with herbals in preparation for battle. Tribal veterinary surgeons used them to drive diseases out of cattle. To Dhlomo states that in this society shields were emblems of power, martial authority, law and justice. Given this valorization, shields were seen as symbolic, ritualistic and utilitarian. There were various forms of shields: some for hunting expeditions, courting shields, battle shields, etc. Although women were generally not allowed to carry shields, they now and then did on occasion of dancing and ritual ceremonies. Since shields are made of cow skin, Dhlomo in the third essay reflects on the importance of the cow in Zulu society. The essay gives Dhlomo an opportunity to reflect on the contradictions of constructing modernity: "It is one of the tragedies and the ironies of South African policy that today, in spite of the systematic undermining and crumbling away of tribal life by the impact of Christianity, industrialization and Western culture, and the consequent decline of the power and the authority of chiefs as well as the tie and meaning of tribal, social and moral sanctions, the economic value of inkomo [cow] in what still remains of tribal life today, has actually been enhanced. The reason for this is the abortive attempt to keep a civilization within a civilization, a system within a system. Modern society is based on a money economy and tribal life on a cattle economy. South African policy is attempting the impossible task of reconciling these two conflicting systems. I refuse fully to bring the African within the maelstrom of our industrial and commercial life as this involves the question of political and economic status. At the same time, it wants African labour for its farms, mines, its industrial, commercial and domestic needs. To gain both ends, that is, to eat its cake and have it, it attempts to preserve intact the tribal state as a reservoir of labor while undermining the foundation, the soul and the meaning of that state." (DOES THIS QUATATION CONTRADICT THE THESIS I'M DEVELOPING IN THE ESSAY?) In other words, the politics of race, discrimination, segregation and

apartheid were preventing the historical development of modernity to take its logical and natural course in South Africa.

***Within this mapping of the labyrinthine form of tradition, Dhlomo constructed and situated Shaka as its the greatest heroic figure. With doubt, for him Shaka was the exemplification of the grandeur of the Carlylean hero. His choice was not based solely on Shaka's military prowess, though absolutely great that was, but rather, on Dhlomo's belief that the Zulu chieftain's prodigious formation of the Zulu nation through blood and steel had the effect of triggering immense cultural renovations as well as the consolidation and purification of the Zulu language. This may explain why Shaka had such a mesmerizing hold on the imagination of the New African intellectuals, artists and writers from Mofolo's **Chaka** and John Dube's **U-Jeqe: Insila ka Tshaka** to Mazisi Kunene's **Emperor Shaka The Great**. Since these are fictional works, they will not be of immediate concern to us here (they will be considered elsewhere), because what is crucial is the intellectuals understanding of Shaka's position in South African history rather than his subsequent mythification as a historical legend in fictional generic forms, this having more to do with political struggles of the present. Before considering Dhlomo's reflections on Shaka, it is illuminating to consider the essays of R. R. R. Dhlomo, Benedict Vilakazi, Sibusiso Nyembezi, Jordan Ngubane, Mazisi Kunene, since their meditations on this monumental figure was an essential component of New African(ism) and of their beingness in modernity: Shaka was a symbolic representation of the tradition they had to transcend and surpass, or incorporate, in order to arrive at modernity fully prepared for new things.

R. R. R. Dhlomo in a treatise in form of a short story seemed to have felt that the assassination of Shaka, by his two brothers Dingane and Mhlangana, with the participation of his paternal aunt, the great Mkabayi, was justified by the bloodshed the son of Senzangakhona had unrelentingly unleashed among the Zulus.⁵² This would seem to put R. R. R. Dhlomo in a position similar, or at least adjacent to that of Thomas Mofolo: the difference being that while Mofolo viewed Shaka as the quintessential evil in the Manichaeian binary struggle between Christianity and heathenism (barbarism), R. R. R. R. Dhlomo, in less apocalyptic terms, saw him as the representation of the rottenness of tradition that made the triumph of modernity inevitable and justified. In other words, for R. R. R. Dhlomo the absolutist terms or vision of Shaka, which viewed everything in terms of either/or, would make it less likely that modernity would emerge under the aegis of tradition. What R. R. R. Dhlomo seemed to have feared most was modernity colonizing and imperializing tradition, thereby leaving it in a state of perpetual petrification. The satiric pieces R. R. R. Dhlomo wrote in R. V. Seloape Thema's *Bantu*

⁵² R. R. R. Dhlomo, "The Murder Of Shaka September 24, 1928", *Bantu World*, September 24, 1932.

World in the 1930s made fun of the Africans who were in a hurry to adopt the New while rejecting the Old without serious consideration of the consequences of the the struggle between Africans and Europeans: for him an unreflective acceptance of modernity was an unconscious strengthening of the hegemony of whites over blacks.

Benedict Wallet Vilakazi on the other hand, in contrast to R. R. R. Dhlomo, believed in an accelerated construction and acceptance of modernity, thereby subverting tradition, as a necessary pathway that would enable Africans eventually to overcome European domination. Consequently Vilakazi's reading of Shaka's effect in South African history, or for that matter in African history, was a perpetual renewal and upturning of tradition as a preparation of the New, which Vilakazi saw Shaka as having anticipated and having had foresight to have seen as inevitable. It was in this context that Vilakazi called on New Africans to develop new perspectives on African history: "South Africans are in general, the most ignorant nation in all things Africans. It is from this ignorant group of people that we get our history written and planned out. . . Few people know how Moshesh [sic] of the Basotho fame came to be known as a 'nation-builder'; and fewer still are those that know why Shaka is known as a tyrant, destroyer and blood-thirsty king. What the school books teach us, we accept dogmatically especially about the great figures of our black history."⁵³ In contrast to this false and white hegemonic position, Vilakazi viewed Shaka as a modernizer in having destroyed the class of natural healers ('witch doctors') who had been charging exorbitant prices for their expertise while in many ways retarding the progress of Zulu nation through their dissemination of superstitious beliefs. Equally impressive to Vilakazi was Shaka's modernizing tendencies in having incorporated through force of arms of other ethnic groups into the Zulu nation. Detailing his reflections, Benedict Bambatta Vilakazi enumerated several features which in his estimation accounted for the greatness of the son of Nandi: he had instilled national pride, a sense of freedom, and intituted equal rights and privileges, among the people of the nation he forged; his concept of freedom embraced different races and was embodied in the communal ownership of land; since the government of the Zulu nation was based on meritocracy, it is not surprising that some of Shaka's high officials were Basothos; and Shaka rarely attacked a peaceful nation. Most impressive to Vilakazi, was that Shaka enabled the citizens of the nation to strive for freedom in order to express their individual selves. Although Vilakazi himself does not go this far, since he was by nature apolitical, what Shaka was constructing in the 1820s found continuation in the founding of the ANC in 1912.

⁵³ B. W. Vilakazi, "Shaka's Plan Of Freedom And Reconstruction", *Ilanga lase Natal*, July 31, August 14, 21, 1943.

In an essay that found inspiration in Vilakazi's doctoral dissertation, **Oral and Written Literature in Nguni**, Nyembezi analyzed the conception of the achievement of Shaka as reflected in izibongo. Although originally conceived as praise poems of the valour of heroic great men, with time izibongo have expanded to include praises of the physical appearance of women, newly born children, animals, and oneself. Fundamentally, they are part of the oral preservation of history. Nyembezi found in some of the izibongo the portrayal of Shaka's travails and tribulations because of his birth as an illegitimate child. the very things that were to account for his future fierceness and ruthlessness.⁵⁴ The Shaka who emerges from the izibongo is of a great leader with a tragic flaw of unforgiveness.

Jordan K. Ngubane's great essay of 1976 "Shaka's Social, Political and Military Ideas", written in exile in Washington D. C. in a state of bitterness, anger and despair, is an extraordinary document by any measure.⁵⁵ It is haunted by the spectre of Dhlomo, his great friend who had been dead by this time for over two decades. There is a central allusion to him in the body of the essay. What haunted Ngubane was Dhlomo's essay of 1954 which appeared in *Ilanga lase Natal*: "Shaka: His Character, Philosophy, Policy And Achievements". We will consider Dhlomo's essay in a moment. What gives remarkable weight to Ngubane's essay is that it was part of his historical and life time project to find a rational explanation of why Afrikaaner nationalism had defeated African nationalism: the breakthrough was his realization and belief that African nationalism(s) lacked a metaphysical system based on African philosophies which undergird it as a historical process. Without this undergirding metaphysical system, he came to believe, African nationalism lacked the durability, longevity, cultural fiber, and anchoring in the African soil, to make it triumph over Afrikaaner nationalism, or at least force white nationalism to come to its historical senses by having a rapprochement with African nationalism. The brilliance of the essay is in its construction of this metaphysical system which Ngubane believed informed the praxis of Shaka, hence his singular greatness. But tragically within the body of the essay itself there were already seeds of self destruction which led Jordan Ngubane a decade later to die in the arms of Mangosutho Gatsha Buthelezi and Inkatha (later Inkatha Freedom Party): the slippage of this anchoring was from African nationalism to Zulu nationalism, to the point of absolute valorization of the latter: in other words, collapsing African nationalism into Zulu nationalism: theorizing the historical form of African nationalism

⁵⁴ C. L. S. Nyembezi, "The Historical Background To The Izibongo Of The Zulu Military Age", *African Studies*, June-September, December 1948.

⁵⁵ Jordan K. Ngubane, "Shaka's Social, Political and Military Ideas", an appendix in Donald Burness' *Shaka: King of the Zulus in African Literature*, Three Continental Press, New York, 1976, pp.127-164.

through the historical content of Zulu nationalism.⁵⁶ We can be absolutely certain that Dhlomo would never have countenanced this tragic slippage.

Jordan Ngubane reads Shaka as having initiated a revolution to meet the challenge of South African history, particularly Zulu history. He traces the genealogy of the nature of the challenge and the form and structure of the revolution through *izibongo*, Zulu lore, and patronymic legends. The pre-Shakan Zulu history, from Zulu ka Malandela Zulu in the second half of the fifteenth century, the chief of the small Zulu clan in Natal, to Senzangakhona (Shaka's father) in the eighteenth century, had been characterized by chaos due to intercentine warfare led by the conservatives within the ruling aristocracy. Shaka's hatred of the aristocracy lay in that under the principle of defending custom and tradition, they had ostracized him because of his illegitimacy as well as his mother, Nandi, on the charge that she was a woman of loose morals. In Ngubane's estimation the Shakan revolution lay in several undertakings and achievements: he destroyed the conservative aristocracy by forging a new society, based not only on tradition and custom, but fundamentally on meritocracy; in replacement of the principle of traditionalism as a fundamental criteria of evaluation in society, he initiated a 'person-centered Buntu civilization' in which critical reason and harmony with the needs of society was the sole form of judgement; he established the possibility of the new concept of nationhood as a fundamental structure in replacement of clan loyalties; he taught that the human body was nature's finest masterpiece, and as such must be kept in clean and good health---regular exercise of the body will help in keeping the cleanliness of the human mind; Shaka's transformation of Zulu society made possible the streamlining of the Zulu language; he invented a short spear and new military formations which made the Zulus the formidable military instrument in the whole of Southern Africa; and the deeds and valour of Shaka inspired great poets, and the greatest among them was Magolwane ka Mkatini Jiyana.⁵⁷ This

⁵⁶ In a study of the intellectual significance and historical meaning of Jordan K. Ngubane, it will be necessary to specify the nature of his break with Gatsha Buthelezi and the Inkatha Freedom Party, just a few years before his death.

⁵⁷ Mazisi Kunene has sketched a brilliant portrait of this great poet: "Portrait of Magolwane--The Great Zulu Poet", *Cultural Events in Africa*, July 1967. As though the fascination of the historical meaning of Shaka for South African literary imagination could not possibly exhaust itself, and as though his great epic, **Emperor Shaka The Great**, the Mt. Everest of our literature, had not already established corrective parameters concerning Thomas Mofolo's **Chaka**, Mazisi Kunene, a full decade after Jordan Ngubane's reflections on Shaka, wrote a major essay in which he castigated Mofolo because of the internalized the ideology of the missionaries, had failed to register the real achievements of the son of Senzangakhona: transformed political thinking in Central and Southern Africa; incorporated the ideas of a united Africa; imprinted military ideas on the whole vast region; invented efficient weapons; prepared the region for confrontation with the invading whites; established mutual cooperation among African states; initiated political democritization; and posited heroism as an ideal: "Into this category [of ignorance and distortion] would unfortunately fall also Mofolo's **Chaka**, who, under pressure from missionaries, created a Faustian Shaka of fiction who has

celebration of the Shakan revolution never blinded Jordan Ngubane to the fact that this achievement came to an end through the necessity of terminating his despotism, which characterized the last moments of his rule.

What is extraordinary about Ngubane is his fine judgement that the assassination of Shaka was a historical necessity as much as the Shakan revolution was a response to the calling of historical destiny. We would like quote this rather long passage as an indication of Ngubane's riveting brilliance: "Then, tragedy crashed into Shaka's life. Nandi died in October, 1827. That extinguished the brightest light in his life and left him a changed man; something vital cracked in him and unbalanced his faculties. Shaka was never to be the same man again. The sick emperor embarked on an insane programme of executions, persecutions and misrule; he alienated the army, antagonized his friends, spread fear and terror in the nation he had founded and imposed a tyranny more brutal than anything he and his mother had ever known. . . When the Court Poets reported these things to the Zulus, people began to believe that Shaka had lost control of his mind; that he was sick beyond being cured. As each day of excesses went by it became increasingly clear that the chieftain for the nation lay between Shaka's life and the balanced society itself. . . Shaka towered so much above his contemporaries nobody could, or dared, to persuade or force him to abdicate. The only way to bring his bloodthirsty tyranny to its speedy end was to kill him. . . Mnkabayi [Shaka's paternal aunt] was fearless when it came to epoch-making decisions. When she called him [Mbopa, one of Shaka's outstanding lieutenants] and confronted him with Shaka's crimes against the person and the revolution, some Zulus say, Mbopa, always a brave man, broke down and cried. When he wiped his tears, he told Mnkabayi he knew what his duty to the revolution was." This is a fine sense of historical evaluation.

little or nothing to do with the Shaka of history. Shaka in this fictitious novel is depicted as a leader of darkness whose power is pitted against the leader of light (i. e. missionaries). Shaka is also depicted not as an intelligent person, but influenced by an evil force in the person of a diviner or a witch. This force, according to the book, totally controls Shaka's mind" ("Shaka the Great: Warrior-King And Founder Of The Zulu Nation", in **Great Black Leaders: Ancient and Modern**, (ed.) Ivan van Sertima, Journal of African Civilizations Ltd., Inc., Rutgers, 1988, p.253). Thomas Mofolo was not the only New African intellectual of the early part of the twentieth-century to portray in such negative terms. Although his reflections more nuanced than those of Thomas Mofolo, in a chapter devoted to Shaka, John Henderson Soga depicts him as being vindictive, ruthless, cruel and bloodthirsty (**The South-Eastern Bantu**, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1930, p.451). Using Mzilikazi as a surrogate of Shaka, in his novel **Mhudi**, which is really a Shakesperian drama as evidenced by Mzilikazi's extraordinary soliloquy towards the end of the text about his inability to make a transition from tradition to modernity, Solomon T. Plaatje was hostile to African leaders and chiefs whom he considered were enthralled by the principles of militarism. On the hand Plaatje's biographical portraits of Chiefs in **The African Yearly Register** such as Silas Thelesho Molema was positive as long as they were not perceived by him as standing in the way of the emergence of modernity.

Jordan Ngubane mars this great essay towards its conclusion by arguing that the concepts of nationhood and a new nation developed by Shaka found continuation in our time (exactly 1974-5) in Gatsha Buthelezi. Even though Buthelezi was to reveal his diabolical nature from the moment of the Soweto Uprising in 1976, he had by 1974 for all intents and purposes broken with the then exiled ANC. Only Ngubane's hatred of the great national organization, since he believed that it had been subordinated to Moscow and Communism, in effect disengaging from African nationalism, could have blinded him to this untenable appraisal of Buthelezi. Correctly viewing Pixley ka Isaka Seme's founding of the ANC in 1912 as in the tradition of the Shakan revolution of the new concept of nationhood, one is at a loss how Ngubane would reconcile this with Buthelezi's intent of forging Inkatha through ethnicity rather than a serious alliance with the ANC. Ngubane rightly mentions that Albert John Luthuli is in the tradition of Shaka. In mentioning only the Africans from Natal as belonging in the Shakan tradition of African nationhood and nationalism, Jordan Ngubane could be rightly criticized for confusing Zulu nationalism with African nationalism. Also the same criticism could be made of the great poet, Mazisi Kunene, in the Preface to the magnificent epic in postulating Gatscha Buthelezi as continuing the leadership vision of Shaka.⁵⁸ Kunene situates the revolution Shaka effected in military concepts and tactics of warfare. Secondly, in the political authority he exerted. In other words, it was in the nature of the fusion of political and military structures that Shaka initiated momentous changes in Africa.

Dhlomo was much longer preoccupied with the consequential historical meaning of Shaka for the passages of transition from tradition to modernity than many other New African intellectuals. He was very ambivalent and conflicted about the legacy of Shaka for South African history. In his first appraisal in *Umteteli wa Bantu* Dhlomo was highly critical of Shaka, hardly seeing anything of merit in the legacy. In another appraisal twenty years later in *Ilanga lase Natal* Dhlomo was very adulative. In the earlier evaluation, although recognizing Shaka as a great man, Dhlomo believed his policy of constant and unrelenting warfare had brought ruin and chaos to the Zulu people and nation.⁵⁹ With a policy of unending militarism, Dhlomo thought Shaka had dissipated the cultural energy of the people, by making many writers flee from his rule, and thereby making the nation despise and neglect its spiritual and intellectual functions. Under the edicts of militarism, law and administration are rigidified, in consequence making the people conservative, docile and insular. Bringing the issue to the present, Dhlomo saw one of the principle consequences of Shaka's militarism in having rigidified the Zulu people to a conservatism that has hindered them in adapting to the new things of modernity. In effect the Zulu nation had

⁵⁸ Mazisi Kunene, "Preface", **Emperor Shaka The Great: A Zulu Epic**, trans. from Zulu by the author, Heinemann London, 1979, p.xi.

⁵⁹ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Tshaka: A Revaluation", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, June 18, 1932.

become suspicious of the new, with the result that they were retarding their own progress. The conservatism that Dhlomo believed Shaka had instilled in Zulu nation had stifled independent thought and suppressed the expression of the individual creative genius. A greater contrast between Ngubane and Dhlomo about the legacy of Shaka is not imaginable: whereas for one Shaka was instrumental in the development of the concept of nationhood and nationalism so central in the construction of modernity, for the he was the paragon of its blockage.

By the time he wrote "Shaka: His Character, Philosophy, Policy And Achievements", to which Jordan Ngubane had made reference in his own essay, Dhlomo had completely changed his views. Viewing Shaka within his newly acquired Carlylean perspective of individuals determining history, Dhlomo wrote: "Shaka was a great nation-builder. Out of the crucible of an insignificant clan, he built a great and proud people. Such a task required a man of original ideas, strong character, tenacity of purpose, and high ideals."⁶⁰ He expressed his admiration for Shaka's deep appreciation of nature, orderliness and discipline. Dhlomo believed one Shaka's high ideals had been realized in his formation of the great Zulu nation with spirituality being one of its essential qualities; by forming a great and powerful nation and bringing other ethnic groups into a community of nations, Shaka had established the ideal of nationalism. He praised him for having forged communalism, in which castes and classes had been abolished, and universal citizenship instituted. Completely changing his previous hostility to the militarism that Shaka brought into the Zulu nation, Dhlomo saw this as a catalyst for change, reform and nationhood. What he found compelling in Shaka was his inquisitive mind: the constant search for new knowledge. This was the most fascinating aspect of Shaka to Dhlomo: his serious study of geography, topography and nature; in his patronage to the arts, encouraging the making of Izimbongi; and his search for new ideas about the universe. Perhaps the most compelling aspect of Shaka to Dhlomo was his belief that the son of Senzangakhona had not only made certain that the Zulu language would not become adulterated in adjacency to other languages in a greater African nation, he had in the process become a great master of it. Dhlomo's reverence for Shaka was his belief that he had enabled the emergence of major poets such as Magolwane, in effect the flowering of Zulu literature. It was because of Shaka's encouragement of the acquisition of knowledge and being a pathfinder of the new, that Dhlomo believed that he had many lessons for his project of modernity.

As though inspired by the example of Shaka, Dhlomo seemed likewise to have wanted to preserve the purity and elegance of the Zulu language as well as the integrity of Zulu literature within modernity, and hence the many

⁶⁰ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Shaka: His Character, Philosophy, Policy And Achievements", *Ilanga lase Natal*, September 25, October 2, 1954.

reflections on both of them. In a quarrel of 1938, which will be our concern later in the essay, Vilakazi chastised Dhlomo that one does not preserve a great literature through theorizing it, but rather through writing it in the language that underpins it. While writing his whole oeuvre in English, Dhlomo seems to have been obsessed with the nature of the Zulu language. Perhaps this ironic situation is explained by the intractable dialectic of modernity and tradition. In a consideration of "The Future of Zulu", Dhlomo was fearful that although Zulu was verile, flexible, beautiful and has the best claim to being the African lingua franca in South Africa, and was spoken by a historically and numerically greater number of blacks, and as well as being taught at the Universities, it still faced formidable obstacles.⁶¹ The economic and political imperatives of the situation in South Africa was impelling the Zulus themselves to clamour for the introduction of English as a medium of instruction, while Zulu should be taught only a subject. Dhlomo wanted Zulu to be utilized as a medium of instruction up to the doctorate level. Second, the publication of Zulu literature in comparison to English literature written by Africans, was very small. Third, the absence of literary magazines written wholly in the African languages. Fourth, the commingling of Africans in the urban spaces of modernity, Dhlomo believed, had the effect of forcing them to speak in English. Fifth, and this deeply antagonized him, the 'white experts' dictated what kinds of books in the African languages African authors should be writing for schools. And lastly, the multiplicity of dialects were encroaching on the historical and cultural space on the Zulu language, likewise Zulu on the other languages.

Responding in an Editorial to Chief Albert Luthuli's complaint that the quality and level of English was deteriorating among New Africans, particularly among students, in relation to the African languages, Dhlomo sought to halt this deterioration by indicating that English, rather than the indigenous languages, was the fundamental instrument of entrance into modernity. It was also the language of preference among progressive Africans. Seeking to justify the historical imperativeness of the hegemony of the English language, he posed these two questions: "Of what practical value will the knowledge of its mother tongue be to a child who will be thrown into the world that uses English as its medium of expression? What business or other contacts can he [or she] conduct when, after leaving school, he finds himself unable to command the English language?"⁶² Although partial to the practical predominance of English as a historical necessity, Dhlomo was always supportive of measures to strengthen the African languages. Analyzing a report of the Zulu Language Committee on the status of Zulu language and literature, Dhlomo took the opportunity to express his concerns

⁶¹ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review and Commentary "The Future of Zulu", *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 7, 1944.

⁶² Anonymous, "Mother Tongue", *Ilanga lase Natal*, August 7, 1943. Its preoccupation with certain themes, clearly indicates it was written by H. I. E. Dhlomo.

about the Zulu language. He suggested three topics which he felt the Committee should seriously examine: in comparison to spoken Zulu, written Zulu needed to be modernized through new coinages and elimination of archaic terms—he felt the language should be made more flexible and evolutionary; the necessity of standardizing the spelling of the language; and, much more important in Dhlomo estimation, the coinage of new Zulu words and phrases "to cope up with modern trends in all departments of life. . . We need medical, business, legal, technical, geographical and other words; names of birds, animals, colours, etc."⁶³ Although he highly praised the Zulu-English Dictionary which had been assembled by Doke and Vilakazi a few years before, he felt it had not fully tackled these three central issues of contemporary African literary culture. Dhlomo's preoccupation with the Zulu language was an expression of his deep concern that all the African languages must be modernized in order for Africans to make full sense of a new historical experience of modernity which had entered African history.

The call for the modernization of the Zulu language was accompanied by Dhlomo's reflections on the condition of Zulu literature. One problem facing this literatures as well as other literatures in the African languages, was that their publication was not necessarily based on merit, but rather on the political exigencies of whether thematically and stylistically they followed the pattern and the guide-lines of what the white minority government thought were suitable books for schools. This power of political overdetermination in cultural matters was because the largest market of literature in the African languages was in government schools. The consequence was that mediocre

⁶³ Anonymous, "Zulu Language Committee", *Ilanga lase Natal*, June 9, 1951, my emphasis. The themes of this reflection are in line with the views of H. I. E. Dhlomo expressed elsewhere. This concern with language was part of a large project of Dhlomo's: the role of the African newspapers in facilitating the conditions of possibility in the making of African or national literature. Given that the potential audience for this national literature read newspapers in African indigenous languages, and hardly read any English language newspapers, and given that the authors and creators of this national literature preferred writing and reading only English language newspapers, Dhlomo wondered how this serious disjuncture could possibly be bridged. Although sympathetic to the argument of the African middle class writers, that the progress of the Race demands the historical predominance of English, that this predominance militates against the possible emergence of tribalism, and that English has become a lingua franca in South Africa, Dhlomo was deeply concerned that this would have the effect of atrophying the African languages which he believed were the Soil and Soul of a fundamental part of national culture (see: Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Language Problem", *Ilanga lase Natal*, April 28, 1951). These ideas were anticipatory of what Ngugi wa Thiong'o was to push forcefully from the 1970s onwards. Simultaneous with this concern about the future role of the African languages, Dhlomo was anxious to indicate the importance of Afrikaans and its literature beyond the cultural politics in which they were encased. Not only would knowledge of Afrikaans open the space of a literature which was a central part of South African national culture, Dhlomo believed it would make easier to learn Dutch and German, hence an opening to knowledge of European literatures (see: Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Importance of Afrikaans", *Ilanga lase Natal*, May 12, 1951).

books which were obsequios (?) to the political dictates of the government were published. In an Editorial Dhlomo argued that only the quality of the books should be the only valid criteria for their publication.⁶⁴ Dhlomo also saw this issue of the selection of the criteria for evaluating African literature(s) other than on its own intrinsic qualities as in many ways implicated in the hegemony of the English language in South Africa. This explains the reason why he preoccupied himself with this issue in many instances, before leaving cultural matters in the last few years of his life and concentrated on political matters. In one particular instance Dhlomo speculated that perhaps the English language had become the national forum for the readers of newspapers in the African languages.⁶⁵ It seems as though he wanted to transform this readership to be the real audience for national literature which was being constructed by New African intellectuals, writers and artists. This may explain the fact that although he had deep affinities and great love for the Zulu language, he never used it as a medium for realizing his creative work. Caught in the intractable contradictions between modernity and tradition, Dhlomo seems to have wanted his creative work written in English to be viewed as part of the national forum through which great vernacular literatures could be realized. Only once in all of his voluminous writings did Dhlomo attempt to historicize his decision for having chosen to write in English rather in Zulu or any other indigenous language (including the the languages of the Khoisan). This profound dilemma necessitates this rather long quotation: "An African who writes successfully in English kills many birds with one stone. He proves that the African can rise to world standards. He gets an international reputation. He speaks to a wider audience. He receives better financial returns. There are no political, religious and other restrictions. He is not encouraging tribalism. The argument is that he can show African genius just as well in writing in English. This is the result of the drift to towns, education, the break-down of tribal ties and sentiment. These people are not interested in the deeper and finer points of Bantu languages being a great treasure or the Soul of the people. they are interested in their immediate needs and cravings for entertainment. While politicians and scholars argue they voraciously devour all kinds of exciting sensational fiction in English. They read the European Press and support African magazines published in English. They would not think of reading vernacular literature when there is so much variety and quantity of the other kind."⁶⁶ Benedict Wallet Vilakazi had already criticized some of these views being repeated in 1953 in his intellectual duel with H. I. E. Dhlomo in 1938, as we shall see in a moment. Dhlomo was postulating that the needs of the New African in the throes of modernity necessitated the primacy of English as one

⁶⁴ Anonymous, "Zulu Literature", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 31, 1951.

⁶⁵ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "English versus Vernacular", *Ilanga lase Natal*, January 17, 1948.

⁶⁶ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Reflections On A Literary Competition", *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 31, 1953.

of the effective ways of overcoming the pull or grip of tradition. Modernity and tradition were not only only a historical relation, but in a real sense a historical contradiction. Dhlomo was a classical exemplification of this contradiction.

Given this contradiction between modernity and tradition in the lived experience of Africans, which Dhlomo felt the hegemonic white political state was exacerbating rather than ameliorating, he came to believe that literature or literary culture could provide the means of reconciliation between the two, while politics or political practice could provide the praxis or intervention that would make possible the transcendence of modernity over tradition: this explains his theatre work (plays) predominantly written in the 1930s and his political interventions in the African National Congress in order to give it an intellectual vision from approximately 1943-4, the moment of the founding of the African National Congress Youth League, to about a year or two before his death in 1956. It is no mere coincidence that while his plays were preoccupied with the past (tradition), his developing political intervention engaged itself with the present and future (modernity). Dhlomo had a strongly held conviction at this time that the African National Congress would eventually succeed in bringing Africans into the modern age, for that matter, South Africa itself: to him the historical mission of the African National Congress (ANC) and the project of modernity were inseparable. This is the reason why while his senior colleagues such as H. Selby Msimang and R. V. Selope Thema, founding members of the ANC and outstanding intellectuals, with whom he had worked very closely in the *Umteteli wa Bantu* newspaper in the 1930s (a great newspaper in this decade), began disengaging themselves and eventually left the organization in the early 1950s, Dhlomo intensified his participation. But like all the New African Talented Tenth, including Msimang and Selope Thema, he believed that United States modernity, specifically African American modernity, had profound and incomparable lessons for South African modernity, specifically African modernity. Perhaps they believed, what Octavio Paz in another context and half a century after their historical mement, that the United States was "the most perfect expression of modernity."⁶⁷

Simultaneously with the writing of his plays, Dhlomo wrote a series of remarkable essays on the position, function and role of drama, literature generally, within African traditional societies. Few other essays in the whole of South African literary history can match, let alone equal, their astonishing brilliance. Before examining them, it is necessary to reflect on Dhlomo's understanding of the problematics of African literature in the historical evolution of cultural forms. All of Dhlomo's reflections on the arts were

⁶⁷ Nathan Gardels, "The Border of Time: A Conversation with Octavio Paz", *New Perspective Quarterly*, Vol.4 no.1, Winter 1987. Paz criticizes United States modernity in its commitment to the 'idea of purity' and 'separation'.

governed by the this philosophical and aesthetic credo: "The Soul of Africa is the African. The soul of South African art must come from the Africans, therefore. They are of the soil; they are the People. And art that is original and great must spring from the soil and the people."⁶⁸ This affirmation of the subject, the creative process and the historical location of the act of cultural production did not by itself resolve the contradictory and contestatory nature of the process of establishing a national literary culture or nature culture. Dhlomo's posing of certain questions for his own self-understanding concerning South African national literary culture makes this clear: "What about the vexed question of language and a national Bantu [African] literature? Can there be a truly Bantu national literature without a lingua franca? How will the works of the various language groups be assessed and compared? By translated versions or through the originals? Can we, for instance, have a Bantu poet-laureate, or shall we have one for each language group? What place will the Africans who write in English and Afrikaans occupy? What, exactly, is Bantu literature? Of Bantu tribal poetry and modern Bantu poetry---shall we have our own laws and standards of criticism or adopt the Western standards? . . . There are Africans who think that whatever we do we must avoid isolationism and try to be international in our outlook, influence and achievement."⁶⁹ His preoccupation with literary and cultural theory was a historical consciousness that until some of these historical 'problems' were resolved, or critically confronted, the entrance of Africans

⁶⁸ Busy Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Non-European Art Exhibition", *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 6, 1945.

⁶⁹ Busy Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review and Commentary "The Cultural Front", *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 25, 1947. What probably impelled Dhlomo to pose these issues was the attempt on the part of the Young Lions of the African National Congress Youth League to establish an African Academy of the Arts, hence a 'new awakening on the African cultural front': A. P. Mda, "African Academy of Arts", *Inkundla ya Bantu*, July 24, 1947. A. M. Lembede, "An African Academy of Art and Science", and Jordan K. Ngubane, "African Academy of Arts", *Inkundla ya Bantu*, July 31, 1947. In another context, Dhlomo's poses one of the fundamental questions which would be faced by the established African Academy: how to forge a national literature without a national language or lingua franca, or when some of the leading writers are unfamiliar with the language of other ethnic groups (Weekly Review and Commentary "Authors' Society: First Fruits", *Ilanga lase Natal*, August 30, 1947). Note the proximity of all these dates. In a subsequent reflection Dhlomo traces the origins of the idea of establishing an African Academy to a Conference of 1936 (X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Academy of Arts and Research", *Ilanga lase Natal*, September 10, 1949. Dhlomo's encounter with the Youth League was unfortuitous, for from about fifteen years before their emergence he had been calling on the younger generation to bring about the New against the Old, bring into being the future represented by modernity in contrast to the past symbolized by tradition: "Youth is progressive and will not give childlike obedience to our present systems just because they happen to exist. . . Instead of allowing our Past alone to influence and guide us, they believe in bringing into play the Past, Present, and Future. It is a good omen: it is an improvement on our stagnant way of thinking" ("Younger Generation", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, July 5, 1930). Exactly twenty years after Dhlomo's death (1956), the Youth of the Black Consciousness Movement, following the historical logic of this principle, initiated the Soweto Uprising of 1976, which was the beginning of the end of apartheid.

into twentieth-century modernity would always remain problematical, if not impossible.

As already indicated, from early on in his intellectual career Dhlomo had a historical sense that literary matters that were part of the foundation in the construction of modernity had to be theorized into a historical understanding. Beginning with a large portion of his critical reflections in *Umteteli wa Bantu* in the 1930s, were part of this project. Calling on African writers and journalists to create an intellectual revival, an Age of Reason, an African Hellenism, Dhlomo pleaded for original work that objectively and philosophically would enlighten the readers about the total picture of life. He all forms of literary expression to be undertaken. Such a literature should not only be characterized only, by originality, but iconoclasim and high quality treatment, should be part of it, in the effort to make people to strive for the 'higher things of life'. African writers should not preoccupy themselves only with literary form, should transform themselves into political and social reformers in the task of emancipation. Literature should be at the center of the making of creative ideas about the lived experience of modernity. Dhlomo again bitterly lamented that white state hindered the fulfilling of such a task by the prohibiting of Africans to use the better endowed white libraries and research institutions. He was fearful that the construction of the new would not be possible without the availability of books from all over the world to Africans.⁷⁰ Perhaps what inspired Dhlomo to believe in the possibility of an 'African Hellenism' was the existence of books written by Africans in the English language which he thought outstanding, some of which superlative; with justification they could coconstituting part of his South African canon, since he referred to them repeatedly in other instances: **The Bantu** by Silas Modiri Molema, **Native Life in South Africa** by Solomon T. Plaatje, **The Bantu Problem** by D. D. T. Jabavu, **Man Must Live** by Ezekiel Mphahlele, **Should the N. R. C. be Abolished** by Jordan Ngubane (of his estimation of Samuel Mqhayi will be considered later in the essay).⁷¹

⁷⁰ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "The Bantu Writers and Their Work", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, April 30, 1932.

⁷¹ Busy Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review and Commentary "Books in English by Africans", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 25, 1950. Dhlomo laments that because of the absence of a common national language, these books written in English are not accessible to many Africans. He mentions the debate which was then prevalent whether African creative writers should write in English or in the African languages. He enthusiastically notes that the literature in the African languages is outpacing that written by Africans in English. Dhlomo does not believe that the proposition by Jacob Nhlapo that Nguni languages should be united into one language, likewise that Sotho languages be united into a single language, would necessarily solve the problem of creating a national and unified literature made easily accessible by reduction the number of languages through which it would be accessible (Weekly Review And Commentary "The Sixpenny [Bookman] Library", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 18, 1944). Neville Alexander was to celebrate in the late 1980s this proposition by Nhlapo as the solution to all South African language problems: . In the style of Thomas Carlyle, again Dhlomo praises the famous men: Busy Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Great Pioneers of the Movement", *Ilanga lase Natal*, June 30, 1951. In another instance, expanding the possible parameters of the African

Speaking of libraries, it is necessary to mention that they held a deep fascination in his imagination. Dhlomo saw the task of a library as being not only getting books for readers, but more fundamentally, as getting readers for the books. He analyzed reading as a systematic process that enables one to obtain knowledge, consequently power.⁷² On more than two occasions he wrote articles in high praise of the Killie Campbell Private Library Collection of Africana materials, which eventually became the foundation of the great Africana library at the University of Natal in Durban.⁷³ In Dhlomo's estimation, the importance of libraries in the construction of African modernities cannot be overestimated.

Dhlomo conceptualized the nature and role of literature in modernity in relation to the transformations it could possibly effect. Theorizing modernity as a process of industrialization and urbanization, the uprooting and transformation of the peasantry into a proletarian class, as well as the making of new other classes, he conceived of literature as inextricably connected with the question of literacy. For him literacy made possible the introduction of

political and intellectual canon, beyond the literary one, Dhlomo lists the following: politics--John Dube, Solomon T. Plaatje, Albert Luthuli, Walter Sisulu, Moroka; law--Alfred Mangena, Pixley ka Isaka Seme, Anton Lembede; music--Rueben Caluza, Michael Moerane (Busy Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "The Peacock Of Sontseu Barracks: Reply to Mr. O. A. Nkwanyana", *Ilanga lase Natal*, August 15, 1953).

⁷² H. I. E. Dhlomo, "The Bantu Library", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, June 25, 1932. The occasion for the piece was the opening of the Bantu Mens' Social Center (B. M. S. C.) Library in Johannesburg financed by Carnegie Corporation. Dhlomo worked for a short time for the library before returning permanently to Durban in the early 1940s to join his brother as co-editor of *Ilanga lase Natal*. The BMSC Library has been made renowned by Peter Abraham's autobiography, *Tell Freedom*, as place in whose shelves he discovered African American culture and the Harlem Renaissance: Alain Locke's *The New Negro*, W. E. B. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folks*, and other classics by James Weldon Johnson, Paul Dunbar and others. This act of discovery across the Atlantic constitutes one of the stirring moments linking United States modernity and South African modernity. In another context he writes of the effects of the prohibition of Africans, Indians, so-called Coloureds from using libraries: "It concerns intellectual slavery. Owing to our laws and system, our cultural life is affected adversely. So are our moral and other values. The Non-European is enchained intellectually and spiritually because cultural opportunities are denied him. He cannot enter our so-called public library, archives, art galleries (there are a few exceptions) etc. This means intellectual starvation. There can be no free flow of ideas and exchange of thoughts. We are paying heavily for this in this country" (Indians and the Public Library", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 25, 1950, my italics). Anonymous [almost certainly by Dhlomo], "Libraries And Progress", *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 28, 1944.

⁷³ Busy Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], *Weekly Review And Commentary* "Research", *Ilanga lase Natal*, September 15, 1945: "We really do need African research workers to preserve our cultural heritage, expound its philosophy and create great works of art from this rich past." In another context, Dhlomo praises the Campbell library as a paradise for all lovers of culture and literature. Moreover, the library enabled one to appreciate that Art and Culture are on par with Religion (X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "The Campbells And African Culture", *Ilanga lase Natal*, February 5, 1944). The following is a much greater treatment of the Collection: X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Great Contribution To African Culture: Unique Collection By The Campbells", *Ilanga lase Natal*, April 23, 1949.

new ideas and new ways of living.⁷⁴ In this context, the production of literature is with the aim of meeting the needs and the taste of the newly made readers. It was because of his interest in the making of the new and the forging of a new consciousness that he wrote the essay: "Masses and the Artist."⁷⁵ Dhlomo argues that the task of the creative artist is to facilitate through a cultural revolution the participation of the masses in the making of the new. Taking Shakespeare and Homer as examples, he makes the point that great art is born of the confrontation with the most profound adversities of life. The adversities are part of the making of a personal and national experience. The creative process melds the personal and group experience, as well as being a social and aesthetic responsibility. Art for Dhlomo comments and reflects on the experience of the time and the people: hence, serious art cannot be created aloof from the people and the masses: "Homer created universal art by commenting on the battles actual or symbolic of his day. . . Shakespeare wrote of the clowns, the fools, the fables, the Masses, the human frailties of his day. . . So Dickens in his great social novels, so the powerful Russian novelists, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, and so many of the best artists-- --Wordsworth, Shelley and Byron among them." Alluding to Keats, Dhlomo believes that the African artists must meet the challenge of the Masses and Art, Beauty and Truth.

In his quest to create a modern national literary culture in South Africa, Dhlomo theorized the production of literature as intertwined with education, politics and literary criticism.⁷⁶ He believed firmly that literature must play a role in the educating of Africans as well as in creating an African Renaissance. This renaissance could be realized through writing and creating more books which will eventually play a fundamental role in the National Liberation Movement. Such books must engage themselves with South African history in order to be most effective in their educative role. Insisting on the educative role of literature, Dhlomo argued that for its self-interest, if nothing else, it must undertake this task because the appreciation of imaginative literature, which he characterized as the highest form of literature, required a highly educated public. He called for the establishing of more literary magazines to facilitate this educative process. These magazines anyway, he postulated, were not only an important feature of modern life, they would also be the training ground for writers and assist in shaping literary taste. Dhlomo foresaw two major problems in the construction of modern literary culture. First, the question of language: should this culture be realized in the English language or in the various African languages! Which language or languages should be

⁷⁴ Anonymous, "Literature For The African", *Ilanga lase Natal*, July 16, 1949. Stylistic evidence and a fondness for certain themes makes this clear that it could only have been written by Dhlomo. See also the editorial: "Literacy Campaign", *Ilanga lase Natal*, July 10, 1948. This also could only have been written by Dhlomo.

⁷⁵ X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Masses and the Artists", *Ilanga lase Natal*, April 10, 1943.

⁷⁶ Anonymous, "Africans and Literature", *Ilanga lase Natal*, June 16, 1945. This editorial has the imprint of Dhlomo all over it.

the mode of expression of these reviews? Secondly, Dhlomo thought publishers were a problem, for not only were they paying insufficiently, they hardly paid any royalties. He saw this as related to that books were inordinately expensive. Disdaining the idea that poverty makes possible the creation of great art, he advocated a form of patronage should be created in order to assist, particularly, newly emergent writers. The last point he considers on the possibility of creating a modern national literary culture, is the necessity of criticism. Dhlomo views this necessity on three different levels: that criticism begets ideas; that it would tackle the obstacles and difficulties standing in the production of serious literary art; and that it should help writers engage with the most original and important elements in African cultural history---present creativity should be informed by past cultural productivity.

Other than the historical unavoidability of the great figure of Benedikt Wille Vilakazi, Dhlomo wrote little literary criticism. It was as though the politics of segregation and apartheid were so severe, that whenever he set out to write literary criticism, these politics of oppression intruded, thereby transforming his intent of producing literary criticism into an actual production of expansive cultural criticism. Two examples of this concern two European playwrights who had the most pronounced influence on him: William Shakespeare and George Bernard Shaw. One classical instance of this is his consideration of the importance of Shakespeare to Africans.⁷⁷ The occasion was the barring of Africans from seeing Laurence Olivier's film version of Shakespeare's *Henry V*. Dhlomo begins by observing that it is generally accepted that plays have to be seen in order to be appreciated, and that many plays worth seeing are not worth reading. But great plays are great literature, should be read with pleasure, not wait until they are staged or filmed, for in most likelihood neither of these two things would happen to them. The barring of Africans from seeing outstanding films, or from concerts and performances, or from exhibitions, is catastrophic and unhealthy for the cultural and intellectual life of the country, because it prevents them from being inspired, and possibly emulating, the great artists. Dhlomo postulates this as part of the reason that while South Africa was potentially wealthy, it has not as yet given birth to producers of culture of international stature and reputation. Europeans or whites are equally debilitated, intellectually and artistically, the quality and level of competition is lowered by the exclusion of Africans. The so-called white universities are equally affected

⁷⁷ Anonymous, "'Henry V' and Culture", *Ilanga lase Natal*, December 1, 1945. Only Dhlomo would be concerned with Shakespeare and European culture in such a profound way within the pages of the newspaper, either editorially as is the case in this instance, or in its regular columns. In case there is need to state the obvious, there was no other South African intellectual, writer, or artist in the first half of the twentieth-century who had a deeper grasp of European culture, European modernity, European modernism, above all his beloved Shakespeare, than Dhlomo: not Hermann Bosman, not Solomon T. Plaatje, not Getrude Millin, not Roy Campbell, not Laurence van der Post, not William Plomer, or whoever.

by this prejudice (because of the limited admission of Africans), because instead of being guardians and custodians of the classic spirit and looking at art as things in themselves (as Immanuel Kant wished), they judge by means of their prejudices. Given that the soil and soul of art are the people, the masses themselves should be allowed accessibility to the highest forms of artistic expression, since they are the source of material which inspire creators of artistic form.

The other instance is Dhlomo's review of the production of Shaw's *St. Joan* staged by Adams College students. He takes this opportunity in using *St. Joan*, the heroine of the play, to reflect and reinforce his belief in the Carlylean conception of history: that history is made by the heroic action of individuals, not by classes or by the masses of people. It is worth quoting the following to understand the remarkable transformation Dhlomo effects in the process of the review: "Before me I saw the *St. Joan of African Genius, Expression and Patriotism* eager, young, dashing, sincere and honest, determined to serve and save her African 'France' from Oppression, Ignorance, Poverty, Despair, Keen and Honest, the *St. Joan of Bantu Genius and Patriotism* came to the so-called sympathisers and well-wishers, experts and lovers of her sourly oppressed race."⁷⁸ The staging of the play is metamorphosed in Dhlomo's imagination into a tragedy of African birth, transition and progress; its displacement into a contemporary context. The oppression in the play is similar to contemporary oppression in South Africa. Dhlomo understands *St. Joan's* struggle against entrenched authority as having many lessons for Africans. He is fascinated by her convictions, that led onto a lonely path; and despite her being vilified and despised, she never renounced her convictions. Dhlomo is entranced by the paradox, that her greatest final defeat is also her greatest and final triumph. Intrigued by her acceptance of suffering and affliction for the cause, he compares her to Buddha, Socrates, Milton and Beethoven. All of them are heroic intellectual figures who are makers and shakers of history. Dhlomo was also intrigued by heroic literary figures who could not take decisive action in history, especially Hamlet. He used this Shakespearean drama to read South African political history: Dhlomo was fond of repeating that the unwillingness of the white minority segregationist governments to meet with the ANC or its political leaders, in preference for retrograde African Chiefs and their associations, is like staging **Hamlet** without casting the role of the Prince of Denmark!⁷⁹ Shakespeare was much more important to Dhlomo in his reading of South African history, or the modernistic conflict between European history and African history, than as

⁷⁸ Spectator, "Philosophy Of 'St. Joan'", *Ilanga lase Natal*, November 15, 1941. This could only have been written by Dhlomo because stylistically it is similar to his writings written under the pseudonym (?) of "X". Besides, Dhlomo had a passion for Shawian drama. Thirdly, it could be argued that Shaw's play had a direct influence on Dhlomo's **The Girl Who Killed to Save** (or **Nongqause**). Nongqause was a heroic figure caught in the maelstrom of modernity.

⁷⁹ Busy Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "

an inspiration in his creative writing. To Dhlomo in many ways, history was a dramatist conflict.

Dhlomo's very intense admiration for Shakespeare's pedagogics about history was related to his belief that education was arguably the most fundamental entry-way into modernity. The earliest reflections of Dhlomo on education in the context of modernity appeared in the cultural and political organ of New Africanism, *Umteteli wa Bantu*, an organ where he and R. V. Selope Thema, H. Selby Msimang and others tried to interpret the new historical moment which South Africa had entered. Opposing the white government's institutionalization of educational policy which sought to re-integrate Africans into tribal life, he argued that, given that this mode of life was in the process of disintegrating and disappearing for the enlightened segments of Africans, the real mission of education should enable Africans to participate fully in the new economic, industrial, competitive and civilizational order in whose threshold the New African was standing. Unambiguously Dhlomo formulated his pedagogical philosophy: "There is dire need for knowledge and intelligence. The world needs, and Bantu masses yearn for, brains and yet more brains. We need and must have keen, unbiased, clear, critical and evolutionary minds---minds that can rise above the influence and bondage of the past, popular and accepted doctrines, codes, conventionalities, modes of life, and rules and laws of society. Scientists, inventors, engineers, poets---we have none; writers, businessmen, educationaslists---but a few; opportunities, endowments, and privileges---we have in abundance; yet poverty, disunity, misery and diusorganisation prevail."⁸⁰ With this formulation Dhlomo was specifying several things: that education should be geared to individual abilities, not to so-called national groups as the government was enforcing educational policy, with inferior education for black people and better education for Europeans; that since not everyone has the ability, interest and temperment to pursue book learning and academic training across all national groups, attainment of knowledge should not be delimited to particular racial groups, and vocational training to others. With the Du Boisian Talented Tenth and Carlylean heroic individuality concepts in his mind, Dhlomo stated that since Africans like any other people needed dreamers, geniuses, poets, thinkers, scientists, there are Africans capable of these highest scholastic attainments. Although berating the government for setting obstacles in the pathways of Africans' utilization of education to face the complex challenge of modernity, for Dhlomo it was clear that the real obstacles to highest scholastic achievement for each individual were within rather than without. Despite emphasizing individual ability and attainments, for Dhlomo these achievements of the elite to be real had to go hand in hand with developing and changing consciousness of the masses. The New African elitism he espoused did not blind him of the necessity of unity between the African intelligentsia and the masses if progress through education is to be

⁸⁰ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Education", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, June 7, 1930.

achievable. Like most of the New Africans, for Dhlomo modern education was a means of overcoming 'the old traditional ideas of our inheritance.' Concerning the necessity of overcoming traditional inheritance Dhlomo was unambiguous and uncompromising: "Mentally, materially and spiritually the world is progressing towards an organised unity." The unity of the world was being constituted according to the regulative principles of modernity.

Although from the date of writing these reflections on his philosophy of pedagogics Dhlomo was to make many notations on matters concerning education,⁸¹ it was approximately two decades later that he again systematically reflected on this issue. In an Editorial of 1949 in *Ilanga lase Natal* commemorating the centenary of education in Natal Dhlomo pays homage to what he considers to have been an 'epic' effort of missionaries in making modern education available to Africans.⁸² Whatever mistakes they may have done, to Dhlomo these pale in comparison to the 'outstanding achievements' in producing the 'finest African citizens' through their educational system. In comparison to this achievement, Dhlomo castigates the effort of the white government concerning the education of Africans. He considers missionary education to have touched the highest human and ethical values as well as having made available the highest concepts of art, philosophy and religion which touched on truth, beauty and goodness. Concluding this appraisal, Dhlomo writes in uncertain terms: "Our civilization is essentially a product and gift of Greek Humanism and Hebrew Christianity. Are we drifting away from these foundations and this heritage? Have we something better to replace it [with]?" When Dhlomo speaks of the finest Africans who have synthesized the legacies of Humanism and Christianity he has in mind the New African intellectuals. In another context he names these Africans whom he considers to be the embodiment of this rich missionary legacy: John Dube, Pixley ka Isaka Seme, Mark Radebe, Solomon T. Plaatje, Richard Msimang, R. V. Selope Thema, Silas Modiri Molema, Z. K. Mathews.⁸³ All of whom he mentions as having been present

⁸¹ All the notations are in *Ilanga lase Natal*: January 29, 1944; June 24, 1944; November 17, 1945; November 24, 1945; February 2, 1946: "No one who has followed the end-of-the-year examination result (especially in higher education) can have failed to admire the grit, determination and tenacity of the African. Despite his many disabilities, the African is determined to forge ahead. The myth of his being incapable and inferior has been proved---a myth. However, much still remains to be done."

⁸² Anonymous, "Natal Education Centenary", *Ilanga lase Natal*, September 17, 1949. It is clear from internal evidence that this has been written by Dhlomo. The last major piece on education written by Dhlomo just two years before his death was on the confusion Bantu Education was sowing among Africans: Busy-Bee, Weekly review And Commentary "Political Schools Among Africans", April 10, 1954.

⁸³ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Educated Africans", *Ilanga lase Natal*, September 10, 1945. Dhlomo wanted in turn the New African intellectuals to educate the ruling white elites about Africans: "One of the most startling and tragic things in race relations is the ignorance of the average white voter and of some of the highest authorities. This ignorance concerns the African and what is happening in this country" (see:

except the latter at the founding moment of the African National Congress in 1912. These are some of the New Africans who opened the way to modernity for Africans. Dhlomo also applauds the role of educated women in organizations such as Daughters of Africa and the National Council of Women. Charlotte Manye Maxeke had played a principal role in both organizations before her death in 1939. Dhlomo wrote a series of profound articles on the role of women in the construction of African modernity.

Dhlomo was uncompromising in his belief that women like men must participate fully in what he called the African Liberation Movement, the utilization of the positive things of modernity to overthrow the economic, political and cultural oppression of Africa.⁸⁴ One of the reasons for Dhlomo's unmitigating hostility to certain strands of traditional heritage and the African past was that it had held and was still holding women in bondage: "A few decades ago woman's position was unenviable. She was not allowed to hold office or even to participate in ecclesiastical, political and civic institutions; she was expected to observe a special code of morality and was denied many of the privileges enjoyed by men. Today woman has risen from a position of subordination, inferiority and obscurity, to a place of prominence, independence, power and respect."⁸⁵ These criticism of Dhlomo are in consonance with what Octavio Paz considers to be one of the characteristics of modernity, that is the rejection and criticism of the immediate past and the interrupting of continuity. To Dhlomo education was the fundamental key to interrupting the continuity or legacy of traditional heritage and forging an entranceway into modernity. Through education he felt women would overcome their position of subordination, particularly in traditional societies. Dhlomo saw custom and tradition as forms of tyranny which were retarding the progress of women. To him the civilization of modernity was inconceivable and unrealizable without the progress of womanhood. Though supportive of women in availing themselves to the opportunities and difficulties of modernity on the one hand, on the other he was intransigent that women should keep themselves 'pure' and 'virtuous' through inhibition.

Dhlomo's passion for womanhood was very profound. Repeating his often articulated estimation that the highest peaks of world literature were the Attic tragedy, the **Bible** and Shakespeare, he celebrates and marvels that at these highest moments of creativity womanhood is at the center of their representations. He ponders the lessons that can be drawn from the fact that Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides put women in the leading roles of their

Weekly Review And Commentary "Educating the 'Masters'", *Ilanga lase Natal*, February 28, 1953).

⁸⁴ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "The African Woman", *Ilanga lase Natal*, August 11, 1945.

⁸⁵ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Bantu Womanhood", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, May 10, 1930.

drama. To him the idea of fate or fatalism, which runs through Greek literature, seems to find manifestation in womanhood. Comparing Sophocles' **King Oedipus** and Shakespeare's **Macbeth** as arguably the greatest world plays, Dhlomo reflects that in both womanhood is their central preoccupation as well as both being characterized by an unusual rapidity and intensity of dramatic movement. He indicates that Homer's *Iliad* has a woman in the central role: "The idea of woman being the best and the worst creature is found in Greek mythology also where the story of Pandora as the originator of human troubles is to my mind counteracted by that of the unique and glorious birth of Athene who came pure and perfect from Zeus' brains."⁸⁶ Considering Shakespeare, Dhlomo argues that perhaps he painted better women characters than those of men. Moving to African history, Dhlomo finds fault with those African intellectuals who thought that women played a minimal role in tribal or traditional societies. He mentions the role of Mkabayi, Shaka's aunt, who played a unique and leading role in the lives of Zulu's greatest kings: Shaka, Dingane and Mpande. For him Mkabayi had the power of crowning and uncrowning kings, as well as dictating to the greatest of the Zulu army generals. Also mentioning Nongqawuse, who played a tragic role in Xhosa history, he observes: "In fact, the more I delve into the matter, the more I am convinced that woman in tribal society played as great a role as in the other examples quoted above." Dhlomo is at a loss in understanding how some members of the African intelligentsia could possibly have conceived that women constituted a problem in African history. He expected women through education to achieve greater things in modernity. The more educated and emancipated the women become, Dhlomo expected them to play a greater in the 'national struggle of the race' against racism, segregation and apartheid.⁸⁷ Being urbanised, educated and Christianized, thereby integrating herself into the modern urban industrial society, in Dhlomo's estimation inhabiting both the African and the European worlds, the African woman was expected to play a leading role in the struggle for human rights as well as in emancipatory struggles.

Dhlomo's concern with how great literature had represented the role of women in history was in consonant with his view that literature facilitates one of the best readings of history. It is within this purview that he theorized the literary form of African drama as the embodiment of the dialectical and contradictory unity of tradition and modernity. One of the fundamental projects of H. I. E. Dhlomo was creating the historical conditions of possibility that would bring into being renaissance in South Africa, with literature at the forefront of this flowering. He wanted South Africans to produce their own African Goethes, Shakespeares, Keats, Homers, Beethovens, Dvoraks,

⁸⁶ X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Woman", *Ilanga lase Natal*, August 26, 1944.

⁸⁷ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Women and The National Struggle", *Ilanga lase Natal*, January 5, 1952. See also: "Women and Passes", March 22, 1952.

Schuberts thereby making Africa play an active role in world literature and world culture. Dhlomo saw the literary brilliance of Mqhayi, Jolobe, Made and Mqhayi as the prefiguration of what this renaissance could be. In his estimation these South African writers had delved into the African Soil and Soul by using the cultural heritage, particularly folk poetry, tales and songs in creating modern African masterpieces.⁸⁸ Surveying African literary culture in the first half of the twentieth century he thought two literary efflorescences had occurred: one in Xhosa imaginative literature with Mqhayi, A. C. Jordan and others; and the other in Zulu literature with Benedict Vilakazi and R. R. R. Dhlomo at the forefront. In each of these literary movements the concerned writers had not subsumed the warmth, colour, rhythm of a literary work into the abstract technical rules of art; they had written works ethical works with a constructive tone which were a contribution to the clarification of African problems of life.⁸⁹

There were those among his contemporary New African intellectuals who saw the creative work of H. I. E. Dhlomo as constituting the central element of the very renaissance that he wanted to bring into being by unhinging its theoretical blockages. Jordan K. Ngubane, himself an outstanding member of the New African elite, then assistant editor to R. V. Selope Thema in *Bantu World*, wrote two extensive reviews in 1941 appraising Dhlomo's published poetic work of that year. Appraising four poems which Dhlomo had published in *Ilanga lase Natal*, Ngubane states that although Dhlomo is well known as a dramatist, with this serious venturing into writing poems he has marked a new phase in the development of Zulu poetry by bringing into it a modern national spirit.⁹⁰ Ngubane sees in the poems the affirmation of hope, triumph and victory of the African people: in other words, Dhlomo is a poet who sees into the distant future. In one of the poems "The Nile" Ngubane argues that Dhlomo is postulating the idea that although Africans are steeped in tradition, they will be able to meet the challenges posed by modernity. Ngubane interprets "South Africa" as showing the rottenness of the country because whites had in effect turned Africans into slaves and outcasts in their own country. The third poem "Native" is seen by Ngubane as posing the issue that the advance of civilization would outgrow the use of force, and that freedom is attainable through struggle. The last poem "Democracy" shows that Africans have hope in democracy and freedom; and that Western ways of life are not African ways of life, hence Africans have their particular way of seeing things. The only criticism Jordan Ngubane makes of the poems is that they written in English rather than Zulu. About six months later, Jordan Ngubane evaluated H. I. E. Dhlomo's famous book of poetry: **Valley Of A**

⁸⁸ X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "'Lalela Zulu'", *Ilanga lase Natal*, September 17, 1949.

⁸⁹ X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Dhlomo's 'Indlela Yababi'", *Ilanga lase Natal*, May 25, 1946. Dhlomo was very enthusiastic about Benedict W. Vilakazi's thesis, **Oral and Written Literature in Nguni**. He urged its publication.

⁹⁰ Jordan K. Ngubane, "'African poet Sings': Discussion of Mr. Herbert Dhlomo's Latest Poems", *Ilanga lase Natal*, April 26, 1941.

Thousand Hills.⁹¹ Ngubane considers this poem of several hundred lines as the expression of an emergent New Africa, in that although the poem uses Zulu lore, it is about the glory of Africans as a whole. The poem is centrally about the surging of the inner spirit of the African people despite the pain of history imposed on them by Europeans. Beside the adversity of Europeans, the other is that of tradition and the Unknown Supernatural: in Ngubane's evaluation, the poem is about the surge of active creativeness to overcome all forms of adversities. Concluding that the poem traverses the whole complex field of human experience, to Ngubane this 'epic' signaled Dhlomo's real beginnings in the National Letters.

Analyzing a different aspect of the creativity of Dhlomo than that had concerned Ngubane, S. Tuy ka Manzana reported on the lecture on "Bantu Poetry" which H. I. E. Dhlomo had given at an International Club in Durban.⁹² Manzana informed the general public that there was a general consensus among many members of New African intellectuals that not only Dhlomo was considered the ablest scholar on literature produced by Africans and the most brilliant scholar of poetic form, he was also a well read and keen researcher on Bantu folklore. Manzana designated this lecture as the best ever given by anyone at the Club, African or European. In the lecture Dhlomo had set forth several ideas: that rhythm is the essence and forum of all art; analyzed the various shades of beauty and colour of folk poetry; that dance played a vital part in all aspects of Bantu and tribal society; and lastly, that the future of African poetry and music depended on educated Africans, and not on backward tribal artists as many Europeans thought and wished. Characterizing Dhlomo as a sage, philosopher and poet, Manzana wrote". . . a young man destined to play perhaps one of the great future roles in the history of Bantu literature." Concurring with this high estimation of Dhlomo, *Inkundla ya Bantu* called him one of South Africa's greatest national poets.⁹³ There were other appreciations of Dhlomo's other generic

⁹¹ Jordan K. Ngubane, "Valley Of A Thousand Hills: Story of Feeling, Hope and Achievement", *Ilanga lase Natal*, November 29, 1941.

⁹² S. Tuy ka Manzana, "Excellent Lecture On Bantu Poetry: An African at the International Club", *Ilanga lase Natal*, April 29, 1944.

⁹³ Anonymous, "People in the News", *Inkundla ya Bantu*, August 20, 1947. In all probability this news item was written by Jordan K. Ngubane as editor of the newspaper. He was soliciting names of black artists and scholars to be included in the African Academy of Arts which was in the process of being established. The names of Paul Robeson, Marian Anderson, Gerard Sekoto were also mentioned for consideration. The founding of the Academy was one of the projects pursued by the African National Congress Youth League a few months before the death of Anton Lembede on July 29, 1947. Ngubane had turned *Inkundla ya Bantu* into the mouthpiece of the Youth League, as the many writings of Lembede in this year in the newspaper testify. Concerning H. I. E. Dhlomo, an Unpublished Autobiography of Jordan Ngubane shows how closely they collaboratively worked together and in tandem in the late 1940s and early 1950s (The Unpublished Autobiography in the Carter-Karis Political Documents on Microfilm obtainable from Center for Research Libraries in Chicago). According to the Unpublished Autobiography, in tandem, Dhlomo on the pages of *Ilanga lase Natal*, and Ngubane on those of

practices at this time. When Dhlomo started writing his extraordinary philosophical meditations under the pseudoname of 'X', they elicited a stirring positive response. Marin L. Khumalo wrote a short piece expressing his joy at reading "Rain" by 'X', which made him aware of the beauty of the English language as well as the fact that ordinary things in life and nature possess a hidden but deep philosophical resonance.⁹⁴ Given this impact, it is understandable why Walter Nhlapo, an important member of New Africanism and a cultural critic of major importance, wrote a poem dedicated to Dhlomo.⁹⁵ Yet another estimation of Dhlomo's poetry, seeing the influence of Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" in his poem "Harlot", T. H. Gwala ranked Dhlomo among the African intellectuals who were working hard for the liberation of African people.⁹⁶

Dhlomo's essays on the theory of literature, specifically on poetry and drama, clearly indicate why he was arguably the greatest intellectual force of New Africanism in South Africa. They have few parallels, if any, in South African intellectual and cultural history. In the essay "African Dramatists Should Not Fear Being Stigmatised as Imitators" Dhlomo defined the task of African dramatists as the expounding and dramatizing of a philosophy of African history.⁹⁷ In such an undertaking, he expected a dramatist to be first and foremost an artist before being a propagandist, a philosopher before being a reformer, and a psychologist before being a patriot. Postulating the origins of traditional drama as religious ritual, rhythmic dances and song, Dhlomo saw modern drama by nature as imitative, representing the ideas, cultural factors and social processes that inhere in its symbolic movement through history as a generic form. He wanted modern drama to make poetic sense of the lived experience of kings, ancestors and ethnic groups within tradition. Elaborating further on these observations, he called for the establishing of an "African Dramatic Movement" in which drama would play a fundamental role in liberating the African people, especially the African woman, from the tyranny

Inkundla ya Bantu, destroyed the political career of A. W. G. Champion in Natal in favour that of Albert Luthuli. After meeting with Albert Luthuli secretly, they both, in their respective forums, destroyed S. S. Bhengu and the Bantu National Congress, a bogus organization favoured by the white press as an alternative to the ANC. Other than its tiring uninformed phobic anti-Communism, *The Unpublished Autobiography*, is an extraordinary document by any measure. It was probably written in the 1960s in exile in Swaziland. The document shows that in the 1940s a great intellectual Renaissance took place in Natal comparable, if not much greater, than that took place in the 1880s around *Imvo Zabantsundu* newspaper in Alice and King Williamstown. From the moment of institution of apartheid in 1948, Dhlomo gravitated more and more toward politics as will be apparent in a moment.

⁹⁴ Martin L. Khumalo, "The Magic Pen 'X': An Appreciation", *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 7, 1944.

⁹⁵ Walter M. B. Nhlapo, "To H. I. E.", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 30, 1946.

⁹⁶ T. H. Gwala, "This Herbert Dhlomo", *Ilanga lase Natal*, August 18, 1945.

⁹⁷ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "African Dramatists Should Not Fear Being Stigmatised as Imitators", *Bantu World*, October 21, 1933.

od custom and tradition.⁹⁸ Modern drama should concern itself with the progress of African people within modernity. In this undertaking drama would reconstruct, recreate and reproduce the great experiences of the African people. In effect, drama, like cinema, would become a great educating agency in the formation of the ideas, ideals and character of the African people. For Dhlomo drama, much more than history, politics or philosophy, had the potential of greater description of the life and manners of the people. He expected that drama would reach a larger segment of masses or people than other forms of literary representation. Dhlomo saw one of the tasks of the African Dramatic Movement as harmonizing and humanizing race relations in South Africa. The dramatic forms of representation produced by the Movement would be concerned not only with African roots, but would borrow and appropriate from European dramatic art forms of expression. Reflecting on the necessity of synthesizing African and European dramatic forms, Dhlomo wrote: "Some doubt whether Africans can write tragic masterpieces. How can it truthfully be said that a people whose life is one long series of poignant shattering experiences, have no sense of tragedy, of the deeper meaning of life, of the agony that is existence? However, it is not always necessary that an artist should actually live what he portrays or creates. An artist is one able to reveal and portray objective experience subjectively; one whom can be touched and moved by objective reality and experience as if it were subjective." Dhlomo anticipated that the African National Dramatic Movement would utilize dramatic forms to symbolically unravel the nature of history.

Dhlomo sought to theorize the possible lingua franca of the dramatic forms of the African National Dramatic Movement. Examining the lessons imparted by early English literary history beginning with Chaucer, he argued it was after achieving linguistic and racial unity (the English being the conglomeration of Britons, Normans, Danes and Anglo-Saxons) that England produced its great literature.⁹⁹ Likewise in South Africa he believed that the African languages and dialects (Sotho, Thonga, Zulu, Venda and Xhosa) should evolve a universal African literary language that would facilitate the production of great literature. Dhlomo postulated two ways of achieving this universal language: the lingua franca could be developed through an acceptable process of elimination, combination, compromise and modification; or developing a few union languages, thereby eliminating the cumbersome multiplicity of languages. From either of these approaches, Dhlomo foresaw the accruiation of four advantages; the blending of the genius

⁹⁸ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Drama and the African", in a special issue *English in Africa* designated *Literary Theory and Criticism of H. I. E. Dhlomo* edited by Nick W. Visser (vol.4 no.2, September 1977). The essay originally appeared in: *The South African Outlook*, vol.66, October 1, 1936. This essay incorporates large segments of "African Dramatists Should Not Fear Being Stigmatised as Imitators", which had appeared three years earlier.

⁹⁹ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Language and National Drama", *ibid.*; originally appeared in *The New Outlook*, March 1939.

of each racial group into a greater genius of the nation; a greater field of tradition, folklore and ideas would emerge; African literature would expand its readership; and make possible the establishing of a national school of African drama. He was well-aware that several arguments could be made against his propositions: that this attempt at forging languages could result in the institutionalization of African literatures; the union language so realized would be an artificial language devoid of the strength and peculiarities of the African languages; this establishing of cultural forms through edicts and regimented constructions would destroy the spontaneity and originality realized in the creative process; this attempted cultural and linguistic miscegenation would not necessarily result in the creation of original African drama. Nevertheless, Dhlomo believed that all of these complex artistic and cultural conundrums in the creation of original unifying dramatic forms should be one of the central preoccupations of the established "Bantu National Dramatic Movement" confronted with the challenges of modernity.¹⁰⁰

Dhlomo was clear that the historical conditions of this new experience of necessity made an African dramatist in effect be a research worker.¹⁰¹ This formulation was derived by him having from having studied yet again other aspects of world literatures: in other words, what lessons literatures in the forefront of modernist experience had for literary practices in the emergent South African modernity. Stating his observation that 'history plays no small part in drama', Dhlomo argues that the study of literary history (the past of African literature) could yield fruitful and astonishing results. Since there were many points of contact between ancient civilizations and African culture, a comparative study of African traditional life and literature should be undertaken in relation to Hebrew, Greek and Egyptian life and literature. The reason Dhlomo emphasized the necessity of this comparative study, was that he believed that it would possibly suggest the pathways along which the African genius could develop: "Our ideas of Past, Present and Future do not rest on an unchangeable rock of finality, but on the plastic wax of time, conditions, progress. Research in South Africa not only has still to beget startling changes, but will mother great drama." African drama should attempt to capture humanity's life as an unfolding process which never ends. The African dramatist should attempt to capture the human process of change. The real essence of drama for Dhlomo is the complex human mechanism that stand behind people's actions. Through combination of scientific thinking and poetic instinct, the African dramatist as a research

¹⁰⁰ These articulations of Dhlomo in relation to drama make it clear that he was trying to achieve on the cultural plane what the ANC had undertaken on the political plane as from 1912: the unity and supposed oneness of the african people.

¹⁰¹ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "African Drama and Research", in Literary Theory and Criticism of H. I. E. Dhlomo, op. cit.; originally appeared in *Native Teacher's Journal*, vil.18, April 1939.

worker would grapple with the dialectical forms of the complex human mechanism.

"Why Study Tribal Dramatic Forms?" is one of the most fascinating essays on literary theory by H. I. E. Dhlomo because not only it theorizes in a cogent manner the contradictory unity of modernity and tradition, but also because it conceptualizes dramatic form from his Carlylean historical perspective of hero worship.¹⁰² *Izibongelo*, tribal dramatic compositions, intrigued him because he understood them as sacred forms that combined the new and the old, as well as revealing the essential oneness of the African people. Again holding on fast to a comparative perspective, Dhlomo writes that like the great Greek dramatists, the African dramatists and scholars should find inspiration from the past: "Personally I believe we must work gradually from these tribal roots up to the highest forms we can develop." Dhlomo believed that the *Izibongelo*, like Greek drama, Shakespeare and Hebrew literature (the Bible), have universal appeal because of their *literariness*, and not because of their acting or theatrical quality: "These universal masterpieces are plays not only to be seen, but to be read and seen in spirit and in imagination." Dhlomo expected the modern African dramatist to be inspired by tribal dramatic forms in creating theatrical pieces that retain literary verve. Theorizing modern African drama as about the relationship between the past and the present, the past preserved dynamically in recreating the new, Dhlomo saw the past as the fundamental base of African *literary* drama. Since the task of the modern African dramatist is not to mirror life, but to paint it, he believed this would be achievable if the dramatist delved into the past on the basis of having grasped the present. In Dhlomo's observation, a correct and fruitful understanding of the present would inform the dramatist that although modern African drama should be constructed on the basis of tribal dramatic form, more fundamentally, this new synthesis should be grafted into Western drama. Through this double process of grafting and synthesizing, modern African drama would avail itself of the power to reconstruct, reproduce and recreate the great experiences of a people, thereby laying the foundations for posterity. Reflecting on the similarities of the historical conditions then prevailing in South Africa with those that produced 'great' Greek dramatic literature and the 'immortal' Elizabethan drama, Dhlomo wrote these remarkable words: "It is a time of transition, of migration of population, of expansion, of the rise of new horizons and new modes of thought and life. It is a time when an old indigenous culture clashes with a newer civilization, when tradition faces powerful exotic influences. It is a time when men [and women] suddenly become conscious of the wealth of their threatened old culture, the glories of their forefathers [and foremothers], the richness of their tradition, the beauty of their art and song. It is a time when lamentations and groans, thrills and rejoicings, find expression in

¹⁰² H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Why Study Tribal Dramatic Forms?", *ibid.*; originally appeared in *Transvaal Native Education Quarterly*, March 1939.

writing. It is a time when men discover in their history, great heroes [and heroines] whose activities are near enough to be of interest and meaning, but remote enough to form subjects of great, dispassionately passionate creative literature. It is a time when men realise they can preserve and glorify the past not by reverting back to it, but by immortalising it in art. It is a time when men [and women] embrace the old and seize upon the new; when they combine the native and alien, the tradition and the foreign, into something new and beautiful. It is a time when men [and women] become more of themselves by becoming transformed, when they retreat to advance, when they probe into their own life by looking outward at the wider world, when they sound the mute depths by gazing at the rising stars." Within this experience of modernity, which for Dhlomo recurs at different times of human history for different civilizational cultures, he expected the modern African dramatists as New Africans to participate fully in the creation of a New Africa.

The making of a New Africa was the task of the New African intellectuals. The New Africa, of which Dhlomo wrote about repeatedly in the 1940s in *Ilanga lase Natal*, was being brought into being by enormous and accelerated changes and transformations that were occurring in matter of decades and days rather in centuries as had been the case in the not too distant past. These changes, economic, political, social and cultural had the effect of profoundly altering the lives, habits, systems and thoughts of African people. The rapidity of the changes were so drastic and swift that Dhlomo believed that only the few gifted and flexible of the African people would be able sense of them in order to intervene in the process of their happening, while the majority of the people would be puzzled, confused and uprooted by the dislocations in modern society: "Times of upheaval and flux are times of gain or loss, progress or retrogression. . . . all depending on one's readiness and ability to exploit the situation."¹⁰³ It was through the 'great epic' of courage, grit, achievement of the newly educated Africans, preferably University graduates, by means of endurance, self-sacrifice and industry that they would be at the spearhead of the New Africa.¹⁰⁴ Dhlomo believed that the influence of the

¹⁰³ Busy-Bee [H.I. E. Dhlomo] Weekly Review And Commentary "Passive Resistance", *Ilanga lase Natal*, July 6, 1946.

¹⁰⁴ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo] Weekly Review And Commentary "Hail Graduates", *Ilanga lase Natal*, May 24, 1947. The strong coupling and juxtapositioning of education and modernity by Dhlomo, like the other New African intelligentsia, was the recognition that modernity was not brought into being purely by overdetermining infrastructural processes, but rather, by the intersection of these processes and the enlightened historical consciousness of the subjects themselves. Treading on the dangerous zones of Hegelianism and idealism, one could argue that it is the subjective historical consciousness which beckons modernity, occasionally even against the countervailing forces of objective structures. The most consistent of the New Africans in recognition of this dialectic between education and modernity was Z. K. Matthews: "Christian Education in a Changing Africa", *International Review of Missions*, January 1963. Slightly earlier than Dhlomo, Z. K. Matthews wrote that the matter of education for the 'New Native' was just as important as the issue of political rights, if not more so: "A New Native Teachers'

highly trained young Africans in the different spheres of their work were laying the foundations of this New Africa. Criticizing the New African intelligentsia as not contributing productively as they are capable of doing, given their new knowledge and great talents, he expected more social documents on new modes of living from them, as well as more creative literature symbolically dealing with the imaginative difficulties of the lived experience of modernity: he exhorted the New African Talented Tenth to write more books.¹⁰⁵ Taking the example of what he considered to be the great teachers in world history, Buddha, Confucius, Socrates, Plato, Erasmus, Spinoza, Voltaire, Dhlomo developed a thesis that it was the absolute best of the African teachers who are makers and interpreters of a New Africa.¹⁰⁶ The greatness and sacredness of the profession in imparting spiritual and intellectual knowledge about life, the immaculate essence of beauty, truth and goodness are fundamental in constructing the essential values of modernity.¹⁰⁷ For Dhlomo teaching was the most demanding of professions, demanding the greatest effort from the best minds. Jacob Nhlapo, Anton Lembede and Benedikt Vilakazi exemplified for Dhlomo what the best minds among Africans are capable of attaining through education.¹⁰⁸ He hoped their examples would inspire a movement of artistic expression and national awakening. Dhlomo was deeply conscious that his articulations of the historical responsibilities of the New African in many ways paralleled those of the New Negro in United States.¹⁰⁹

Dhlomo's boundless enthusiasm for the African Youth or the younger generations of Africans was his belief that education had made them commit themselves to the New against the Old.¹¹⁰ He praised them for having created a stupendous vision which had awakened the African people.¹¹¹ He called upon them to produce doctors, lawyers, journalists and teachers which the country needed and was demanding. This explains his support of the African

Course", *Ilanga lase Natal*, November 4, 11, 1927. Elsewhere it will be necessary to consider Matthew's study of African law and education in relation to modernity.

¹⁰⁵ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Intellectual Misers", *Ilanga lase Natal*, May 22, 1948. In another context, he pleaded for a book to be written about the New African: "Let us forget our lamentations for once, and tell of our achievements." (Weekly Review And Commentary "Books To Be Written", *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 25, 1947).

¹⁰⁶ X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Passing Thoughts On the Teachers' Jubilee", *Ilanga lase Natal*, June 26, 1943.

¹⁰⁷ The Romantic philosophical constructs of John Keats had a profound effect on the imagination of H. I. E. Dhlomo. We have already indicated that there is a general consensus that Dhlomo's poetry was marred by its striving for Romantic poetic effects at the moment of high modernism.

¹⁰⁸ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Educational Attainments", *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 13, 1945.

¹⁰⁹ Busy Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Shape of Things To Come", *Ilanga lase Natal*, September 30, 1944.

¹¹⁰ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "The Younger Generation", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, July 5, 1930.

¹¹¹ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Africa's Call", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, November 16, 1929.

National Congress Youth League from the moment of its inception in 1944 on the pages of *Ilanga lase Natal*. In an Editorial he saw in the emergence of the Youth Leaguers the forging of a type of 'New Leader', committed to a principled democratization process of modernity, in contrast to 'old type of Great Leader' still preoccupied with tribalistic thoughts and habits of mind.¹¹² The New Leader in politics he saw in the careers of Anton Lembede and Albert Luthuli.

The emergence of the New African was part of the formation of the African middle and working classes.¹¹³ Dhlomo particularized the ideological making of the New African. Dhlomo's major and perhaps the only sustained reflections on the New African was in the context of abradating white South Africans for their ignorance in not knowing that Africans had produced novelists and poets, some of whom were as good as the best in their communities. He sought to disabuse the stereotypes Europeans had of Africans by enumerating the complex categories under which Africans were functioning as the result of the modernization South Africa was undergoing. Dhlomo characterized the 'Tribal African' as a patriot who unfortunately viewed race relations from a perspective of nationalism blinded by militarism. Haunted by the military defeat suffered by the African people, he or she holds on to tradition blindly, composing poems and songs in praise of custom waiting for the moment he or she will be able to reserve this shameful moment. Living a Jekyll-and-Hyde existence, she presents a Janus face to the Europeans. To her concepts such as socialism, capitalism or liberalism do not hold much significance. The "'neither-Nor" African' is neither wholly African nor fully Europeanized, yet wishes and dreams of becoming fully Europeanized. Caught in the maelstrom of industrialization, evangelization and civilization, he lacks a universal national philosophy that would mediate her syncophancy to whites. Lacking originality and clear

¹¹² Anonymous, "Problems of African Leadership", *Ilanga lase Natal*, February 12, 1949: "The two World Wars, the urbanisation and industrialisation of thousands of Africans, the emergence of an African working and a middle class, and the growth of education in the mission stations and in urban areas, have combined to produce a New African who is no longer tribalistic in his thoughts and habits, and who does not believe in the Chiefs and the Great Leader, but in trained leadership of real and proved merit based on certain principles." Any mention of the concept of New African and expression of contempt for African Chiefs on the pages of *Ilanga lase Natal* could only have been written by H. I. E. Dhlomo. A whole article is devoted to exposing the retrogression of African Chiefs, their treachery, and their ill-equipped nature to be the leaders of African thought and action in the context of modernity (see: Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Cowley Faux Pas", *Ilanga lase Natal*, July 11, 1953). Dhlomo was not alone in his enthusiasm for the Youth League. His contemporary and astute reader, Walter M. B. Nhlapo, had superlative praise for the Youth League publication "*New Africa*" ("Johannesburg News Letter", *Ilanga lase Natal*, September 15, 1945). He praised in particular articles by Anton Lembede and A. P. Mda.

¹¹³ Dhlomo praised the helping of the poor by young African priests as part of the creation of a New Africa or a New Africanism (Weekly Review And Commentary "Silent Service", *Ilanga lase Natal*, January 14, 1950).

thinking, he avers any progressive ideas consoling himself in the belief that eventually all non-African groups will eventually be driven from South Africa. Of the third category, to which the 'New African' belongs, Dhlomo writes: "The new African knows where he belongs and what belongs to him; where he is going and how; what he wants and the methods to obtain it. Such incidents as workers' strikes, organized boycotts; mass defiance of injustice--- these and many more are but straws in the wind heralding the awakening of the New African masses. . . [The New African] wants a social order where every South African will be free to express himself and his personality fully, live and breathe freely, and have a part in shaping the destiny of his country; a social order in which race, colour and creed will be a badge neither of privilege nor of discrimination. . . He knows too much and sees too far for the comfort of those who believe in our present unjust and crippling social order."¹¹⁴ Dhlomo articulated the political vision of the New African as a 'civilized philosophy', for which values and issues are more fundamental than race and color. The progressively thinking African intellectuals and democratic political leaders were among the most eminent representatives of New Africanism. This is the reason throughout his life Dhlomo preoccupied himself with the historical and social responsibilities of African intellectuals.

Following on the tradition of nearly all New African intellectuals of appropriating the historical lessons of African Americans within United States modernity in order to negotiate the newly emergent South African modernity, Dhlomo argues, in one of his earliest published essays, that given the relative comparability of the historical experiences of the two countries, the self-reliance, the fortitude, the determination, the seizing of opportunities, and the displaying of remarkable capabilities exemplified by African Americans should be emulated by African political and intellectual leaders.¹¹⁵ He believed that through the cultivation of reason would intellectuals be able to lead the New African masses to prosperity, progress, peace and fraternity. Seeking to enhance, enlarge, and deepen the social space of involvement of New African intellectuals among New African masses, in a letter to *Umteteli wa Bantu* Dhlomo thought it insufficient of African elite to form only political organization like the ANC.¹¹⁶ He thought it necessary

¹¹⁴ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Racial Attitudes: An African View-Point", *The Democrat*, November 17, 1945; "African Attitudes to the European", *The Democrat*, December 1, 1945.

¹¹⁵ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Hardship and Progress", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, October 18, 1924.

¹¹⁶ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Letter to the Editor", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, February 18, 1928. Besides his support for the formation of Leagues, Dhlomo saw much that was positive in the organization of the Co-operative Movement among Africans which would enable the 'African workman [and workwoman]' at the local level to overcome the difficulties which resulted from their 'cheated' by Indians and Europeans ("The Co-operative Movement", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, July 27, 1929). Concomitant with his strong advocacy for intervention at civil society, Dhlomo urged the formation of a national organization consisting of a council of African leaders who would give a sense of cohesiveness to many organizations at this level of society ("National Organization", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, August 31, 1929). It is interesting to note the different responsibilities he would have parceled out to the different members of the New African

of them also to participate in the construction of civic organizations such as the African Social Service League which principally concerned itself with the practical matters of social and home life for the betterment of the New Masses. The League intervened in the social life of Africans by sheltering children, crime, drunkenness and other urban vices which he thought were essentially the products of modernity. His support for the League was in concordance with his view then that more than color and nationality, it was economic achievement determined one's position in social life. Dhlomo viewed in this context the responsibilities in a four-fold manner: to work for the betterment of present conditions; undertaking moral upliftment; the economic reconstruction of communities; and the social organization of the African masses. The one New African intellectual whom Dhlomo considered to be facing the challenges modernity in an exemplary manner, the forging of a dialectical unity between the interests of New African intellectuals and the New African masses, was Solomon Plaatje. In an appraisal of the history of the methods of struggle by African intellectuals against oppression, racism, discrimination and segregation, he praised Plaatje by implication and allusion, and without naming him, for having shifted the policy of sending African delegations to England to protest to the actions and policies of white parliaments in South Africa, to propagandizing the African cause through newspapers, publishing books and giving a series of lectures: it was Plaatje who founded *Koranta ea Bechuana* (The Bechuana Gazette) in 1901, and published **Native Life in South Africa** (1916), a document indicting the tragic consequences unleashed by the Natives Land Act of 1913, while ironically with a deputed delegation in London, and gave a series of lectures in Harlem in the early 1920s to African Americans, sometimes accompanied by Marcus Garvey, about the oppressive conditions of Africans in South Africa.¹¹⁷ In the same year of 1930, in taking stock of what had been published during its twelve months, as well as the articles that had been published during this period, he selected the publication of Plaatje's historical novel **Mhudi** (though written about a decade earlier) as a priceless work for the nation that is rare.¹¹⁸ Dhlomo also praised the essays of R. V. Seloape Thema which appeared in *Umteteli wa Bantu*, the essays in effect which theorized and intervened in the construction of South African modernity.

intelligentsia, had he the power to so: H. Selby Msimang---national policy; R. V. Seloape Thema---the Joint Council Movement; Professor D. D. T. Jabavu---educational policy; Richard W. Msimang---Union anti-African legislation; Dr. Alfred Xuma or Dr. Silas Modiri Milema---Public Health; and Z. B. Mahabane---African National Congress.

¹¹⁷ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Deputations and Propaganda", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, January 17, 1931.

¹¹⁸ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Through Umteteli's Pages", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, January 3, 1931. A year and a half later, following the unexpected death of Plaatje in 1932, Dhlomo wrote these passionate words as part of an obituary: "Now he is no more, and there is nobody to fill his place. Never have I found him autocratic, contumacious, or narrow of outlook. Whatever subject he touched upon---leadership, literature, travel, amusement---was treated with a brilliancy, humour, ability and finish that at once surprised and captivated, inspired and humbled me" ("An Appreciation", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, June 25, 1932).

Probably one of the reasons for H. I. E. Dhlomo's high estimation of Solomon Plaatje's position in South Africa cultural history was his large contribution in the writing of the book that represented the modernist historical vision of New Africanism: **The African Yearly Register**. Not only are the contributions of Plaatje the only ones which are specifically identified, they are practically all about the Chiefs in the first part of the book which deals with tradition. Of the second part of the book, which covers the modernist, the editor writes the following: "The Editor also wishes to extend his profound thanks to Mr. H. I. E. Dhlomo for information and photographs appearing in the second part of the book. . . "¹¹⁹ The anthology consists of biographical sketches of leading African personalities traversing the spectrum of the tradition/modernity dialectic from Chiefs to New African intellectuals. Most of the figures sketched are New Africans such as Silas Modiri Molema, Walter Rubusana, Charlotte Manye Maxeke, Griffiths Motsieloa, Alfred Mangena, etc. The book also articulates a pan-African perspective with biographies of such figures as J. E. K. Aggrey, Edward Wilmont Blyden, Bishop Samuel Adjai Crowther. Since Dhlomo saw himself as the apostle of modernity, and Plaatje was very critical of the social consequences ushered in by modernity, the book can be read as a representation of their differing understanding of modernity.

The importance of the anthology can be measured by the fact that it is the only extended book review Dhlomo ever wrote of any book.¹²⁰ Dhlomo saw the primary importance of **The African Yearly Register** in contributing to finding a solution to the problems of race in South Africa by making available to Europeans the outstanding achievements of Africans, thereby proving that what whites are capable of achieving, blacks are also capable of attaining. To younger Africans it would make available the efforts and achievements of African, past and present, which they ought to emulate; it would encourage them to learn about the history of Africans as well as that of African kingdoms of antiquity as of the immediate past. To Dhlomo the first part of the anthology which is on the outstanding achievements of non-South African Africans, besides on South Africans Chiefs, shows what greater things New African intellectual would be capable were it not for segregation and

¹¹⁹ T. D. Mweli Skota (ed.), "Preface", **The African Yearly Register: Being an Illustrated National Biographical Dictionary (Who's Who) of Black Folks in Africa**, R. J. Lesson & Co. Ltd., Johannesburg, 1930. Not the allusion to W. E. B. Du Bois' **The Souls of Black Folk**. The reason for this expression of gratitude is that Dhlomo had begun on his own to write and compile a national biographical dictionary, but on hearing of similar efforts by Mweli Skota, decided to contribute his own work to Mweli Skota's project. It is in this context that one can presume that a large part of the second part of the book consisted of contributions by Dhlomo.

¹²⁰ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "The African Yearly Register", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, October 17, 1931; "Thoughts on The African Yearly Register", October 24, and October 31, 1931. Approximately twenty years later, when New Africanism was ebbing at the historical conjuncture of the development of official apartheid and the emergence of the Sophiatown Renaissance cultural movement, Dhlomo called for another book on the national biography of the race: Weekly Review And Commentary "African Who's Who", *Ilanga lase Natal*, November 19, 1949.

racism. He viewed the second part of the book as a national biography of the national soul. Dhlomo read the book as showing the indispensability of education in the transition from tradition to modernity. He believed that the self-education of brilliant African intellectuals such as Solomon Plaatje held many lessons for the younger members of New Africanism. The presence of many eminent women in the anthology Dhlomo took as a positive sign of the positive role of women in African history. In short, to Dhlomo the book was a historical mirror of the role of African intelligentsia in facilitating a transition from tradition to modernity.

The fascination of the great Xhosa poet Samuel E. K. Mqhayi for Dhlomo was in his perception of him as located at median point between tradition and modernity. In his obituary, prasing Mqhayi as a pioneer of Xhosa literature who made the Xhosa language the vehicle of great power and beauty, who practised other generic forms that of novelist and biographer, Dhlomo situates him historically as the last link, between a tribal bard whose powers of creativity and verbal voice were astounding, and the modern African who wrote verse poetry.¹²¹ Searching for superlative words to praise Mqhayi as a great man, Dhlomo appraises him as not only as a voice of his people, but as the very essence Xhosa culture whose voice will always be a source of inspiration for generations of South Africans. Another brilliant scholar, a leading representative of the New African Talented Tenth, A. C. Jordan, in his obituary also praised Mqhayi in nearly the same historical terms: "A lover of the human race, he associated himself with several progressive movements and institutions. He understood alike the illiterate and educated, and as a result, his social influence was very wide. Because of his active interest in his people, his knowledge of their history, traditional and modern, was amazing. . . And now, as the Meteor slides along and swims into the Dark Cloud that must for ever hide it, let us hope that the younger generation has caught its splendour, to cherish and yo carry to the great New Age that

¹²¹ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Mqhayi", *Ilanga lase Natal*, September 1, 1945. Two years earlier Dhlomo had praised Mqhayi's book of poems Inzuzo as the only major work of cultural expression in 1943 (Weekly Review And Commentary "What Did We Do This Year", *Ilanga lase Natal*, January 8, 1944). Since one of the underlying themes of this essay is that H. I. E. Dhlomo would not have been what he was without Benedict Vilakazi and Jordan Ngubane, among others, and therefore the emergent Zulu intellectual renaissance of the 1940s (in contrast to the Xhosa cultural renaissance of the 1880s), it remains to indicate that the death of Mqhayi had the same devastating effect on Ngubane as it had on Dhlomo. In an editorial obituary Ngubane observed: "The news of the death of Samuel E. Krune Mqhayi at Ntabozuku has come as a staggering shock on the African people. . . Mqhayi has been discovered not only to have been an outstanding poet among the Xhosas, but to have been a son of whom the Zulu, Sutho were rightly prous. . . In other words, he lit the torch for the younger generation of African writers. . . His memory should be kept alive in the minds of all African posterity. . ." ("S. E. Krune Mqhayi", *Inkundla ya Bantu*, August 31, 1945). Jordan Ngubane emphasized that Mqhayi had made the Izibongo art form a living tradition of modernity.

Mqhayi must not know."¹²² Paramount in both evaluations is the responsibility of African intellectuals in transcending present obstacles in order to bring the New Age into being.

Throughout his life Dhlomo wrote pieces on the relationship between African intellectuals and modernity. It was only in the 1940s that he began to reflect on this relationship with a certain sense of consistency. Dhlomo seems to have been spurred on by the emergence of the African National Congress Youth League and the beginning of the apartheid era in South African history. In the same year as the founding of the Youth League, 1943, he castigated African intellectuals for not expressing themselves forthrightly in front of government commissions investigating the crisis and the untenable under which the African people were living. Dhlomo criticized African intellectuals for not pointing out to the commissions that it was the dire consequences of government policy that the Africans were suffering. He commended the emergence of a group of young African intellectuals who were not afraid to state forthrightly what they observed or felt. In an editorial, he exhorted African intellectuals to become voices of the African people: "But we fear that unless our intellectuals get into the sufferings of their people; and weave themselves into their unvoiced fears and anxieties they will never speak the feelings of the people."¹²³ It was because of his perception of the Youth League as the voice of the people expressing the feelings of the people, that he was enthusiastic about its advent. Consonant with the notions he had stated in this editorial, he viewed the Youth Leaguers as possessing constructive ideas and thoughts, and had the wherewithal to make the African people find their true destiny. Within a year of the founding of the Youth League, Dhlomo celebrated its young intellectuals as the brain trust, a laboratory that would collect facts and make analyses on behalf of the

¹²² A. C. Jordan, "Samuel Edward Krune Mqhayi", *South African Outlook* (?), September 1945, my italics. Reinforcing the New African view of Mqhayi as a bridge between two historical moments, a decade later in the 1950s in a series of essays on the theory of African literature written in *Africa South* and subsequently assembled posthumously by his daughter in ***Towards an African Literature: The Emergence of Literary Form in Xhosa***, A. C. Jordan wrote: "There are some modern Bantu-speaking poets who seem to think that the praise-poem has had its day. But there are others who have shown successfully that the idiom, style and technique of the traditional praise-poem can be applied most effectively to modern themes. Among the latter is the Xhosa poet, Mqhayi" (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1973, p.27, my italics). It may be possible that there are greater affinities between Mqhayi and Vilakazi than those generally supposed. Besides their concurrence in the greatness of Mqhayi as a transitional figure, both H. I. E. Dhlomo and A. C. Jordan were entranced by the poetic power and intellectual imagination of Benedikt W. Vilakazi. Jordan translated Vilakazi's famous "Ezinkomponi", a searing poem about the construction of South African modernity through the exploitation of black labor power by white capital ("In the Gold Mines", *Africa South*, vol.1 no.2, January-March, 1957).

¹²³ Anonymous, "Our Intellectuals", *Ilanga lase Natal*, July 31, 1943. This editorial and other articles and editorials he wrote about intellectuals at this time resonate with ideas that H. I. E. Dhlomo began developing in the pages of *Umteteli wa Bantu* in the 1920s and 1930s.

seasoned African political leadership. Interestingly, he viewed the Youth League not so much as a political body as a national intellectual group studying, discussing and presenting papers to the national body of the ANC.¹²⁴ These observations were prescient in several respects. First, it was Anton Lembede's specific articulation of the ideology of African Nationalism that partly galvanized the ANC towards the Programme of Action of 1949. Upon hearing Lembede's famous presentation of this lecture in person, Dhlomo seems to have been convinced that African Nationalism could be developed into a systematic philosophy that could withstand the challenge and what he thought to be the dangers of Communism in Africa.¹²⁵ Secondly, Dhlomo seems to have been excited by the call of the Youth Leaguers, especially by Lembede, Jordan Ngubane and A. P. Mda, for the formation of the African Academy of Arts and Sciences.¹²⁶ In his own reflections on the possibility of this formation, which are much ampler and denser than those of the Youth Leaguers, not surprising given his seniority and greater intellectual power, Dhlomo gives historical contextualization by indicating the previous attempts to found an African Academy: by R. H. W. Shepherd in Lovedale in 1936; by Rheinalt Jones at the University of Witwatersrand in 1937; by Non-European (Africans, Coloureds and Indians) Arts Congress in 1944-45; and lastly by Benedict Vilakazi just before his death in 1947. Vilakazi's effort was similar to that of the Youth Leaguers, in that both wanted the Academy to be established under the aegis of African Nationalism, i.e. limited only to Africans. Dhlomo opposed this, rightly reasoning: "In essence Art and science are universal and indivisible." For Dhlomo, the only crucial and fundamental criteria was assembling together the most talented and knowledgeable individuals in South Africa.¹²⁷ Thirdly, the Youth Leaguers through exemplification seem to have convinced Dhlomo that the distinction between intellectual work and political

¹²⁴ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Congress Youth League", *Ilanga lase Natal*, August 12, 1944. Two months earlier, Dhlomo had praised the Natal Youth League for having attempted to bring about a sense of national unity, created a platform for Youth, and having infused new blood into the ANC (see: Weekly Review and Commentary "Congress Youth League", *Ilanga lase Natal*, June 3, 1944).

¹²⁵ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Commissions and Organisation", *Ilanga lase Natal*, September 7, 1946. Dhlomo called attention to four features which had resonated in Lembede's lecture on African Nationalism: African Nationalism is not projected against Indians or the Coloureds; it is against any form of domination, especially foreign domination; it hoped and believed in the emergence of 'Black Africa' as a world power; and it articulated a belief in the leadership of Africa by Africans, and rejected any form of white leadership.

¹²⁶ A. M. Lembede, "An African Academy of Art and Science", *Inkundla ya Bantu*, July 31, 1947; A. P. Mda, "African Academy of Arts", *Inkundla ya Bantu*, July 24, 1947; Editorial [by Jordan Ngubane], "African Academy of Arts", *Inkundla ya Bantu*, July 31, 1947; Editorial [by Jordan Ngubane], "National Academy", *Inkundla ya Bantu*, August 7, 1947. This last Editorial was accompanied by another announcing the tragic death of Anton Lembede.

¹²⁷ X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Academy of Arts and Research", *Ilanga lase Natal*, September 10, 1949.

engagement was artificial. From the moment of this encounter Dhlomo gravitated swiftly towards constructing an intellectual and political praxis in support of the ANC. Fourthly, Jordan Ngubane gave space to H. I. E. Dhlomo in the intellectual and political forum of the Youth League, the newspaper *Inkundla ya Bantu*, to develop further his reflections on the responsibility of African intellectuals.¹²⁸ Among all the Youth Leaguers, Dhlomo was deeply fascinated by Lembede and Ngubane. It could be said that Anton Lembede signified and represented to Dhlomo in a concrete way the classic instance of education facilitating an entrance into modernity from tradition. Ngubane on the other hand, signified to Dhlomo someone who fearlessly through journalism confronted the challenges of modernity.¹²⁹ It would not be farfetched to suppose that Dhlomo saw Ngubane as a direct descended of Solomon Plaatje. Dhlomo's estimation of Jordan Ngubane was so high, that together, as we have seen, formed a brain trust of Albert Luthuli's political leadership of the ANC in the early 1950s.

In another Editorial of this period, Dhlomo called upon intellectuals to be guided by knowledge and truth. It was written as a critique of European intellectuals whom Dhlomo believed were easily susceptible to racial prejudice and to the myth of white superiority.¹³⁰ Seeking to show a selection of outstanding intellectuals who had been guided either by the truth-object of their analysis or the truth-beauty of their creation, he wrote a letter to each of them as a way of discoursing about their intellectual preoccupation. Each was preoccupied with the idea of culture similar to his own understanding of it: "Culture, embracing, as it does, our language, poetry, music, philosophy, religion and education, is the very Soul and Meaning of our race."¹³¹ In each of the letters, written between April 1 and June 3, 1950, Dhlomo was concerned with how modernity had shaped the intellectual formation of that particular intellectual or artist. Perhaps in a preliminary way, these letters were the prefiguration of the intellectual history that Dhlomo would have

¹²⁸ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Three Famous African Authors I Knew, II: R. R. R. Dhlomo", *Inkundla ya Bantu*, Second Fortnight, 1946. The other two on unknown authors seem to have been lost. For our purposes here, Dhlomo marvels that his elder brother, R. R. R. Dhlomo, is equally engaged with both tradition (rural) and modernity (urban). Given this double engagement, it is not surprising when Dhlomo states that his brother avoided intellectual circles. The essay gives Dhlomo another opportunity to express his great admiration for Solomon Plaatje. Dhlomo evaluates Benedikt Vilakazi's estimation that R. R. R. Dhlomo was the foremost humorist of the day. Lastly, given that his brother was writing Zulu historical novels about Zulu kings, Dhlomo saw him as the last of the breed of writers more preoccupied with tradition over modernity.

¹²⁹ Dhlomo was enthusiastic of Jordan Ngubane participating in the formation of an African Research Society. He saw danger in the Society giving only priority to social issues, thereby neglecting the arts (Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], *Weekly Review And Commentary* "Durban African Research Group", *Ilanga lase Natal*, July 22, 1944).

¹³⁰ Editorial, "Dilemma Of Intellectualism", *Ilanga lase Natal*, July 21, 1951.

¹³¹ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo] *Weekly Review And Commentary* "African Authors, Scholars and Culture", *Ilanga lase Natal*, June 10, 1944.

mapped out had he had the opportunity to have done so. Writing within two years of the onslaught of official apartheid, in a letter to E. H. A. Made, a formidable Zulu essayist, Dhlomo states that the African people are engaged in a war of liberation, of self-expression and of self-determination. In this war, which he views as a titanic struggle of ideas, and an unfortunate clash of cultures in which issues, ideologies and fundamentals are deliberately obscured, the duty of the African writer is to inspire the illiterate, the articulate and the oppressed with determination to search for Truth and a will to unrelentingly pursue the struggle against oppression until victory is assured: "He [or she] must mirror and tell of the people, reveal their soul and suffering, expose their exploitation, fight by their side, sing their tribulations and triumphs, their naked practical experiences and their hidden, flaming and unconquerable spiritual valour."¹³² In this ideological struggle, words are weapons of war which should be effectively employed in the 'Cause' of the 'Race'. The literary works of Made, which he enumerated as two novels, two volumes of biography and history, two books of poetry, and a book of essays, were a fundamental part of the cause of the African people. Demanding that the writer must identify herself with her people, Dhlomo concludes his letter with this commanding tone: "This is your task and that of your fellow-writers. Africa demands it of you. We do not seek or await your reply. We conscript you to the duty."

In the same issues of *Ilanga lase Natal* as this one with this communication to Made, in fact on the same page, Dhlomo considered the musical importance of Simon Ngubane, then a young African composer. Praising Ngubane for having researched and studied indigenous African music on a scientific and technical level throughout Central Africa, Dhlomo argued that such undertakings enable African people to re-construct their cultural history of the various ethnic musics as well as their particular art forms. What fascinated Dhlomo was the possible reconstruction of the various national schools of music, and their particular idioms and characteristics. The relationship between rural indigenous music and the urban new African musics was constantly in his investigative imagination. Although articulating again and again his constantly reiterated position that creative arts depend on the gifted chosen few (echoes of Thomas Carlyle and W. E. B. Du Bois), Dhlomo was intrigued by the differentiated cultural complexions of various nations. In the letters to various intellectuals and artists was not only concerned with intellectual history but with tracing the possible forms of the interconnected cultural history of the African people. His Letter to Rueben Caluza, one of South Africa's famous composers makes this clear, the interweaving of these two historical forms. In the Letter Dhlomo recalled a

¹³² Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Weekly Letter: To E. H. A. Made", *Ilanga lase Natal*, April 22, 1950. In one of the very few appreciations Dhlomo ever wrote, he praises E. A. H. Made for having passed the stern criticism of Benedict Vilakazi (H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Emman A. H. Made: An Appreciation", *Ilanga lase Natal*, November 6, 1948).

whole night spent with other New African intellectuals listening to the quartettes and symphonies of Schubert and Beethoven. In the process of listening, several intense discussions ensued: the nature of the creative; the comparative merits of poetry and music; and the role of creative art in nation building and national liberation.¹³³ The conversation centered on the capacity of the music to portray the tribulations and aspirations of the 'Race'. In the midst of these recollections Dhlomo made several observations. While in traditional societies the creation of music was done largely through a process of spontaneity, in modernity creativity and research are inseparable. Although wishing to make clear the distinction the process of creativity between tradition and modernity, Dhlomo believed that traditional cultural heritage was utilizable to create new forms, since concerning cultural forms tradition was evolutionary and progressive. Like practically all the New African intellectuals, Dhlomo condemned jazz as 'cheap', presumably in his instance because of its spontaneity or improvisational quality. These observations make it possible to abstract a fundamental principle about the relationship between modernity and tradition that Dhlomo implicitly, but unfortunately never explicitly articulated into a fully theorized historical construct: that concerning cultural matters, there had to be an element of continuity between tradition and modernity, whereas concerning political matters and processes there had to be complete rupture.

One of the reasons for Dhlomo's passionate alignment with modernity was what he believed to be the continually expansive autonomous zone of

¹³³ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Weekly Letter: R. T. Caluza", *Ilanga lase Natal*, June 3, 1950. Preceding these weekly letters of 1950 to particular leading African intellectuals, in 1947 in a prefigurative form, Dhlomo had written shorter sketches of Snaps about African women and men who had achieved outstanding work: "The master minds, the greatest heroes, the saviours are often the unknown but dutiful and faithful workers." In these Snaps Dhlomo considered R. T. Caluza (May 24), Compositors (June 7), D. G. S. Mtimkhulu (June 14), W. J. Mseleku (August 9), Gerald Bhengu (August 9), Dr. B. W. Vilakazi (August 16), Mrs. A. J. Sililo (August 30), K. E. Masinga (September 13), Miss Bertha Mkize (September 20). The tribute to B. W. Vilakazi was because of his having obtained a few weeks before a Doctor of Literature from the University of Witwatersrand. Dhlomo celebrated him as a 'native genius in creative literature' who exemplified the achievement of the race in the academic field. To Dhlomo, Vilakazi had elevated the power and reputation of Zulu literature. Dhlomo was most enthusiastic about Vilakazi and Professor Dike's work on the Zulu-English Dictionary; it was published about a year after Vilakazi's death (Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo] Weekly Review And Commentary "Snaps: Dr. B. W. Vilakazi", *Ilanga lase Natal*, August 16, 1947). Z. K. Matthews in 1961 was to undertake a similar project of reconstructing an African intellectual history in *Imvo Zabantsundu*. Matthews sketches from June 3 to November 21 were much deeper and more extensive, beginning with Elijah Makiwane and John Knox Bokwe, passing through Solomon Plaatje and Alfred Mangena, to Charlotte Manye Maxeke and Pixley ka Isaka Seme. Matthews' sketch involved many other portraits. It would seem that H. I. E. Dhlomo's Snaps were a trial run to his writing a major study of the men who founded the ANC; he seems to have been hindered from undertaking such a project by the inadequacy of historical records (Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo] Weekly Review And Commentary "Write That Record or Story", *Ilanga lase Natal*, January 17, 1948).

individuality or individualism that it made possible. This expansive zone of individualism Dhlomo believed to be critical in order for original creativity to take place in a modernist world experience. Exhorting African creative artists in music to thoroughly learn from both Western and African music, and that creative process is an individual and cannot or should not be dictated from without, Dhlomo argued also that there was much to be learned from the individualism at the center of the Western creative process: "Like Wordsworth and T. S. Eliot, for instance, in poetry, and like Wagner and the modern anatonality composers, all of whom introduced new forms, The African composer is free to use whatever material he chooses to produce his original ideas. The vast collections of tribal music and the material supplied by research workers present a useful store-house for him." For Dhlomo originality and individualism were inseparable, which partly explains his hostility to Soviet Communist edicts about cultural matters. In the letter to Caluza Dhlomo explains that it was in the context of the intersection or intercrossing of certain issues that Caluza's name came up in the conversation among the New African intellectuals gathered together in an all night session of listening to classical music: between research and creativity, between individualism and originality, the very fact that Caluza had studied both African American music and Western music, besides his enormous grasp of indigenous rural music and the new urban music. Having contributed music to one of Dhlomo's plays, and Dhlomo (an accomplished violonist) having presented two of his string quartettes with others to critical acclaim in Johannesburg, Dhlomo believed Caluza capable of leaving behind great original works of beauty that would enormously benefit the 'Race.

Benedict Wallet Vilakazi was the New African intellectual who exemplified in a most extraordinary way the unity of research and creativity in modernist intellectual practices. Although they were close friends, now and the intellectual adversaries, and constant interlocutors, Vilakazi was the one intellectual of his generation who struck terror in Dhlomo because of his enormous intellectual power and fertile poetic imagination. From the moment of their intellectual dual over African poetic form in 1938 to Vilakazi's tragic and totally unexpected death in 1947, Bambatha (born in the same year as Bambatta Rebellion of 1906) was a constant point of reference in Dhlomo's intellectual odyssey.¹³⁴ Vilakazi's impact on South Africa cultural history has been profoundly deep, as can be judged from the inestimable he has had on Mazisi Kunene,¹³⁵ the greatest poetic voice after the generation of

¹³⁴ An Editorial in *Ilanga lase Natal* announcing the death of Benedict Vilakazi, in all probability written by Dhlomo, spoke of his achievement as so monumental that superlatives were unnecessary ("Dr. B. W. Vilakazi", November 1, 1947).

¹³⁵ In his book of poetry, *Zulu Poems*, Mazisi Kunene has a poem on his master, which reads in part: "Great poet, who sleeps between the rocks/. . . Shouting your name, Presenting your beauty/ To each generation that reawakens with your song" ('Dedication to a Poet', Africana Publishing Corporation, New York, 1970, p.88). In the Introduction to the anthology, Kunene

Vilakazi and Dhlomo, definitely surpassing the generation separating them, that of Jordan Ngubane and Anton Lembede.¹³⁶

Immediately following Vilakazi's death, Dhlomo wrote a threnody, that is only surpassed by **A Valley Of A Thousand Hills**, in terms of length among his poems. "Ichabod: Benedict Wallet Bambatha Vilakazi" contains some remarkable lines:¹³⁷

Cry "Ichabod!" Then pause! The people mourn
Their greatest Bard, no gone beyond the bourne.
The singer of sweet songs will sing no more!
No more his face be seen. Ah! nevermore!
And nevermore those winged feet shall tread
The land he loved, that loved him dear!

.....
How beautiful our native speech resounded
In the mellowed tones you weaved in Race-pride grounded;
Now pruned our Tongue and desolate the Race,
For who have we to fill thy honoured place,
Who like a planet in the firmament
Blazed forth; amazed, left us in wonderment?

.....
Now art thou gone great Vilakazi, sage
And poet, greatest Singer of your age.

.....
Black bards and heroes greet their friend and peer;
Great Shaka, Magolwane 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.

observes: "As the Zulu literary tradition had been devalued, I started writing without models, until I discovered Vilakazi's poetry", p.20.

¹³⁶ The mentioning of the names of Benedict Vilakazi, Anton Lembede, Jordan Ngubane, H. I. E. Dhlomo together argues for a cultural renaissance which took place among Zulu intellectuals and artists in the 1930s and the 1940s, that would compare to a similar event that took place among Xhosa intellectuals, Walter Rubusana, Elijah Makiwane, John Tengo Jabavu, Pambani Mzimba in the 1870s and the 1880s.

¹³⁷ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Ichabod: Benedict Wallet Bambatha Vilakazi", *Ilanga lase Natal*, November 8, 1947.

It is fascinating how Dhlomo situates Vilakazi nationally and wordly: in relation to Magolwane, Shaka's court poet who revolutionized Zulu poetry; in proximity to Mqhayi, because they both had to modulate their poetic voice across the modern/tradition polarity; adjacent to Shelley and Keats, because of his emulation of their Romantic sensibility; and Dante, because they were both great Catholic poets.

Approximately three years earlier Dhlomo had written a poem in which placed Vilakazi in a context of tradition traditional poets from antiquity to the modern times, because their linguistic innovations had not been easily discernible, had not been accorded the acclamation they deserved. Celebrating Vilakazi as a poet of rare genius, Dhlomo wrote that he had brought something new and strong into Zulu language as well as into South African culture.¹³⁸

.....
 Until thou Poet of rare genius uttered
 Word wrought fireworks! Amazed, we
 stood to scan!

Sing on great Vilakazi, Scholar, death-
 less name!
 (How strong and sweet resounds our
 Father's tongue
 In those rich lines you have so neatly
 sung!)
 We hail you, Sage! Your efforts are
 your People's Fame!

Indeed, Benedict Vilakazi's name has remained deathless in South African intellectual and cultural history. Dhlomo marvelled at the unity of the critical and the poetic in Vilakazi's intellectual imagination. Perhaps in Africa also, for in an essay celebrating the release of Nelson Mandela from a 27-year imprisonment in 1990, Ngugi wa Thiong'o invoked the name of Vilakazi among other South African writers as exemplifying the best in South Africa that is essential to the whole of the African continent.¹³⁹ Dhlomo's homages to Benedict Vilakazi were not limited to versification in threnodic form only, but also involved his translating from Zulu into English a long poetic homage to the great poet by the eminent Zulu man of letters, Emman H. A. Made.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Benedict Wallet B. Vilakazi, M. A.", *Ilanga lase Natal*, January 15, 1944.

¹³⁹ Ngugimwa Thiong'o, "Many Years Walk To Freedom: Welcome Home Mandela", **Moving the Center: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms** Heinemann, Portsmouth, 1993.

¹⁴⁰ Emman H. A. Made, **Ubambatha Kamakhwatha**, trans. H. I. E. Dhlomo, [no publisher's name], Johannesburg, 1949. This is a booklet of about fifteen pages. Mazisi Kunene's estimation

Five years after the death of his great friend, Dhlomo was able to undertake a historical appraisal of Vilakazi in a cultural forum of the then emergent Sophiatown Renaissance, *Drum* magazine. In a penetrative psychological portrait of Benedict Vilakazi, Dhlomo indicates that it was Vilakazi's mastering of Latin that had a determining effect on his intellectual formation.¹⁴¹ This enabled him to read favourite poet Virgil and other Latin classics, like Terence, in the original. Ideologically, this led him to convert from Protestantism into Catholicism. Dhlomo believes this conversion may have had something to do with Vilakazi's political conservatism, which isolated and alienated him from the Youth Leaguers. Despite this, Dhlomo states that everyone was of his extraordinary genius: "There is no doubt that when he died he was already the most outstanding figure in Bantu literature as original writer, critic and research scholar. . . But it is doubtful if the present will be called his age for time was against him, but in favour of his equally determined rivals."¹⁴² Dhlomo himself was without a doubt the most formidable of Vilakazi's rivals. What Dhlomo admired in Vilakazi was the moral seriousness in striving to bring the African people into the modern age. This impressed itself on Dhlomo by the fact that although through self-education Vilakazi had attained the best education available in South Africa, obtaining a Doctorate of Literature from the University of Witwatersrand, he still wanted to pursue another doctorate from either Oxford or Cambridge University. Vilakazi's striving to obtain the best education available anywhere in the world in our modern age, his completing a new standard

of Made's effort is forthright and conceptually exact, thereby making his Thesis on the whole the formidable document it is: "In the long elegy on Vilakazi he does not show himself sincerely moved by the death of Vilakazi. Vilakazi's death is no doubt a great national loss, but not Made's personal loss. As a result, his poem lacks poignancy. He does not mourn his death but weeps generally with others. Vilakazi's death reminds him of the great heroes of the African nation" (Raymond Kunene, **An Analytical Survey of Zulu Poetry both Traditional and Modern**, Master of Arts Thesis, Department of Bantu Studies of the University of Natal, 1958, p.219-20). In the preceding pages (p.212-13) Kunene traces the indebtedness of Vilakazi to H. I. E. Dhlomo. Kunene's carefully constructed analysis and argument that Vilakazi was the greatest modern Zulu poet is riveting. Elsewhere it will be necessary to argue in detail that both Vilakazi and Kunene are the greatest poets produced by Zulu literature; and that perhaps Kunene is the greatest poet produced by Africa in twentieth century.

¹⁴¹ It is very ironic that Dhlomo was unaware that the Ilanga lase Natal of the 1920s and early 1930s had as much determining influence on the intellectual formation of Vilakazi. It was writers for the newspaper such as his brother R. R. R. Dhlomo, A. H. Ngidi, Rev. Nyokana, Josiah Mapumulo who were a source of inspiration to him. It would seem that it was the English prose of Mapumulo and Ngidi now and then flowered with Latin words that stirred Vilakazi into studying Latin (B. Wallet Vilakazi, "What Writers Has This National Paper", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 17, 1933). In another context, Dhlomo was prescient in having seen the influence of Rev. A. H. Ngidi on Benedict Vilakazi (Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Dr. Ngidi's Poems", *Ilanga lase Natal*, December 13, 1947): "It is no secret that the late Dr. Vilakazi owes much to the teachings and example of Dr. Ngidi, with whom he was a great friend."

¹⁴² H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Dr. Vilakazi", *Drum*, July 1952.

Zulu-English dictionary, his doctoral dissertation on Nguni literature, as well as his creative work in prose and poetry, convinced Dhlomo that he was arguably the greatest apostle of modernity produced by South Africa in the intellectual arena.

That this high estimation of Vilakazi was universally shared by other New African intellectuals can be seen in the following words by Jordan Ngubane in an Editorial in *Inkundla ya Bantu*: "He has refused to swallow indiscriminately White misrepresentations of the African and has taken every opportunity to make his own enquiries and as a result has succeeded in bringing to the surface very useful information on the African. Most of our brilliant scholars have been afraid of doing as much research and publishing their findings as Dr. Vilakazi has done. In allowing himself to be dominated by the spirit of research and the will to find out the truth for himself, he has set an example worthy of emulation by all who seek to benefit the nation by their academic attainments."¹⁴³ In other words, for Ngubane, and this we can be certain also reflects Dhlomo's position: research must illuminate, and if possible resolve, problems of the modern age.

The debate of 1938-9 between Benedict Vilakazi and H. I. E. Dhlomo about the nature of Zulu poetry in the transition from tradition to modernity, takes on added weight in the context of this New African political position on the responsibilities that accrue to scholarly research. In his magisterial essay, "The Conception and Development of Poetry in Zulu", Vilakazi had sought to show that izibongo, the classical Zulu poetic form originally associated with the praise of kings and warriors, was authentic poetry because it could encompass the deep emotional experience and the complex association of images characteristic of any excellent world poetry. Vilakazi was responding to the condescension of white South African scholars who had argued that while izibongo may have had the poetic power to represent the lived experience of the Shakan era, it could not comprehend let alone make sense of the world created by the entrance of European civilization into African history. In other words, while izibongo may have been servicable in the pre-colonial world (traditional societies), it had not the complex range to grapple with the world of the new (modern societies). Vilakazi indicates that it is a prevalent mistake to think of izibongo as limited to the poetic praising of kings and warriors, for in fact they are attributable to any person or animal or any object that resonates with emotional excitement: "Personally I contend that they are poetry, because in studying the language of their composition, one does not fail to discover a deep and genuine imaginative tone, for the composer of izibongo apprehends experience, both in its intensity and its

¹⁴³ Editorial Opinion, "Dr. Benedict Vilakazi", *Inkundla ya Bantu*, April, First Fortnight, 1946. The coupling of the names of Anton Lembede and Vilakazi toward establishing a nationalist project in research has the imprint of Ngubane who was then editor of the newspaper.

subtlety, and shows undeniable power of revealing unknown modes of being through his creation and association of images."¹⁴⁴ Displaying his extraordinary analytical powers, Vilakazi proceeds to discuss the language of composition (poetic form) of the various forms of izibongo. To Vilakazi it was inevitable that Western poetry would eventually influence Bantu poetry or izibongo 'because all the new ideas of our age have reached us through European standards'. But in his estimation, the grafting of a Western poetic form onto izibongo would not do much to alter inner spirit of this great poetry. Reiterating a theme that had been constant with New African intellectuals as the twentieth century unfolded, that African modernity in South Africa should model itself on African American modernity in United States, Vilakazi implied that the tribulations of Negro Spirituals in United States modernity held many comparable lessons for izibongo in the context of South African modernity: "Every great literature of the nations has contributed to the universal meaning of life. This is found in its poetry, and here again I feel the heavy burden laid on our poets by the impact of Western conditions. In Negro literature where the Black man has sung of human ingratitude, atrocious servitude and crude brute power, the whole thing has been summed up in two lines, in the most triumphant manner and power. The lines are sublime in simplicity and in depth of universal meaning:

"Goin' to lay down my sword and shield
Down by the river side-----
Study war no more."

The Negro song triumphant as it stands brings back to me the Zulu line above, Vuma uphansi umkhonto wezinsizwa! (Come let us sing of fallen heroes and spears!) There is a dream in the song reflecting the Zulu mind's devastating experience, and the vanishing of his shadowy faith in war." Vilakazi believed izibongo would still possess a universal meaning of life even in a world dominated by the ideas of the West.

There is no doubt that Dhlomo was profoundly affected by these reflections of Benedict Vilakazi. In his excited response with passages of great brilliance, Dhlomo argued that Vilakazi had failed to register that same variants of izibongo whose narrative sequential order was peculiar, in that they were characterized by disjunctive continuity ("gaps"), were not wholly pure izibongo for they interrupted by the intrusion of dramatic composition.¹⁴⁵ Dhlomo reconstructed various forms of izibongo to show their dramatic nature. Dhlomo even draws how these intrusive dramatic compositions unfolded on the stage. Vilakazi's rejoinder to Dhlomo's intervention was uncompromisingly critical arguing that since Dhlomo was principally

¹⁴⁴ B. W. Vilakazi, "The Conception and Development of Poetry in Zulu", *Bantu Studies*, vol.xii no.2, June 1938.

¹⁴⁵ H.I. E. Dhlomo, "Nature and Variety of Tribal Drama", *Bantu Studies*, vol.xiii 1939.

preoccupied with Western literary forms, practically all of which were written in English rather than Zulu, and suspiciously resonating with Romantic sensibility rather than what Vilakazi understood as Bantu sensibility, Dhlomo could hardly be taken seriously as possessing an adequate knowledge of Bantu cultures. In other words, Vilakazi saw in Dhlomo's preoccupations with European literary figures and sensibilities a source of his mania for searching for hybridizations where none existed at all. Knowing that Dhlomo wrote his plays in English, Vilakazi lamented the absence of modern 'authentic' Bantu drama. Pressing his point, Vilakazi wrote: "By Bantu drama, I mean a drama written by a Bantu, for the Bantu, in a Bantu language. I do not class English or Afrikaans dramas on Bantu themes, whether these are written by Black people, I do not call them contributions to Bantu Literature. It is the same with poetry. . . I have an unshaken belief in the possibilities of Bantu languages and their literature, provided the Bantu writers themselves can learn to love their languages and use them as vehicles for thought, feeling and will. After all, the belief, resulting in literature, is a demonstration of people's 'self' where they cry: 'Ego sum quod sum' [I'm what I'm]. That is our pride in being black, and we cannot change creation."¹⁴⁶ Such a devastating dig could only have enhanced Dhlomo's respect for Vilakazi. It was perhaps from this shattering encounter that Dhlomo was to continually preoccupy himself with the role of Zulu in articulating modernist sensibilities. It remains to note that these observations of Benedict Vilakazi anticipated Ngugi by more than forty years in the reasons the Kenyan writer gave for abandoning the English language and commencing to write in Kikuyu language.

The relationship between Vilakazi and Dhlomo is one of the most fascinating in the intellectual and cultural history of South Africa. Unfortunately, it has not received the kind of attention it requires and deserves. It would seem that they were both of each other as representing the best intellectually that Zulu culture was contributing to South African culture. This was also apparent to others. In a lecture he gave to the South African Non-European Arts Congress in 1946, a year before his death, Vilakazi is reported to have praised Dhlomo in the highest terms possible.¹⁴⁷ The lecture was part of Vilakazi's undertaking, as he had formulated in his debate with Dhlomo a decade earlier, that Bantu culture was capable of achieving the best that had been achieved anywhere in the world. In yet another lecture at the International Club given a year earlier than the previously mentioned, with Dhlomo presiding, Vilakazi gave a detailed study of Xhosa and Zulu literatures. Dhlomo himself reported that one of the aims of the lecture was to refute what some white anthropologists were propagating about the

¹⁴⁶ B. W. Vilakazi, "To the Editor", *The South African Outlook*, vol.69, July 1, 1939.

¹⁴⁷ L. L. Khumalo, "South African Non-European Arts Congress", *Ilanga lase Natal*, January 26, 1946.

supposed backwardness of African cultures and thought systems.¹⁴⁸ What really excited Dhlomo was that Vilakazi was reading from a massive manuscript, which he presumed to indicate that Vilakazi was preparing for another degree. In all probability Vilakazi was reading from a manuscript which he submitted the following year as a dissertation at the University of Witwatersrand: "Oral and Written Nguni Literature". The presentation impressed Dhlomo so much that he stated that Vilakazi has to be one of the premier research scholars in South Africa. Indeed, this dissertation has a reputation of being one of the best ever submitted to a South African university. Dhlomo himself was enthused when Vilakazi became the first African to receive a Doctor of Letters from any prestigious South African university. To Dhlomo, as to many other Africans, Vilakazi's achievement was a prove of what Africans were capable of attaining in the process of finding their democratic place in the rapidly unfolding historical experience of modernity. Dhlomo reports that all of these undertakings by Benedict Vilakazi were part of his preparations to organize a Writers' Society, which the ANC Youth Leaguers like Jordan Ngubane and Anton Lembede were to built on in their attempt to launch an African Academy of Arts and Sciences.¹⁴⁹

It needs to be registered that not all appraisals of Benedict Vilakazi's singular or collective work were necessarily laudatory. In a review of Vilakazi's new book of poems **Amal' Ezulu (Zulu Horizons)**, written a year and half before Vilakazi's death, Dhlomo prophetically stated that as a great scholar and great poet his legacy will beyond his death: "Both the book and the Doctorate show us new horizons of the genius and progress of our Race."¹⁵⁰ While in the past Dhlomo found Vilakazi obsessed with the idea of classicism in poetry, that is art for art's sake, in that the artist was worshipping beauty, music and Nature, the new poems announce a new revolutionary departure in concerning themselves with the tragic and pathetic conditions of African people caught in the maelstrom of modernity. Dhlomo eviscerates that a great artist is neither an extreme traditionalist nor an extreme revolutionist. Dhlomo thinks **Amal' Ezulu** has found this median ground. He praises Vilakazi for speaking on behalf of the suffering African masses. Dhlomo selects "Ezinkomponi" ("In the Gold Mines") for special mention, a poem that has entered the canon of South African poetic form. By some strange coincidence the poem was translated into English in 1957 in two separate journals by A. C. Jordan, the great Xhosa novelist, and Vilakazi's translator, Florence Louie Friedman.¹⁵¹ Two excerpted stanzas from a translation by Jordan may indicate

¹⁴⁸ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Mr. Vilakazi at the International Club", *Ilanga lase Natal*, July 28, 1945.

¹⁴⁹ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "A 'Writers' Conference And Society", *Ilanga lase Natal*, August 5, 1944.

¹⁵⁰ H. I. E. Dhlomo "Dr. B. W. Vilakazi: Poet", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 30, 1946.

¹⁵¹ B. W. Vilakazi, "Ezinkomponi" ("In the Gold Mines"), trans. Florence Louie Friedman, *Drum*, July 1957.

what Dhlomo may have found compelling in original Zulu when it was first published:

Thunder away, machines of the mines,
Thunder loud and loud
Deafen with noise that we may not be heard
Though we cry out aloud and groan
As you eat away the joints of our bodies;
Giggle and snigger, you old machines;
It is well that you laugh and scorn our rage,
For great is your power and fearful;
You may do as you please: we succumb.

We agreed to leave our round-shaped huts,
To be herded here castrated males;
We gave up our corn, amasi and milk
To live here on pap and porridge;
All gone is our manhood: we are mere boys;
We see that the world is upside down;
We are woken at dawn, and we stand in a row;
Where was it ever done to bury a man
While he walks and sees with both his eyes¹⁵²

This universal central theme of the clash between tradition and modernity, which can be found in the Cubist paintings of Fernand Leger, in the Constructivist photography of Rodchenko, in the Futurist poetry of Mayakovsky, was what Dhlomo found so compelling in some of Vilakazi's poems: "How far European thought, art forms and diction influence and colour African poetry is an interesting subject which we cannot discuss here." Dhlomo suggests that Vilakazi's poetry should be compared to the work of other poets; but a real expansive zone of this comparison should be world poetry. Although Dhlomo was taken with the spiritual revolution achieved by **Amal' Ezulu**, he nevertheless felt disappointed that it did not demonstrate or embody the theory of Zulu rhyme developed by Vilakazi in his landmark essay "The Conception and Development of Poetry in Zulu". Also Anton Lembede commented on the absence of the full realization in one of Vilakazi's Zulu novels: **Nje-Nempela**. Contrasting the novel to H. I. E. Dhlomo's **Dingane ka Senzangakhona**, Thomas Mofolo's **Chaka**, and John Dube's Ujeqe, **The Bodyservant of King Shaka**, Lembede argued that Vilakazi had not taken full advantage of the raw material of South African history

¹⁵² Dr. B. W. Vilakazi, "Ezinkomponi" ("In the Gold Mines"), translated from Zulu by A. C. Jordan, *Africa South*, vol.1 no.2, January-March 1957.

which avails itself to any serious novelist.¹⁵³ Lembede found the structure of the novel unsophisticated and its literary style not sufficiently complex. As a way of conforming the judgement of Anton Lembede, it is interesting to note that in the many reflections on Vilakazi's work, not even once did Dhlomo comment on his novels.¹⁵⁴

Dhlomo's conception of the role New African intellectuals in facilitating the entrance of African people into modernity was not limited only to writers and artists, it very much also involved political leaders. This gained in sense of urgency as of 1948, when apartheid was officially instituted. In a series of Editorials in *Ilanga lase Natal* at this time he examines the possibilities of New African intellectuals intervening within the ANC, not only with the intent of making it a modernizing instrument, but much more importantly, to making it politicize the historical consciousness of the New African masses. Dhlomo takes it upon himself through his columns in this great newspaper not only to wage an uncompromising war against apartheid, but also to combat organizations such as Non-European Unity Movement and All- African Convention which he felt were just distracting the ANC from realizing its historical mission of liberating the dispossessed people from oppression as well as making them embrace modernity without any reservations whatsoever. Hence the appearance of articles attacking I. B. Tabata and denigrating the political leadership of A. W. G. Champion. This denigration is accompanied by the upliftment of the political leadership of Albert Luthuli. Dhlomo wrote several brilliant articles on Luthuli at this time. Jordan Ngubane in his **Unpublished Autobiography**, began secretly in South Africa following the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960 and completed a few years later in exile in Swaziland, writes that a decision was made secretly between himself and Dhlomo, through their respective columns in *Inkundla ya Bantu* and *Ilanga lase Natal*, and given as a fait accompli to Luthuli, to crush any obstacles to making the fundamental instrument of politically modernizing the minds of African people. While writing the **Unpublished Autobiography** in South Africa, Ngubane portrays several sad comical scenes of him running to the bedroom to hide the manuscript when someone knocked at the house door at night, while his children breaking in uncontrollable laughter. But Ngubane knew what he was doing because the **Unpublished Autobiography** is an extraordinary document through which it may be possible to construct the intellectual renaissance that took place in Natal in the late 1940s to the early 1950s. But profoundly saddening also, this document clearly shows the great loss to the African people when Jordan Ngubane because of his extreme anti-Communism defected from the ANC in

¹⁵³ A. M. Lembede, "Book Review of *Nje-Nempela* by B. Wallet Vilakazi", in **The Collected Writings of Anton Muziwakhe Lembede**, op. cit., pp.141-146. Originally appeared in: *Teachers' Quarterly Review*, I, 2, September 1946.

¹⁵⁴ The only major study of Vilakazi's poetry argues that he was a better poet than a novelist (D. B. Z. Ntuli, **The Poetry of B. W. Vilakazi**, J. L. van Schaik, Pretoria, 1984, p.5).

the early 1950s, passed through the Liberal Party, died in the arms of Gatscha Buthelezi and Inkatha in 1985. This was a tragic and a great loss. These are reflections for another occasion.

Dhlomo was historically conscious that his movement from being preoccupied with literary and cultural matters to concentrating on politics was motivated by the necessity to construct a different and a new South Africa history. A year before 1948, Dhlomo wrote the following in one of his columns: "The task of interpreting South African history still remains to be done. It will be done by and when African writers and thinkers give their point of view. Historical events, like figures, mean nothing and can be distorted unless they are given the right interpretation."¹⁵⁵ For Dhlomo a correct interpretation of South African history by New African intelligentsia would be facilitated by an active participation by them in the contemporary struggles of the people. This historical perspective explains an Editorial he wrote in *Ilanga lase Natal* in which he called on intellectual to participate in the national struggle being pursued by the African National Congress. He called on them to play an active role in this evolving historical process. He understood the tasks of the New African intellectuals inside the ANC as making possible for the organization to organize all the African people "so that they form one, solid mass of one voice and united action."¹⁵⁶ At this time Dhlomo was constantly preoccupied with the theme that intellectuals must assist the ANC organize all the African people (masses) under one banner in order to initiate and sustain the efforts of united action. Dhlomo was very enthusiastic about the Defiant Campaign of 1952 which he saw as one of the historic results of this united action.¹⁵⁷ Dhlomo's interpretation of this event was totally opposite that of R. V. Selope Thema who understood it as representing the victory of Communism at the expense of African Nationalism. This interpretation led to Selope Thema's break with the ANC.

Dhlomo outlined the other critical task of the New African intellectuals in helping the ANC forge a united action among the African people as the combatting of tribalism. This ofcourse is the same reason which had propelled Pixley ka Isaka Seme in 1912 to found the ANC, to institutionalize African Nationalism in opposition to tribalism in the body politic of New African masses.¹⁵⁸ R. V. Selope Thema, many years later, wrote an important

¹⁵⁵ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Dingaan's Day", *Ilanga lase Natal*, December 13, 1947.

¹⁵⁶ Editorial, "Intellectuals And Congress", *Ilanga lase Natal*, November 2, 1946. The certainty that it was H. I. E. Dhlomo who wrote it is indicated by the constant reference of the African people as 'Race', which he did in other instances written under his name. Besides the literary style which is clearly that of Dhlomo, the theme of the Editorial about the role of intellectuals in the making of history was his obsessive fascination.

¹⁵⁷ Dhlomo's support of the DEfiance Campaign.....

¹⁵⁸ P. ka I. Seme, "Native Union", *Tsala ea Becoana*, October 28, 1911. This is the historic document through which Seme founded the ANC.

Editorial in *Bantu World* in which he emphatically stated that tribalism was a danger and menace to the progress of the African people and their construction of modernity in South Africa: "Many Africans have been impressed by, and have admired, the amazing progress made by the American Negroes, and have wondered why the African people in this country could not do the same. Now what facilitated Negro progress is the oneness of the Negro race. American Negroes are not divided into tribes: they are one race, speaking one language and they have thus developed a race consciousness that has become a driving and creative force in their march along the path of progressive mankind. That is the secret of their amazing progress. It is true that it will be impossible for us in South Africa to speak one language but one thing we can do is to stamm out tribalism and set aflame the embers of race-consciousness. We can make every African forget his tribal identity and think in terms of race."¹⁵⁹ Dhlomo too was historically conscious that one of the most effective ways for stamming out tribalism was through developing a race consciousness through African Nationalism. In his critique of modern tribalism, Dhlomo gave a slightly different inflection.

Dhlomo attacked tribalism not in the usual way it had been criticized by other New African intellectuals. Instead of locating it among Africans, Dhlomo undertook a withering critique of apartheid as a modern form of tribalism ushered in in 1948. Since all Africans were suffering from apartheid in one way or another, this shrewd strategic move sought to delineate its terrible consequences as a lived experience of a particular form of tribalism. The logic of this approach was that given its totalized effect on all Africans, Indians and Coloureds of this modern tribalism, Dhlomo believed it would discouraged the atavistic or recidivist resurrection of traditional tribalism among Africans themselves. In many of his writings at this time Dhlomo was preoccupied with stressing universalism against particularism. In an Editorial "Paradox of Modern Tribalism", Dhlomo was enraged that the apartheid state was using the the doctrines and edicts of the Christian Church to justify apartheid ideology. Dhlomo criticizes apartheid for contradicting historical trends in the modern world which were moving toward unity and universalism, co-operation and integration, interdependence and hybridisation. He argues that all the modern conflicting forces, philosophies and ideologies of, idealism and dialectical materialism, capitalism and communism, technology and

¹⁵⁹ Editorial, "The Menace of Tribalism", *Bantu World*, January 3, 1942. R. V. Seloape Thema was the editor of the newspaper from its launching in April 1932 to his retirement in 1952. On the occasion of his retirement, *Ilanga lase Natal* wrote a note of appreciation (). From the early 1920s in *Umteteli wa Bantu*, Seloape Thema untiringly advocated the view that the African Americans were the authentic for Africans in the construction of modernity. In all probability, the young Dhlomo picked this idea from his senior colleague when Dhlomo joined in this newspaper from the mid 1920s. Without doubt also, Dhlomo learned from his very admired colleague the ideological reference to Africans as the 'Race'.

religion, are agreed on the unity of the world.¹⁶⁰ Dhlomo argued that his understanding of the development of modern knowledge supported, let alone justified, separateness, isolationism and the supposed development along one's peculiar lines. He believed that it was these modern trends of integration and universalism that had convinced many intellectuals in the world to condemn chauvinism, patriotism and narrow nationalism because they were obstacles to rapid progress, world citizenship and the spirit of internationalism. Expressing his reservations about Rousseau's celebration of primitivism, Dhlomo stated that the unity and integration then taking place were based on realism, science, education and communications were forging all races and nations into oneness. Against these modern trends and forces expressive of the dynamics of the modern industrial society in the twentieth century, the South African state through apartheid was attempting to resuscitate feudal tribalism. What totally enraged him, was that because of apartheid's support of narrow customs and traditions, and the segregation of races, it was trying to force modern African art, music and literature into old tribal traditions.¹⁶¹ Also enraging was that apartheid viewed modern Africans who had broken with tribalism, backwardness and rural isolationism as a threat to Europeans (whites). This remarkable Editorial, in its penetrative analysis of the 'feudal' backwardness of apartheid in the era of modernity, belongs in the distinctive and unique position opened by Solomon Plaatje's **Native Life in South Africa** confrontation with the Natives' Land Act of 1913. They form a central part of South Africa's political canon.

¹⁶⁰ Editorial, "Paradox of Modern Tribalism", *Ilanga lase Natal*, September 8, 1951. His references to Rousseau, Charles Darwin, Levy-Bruhl and others in support of his argument clearly indicates that it could only have been written by H. I. E. Dhlomo rather than his brother R. R. R. Dhlomo. Dhlomo took this occasion to declare again his hostility to Communism because of its denial of the authority of God 'Higher Authority', as well as its supposed failure to recognize the dignity of the individual human personality.

¹⁶¹ In another Editorial, Dhlomo indicated that for him the dynamic between tradition and modernity was not a question of binarism, but the usability of tradition within modernity: "And there is no question that African customs, traditions and culture need pruning, grafting, re-adjustment and reform and re-channelling to meet changed and ever-changing conditions. . . Tradition is not static and 'final' as some think" ("Customs And Progress", *Ilanga lase Natal*, November 20, 1954). Dhlomo concluded by expressing his support of Anton Lembede's "Africanism". In many ways Dhlomo was expressing what had been the standard position of *Ilanga lase Natal* from its inception in 1903. Predating his entrance into the editorial board of this great newspaper, an editorial preceding his own by thirty years, took cognisance of the existence of moderns and traditionalists among Africans. Tradition and Chiefs, because of their conservatism, were seen as holding back the progress of Africans. It saw the close contact between Africans and Europeans as a great step in progress. The editorial enthused about the 'civilized life' of Africans in modern towns. It called on the government to encourage those who had chosen to enter into the worldly experience of modernity. The editorial urged the government to support education among Africans as part of its promotion of enlightenment against heathenism ("Tribal or Detribalised", January 11, 1924).

Concerning tribalism among Africans, Dhlomo wrote with absolute certainty: "Tribalism is doomed."¹⁶² He criticizes the government for giving more power to Chiefs, thereby reviving tribal institutions and old ways of life, i.e., the social and cultural forms that encourage tribalism. Dhlomo is convinced that the processes of change and progress will break down the hegemony of these institutions as well as their patterns of life: "Tribalism centres around the Chief, cattle, communal ownership of land, ancestral worship. etc." Rather than believing or aligning themselves with the Chiefs, the New Africans believe in elected leaders, people who are elected for their ability, courage, character and achievements. Dhlomo was convinced that Chiefs, tribal Indabas, cattle and the Reserves were the pivot and essence of tribalism. Modernity, in the form of education, industrialization, urbanisation, soil conservation schemes, and the movement of migrant labour, would bring about the demise of tribalism. Stating a fundamental conviction of his, which accounted for his pronounced anti-Communism, Dhlomo noted that the New Africans, who were progressive and patriotic, wanted freehold property, definitely against the communal ownership of land.¹⁶³ With these beliefs and choices and convictions, Dhlomo believed that the New Africans had chosen the universal path of progress. For him institutions such as the African National Congress, trade unions, the Independent African Church Movement and the African newspapers were instrumental in making Africans align themselves with progress and modernity. Dhlomo was a fervent supporter of such institutions, because since they were being lead by elected and well educated Africans, they were in synchrony with what the New Africans wanted and where they wanted to go. H. I. E. Dhlomo's membership in the African National Congress was based on his historical judgment that it was the best exemplification of the institutional form and representation of modernity.

Dhlomo's unwavering support of the African National Congress was not oblivious to its weaknesses. He was sometimes very caustic in his criticism of the organization. Because of the tradition of frowning upon criticism and of regarding critics of national leaders and national organizations as enemies in African political circles, Dhlomo believed that these unacceptable means of

¹⁶² Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Reviving Tribalism", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 4, 1950. Dhlomo had expressed similar views about modernity and tribalism twenty years earlier when he was one of the New African intellectuals writing in *Umteteli wa Bantu*. There he had argued that the modern state cannot rest on the foundations and principles that underlie tribal or a purely racial organization: "Instead of encouraging antipathies and differences between white and black in South Africa we should endeavour to amalgamate them into a South African Race" (H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Aspects of the Race Problem", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, March 14, 1931).

¹⁶³ Dhlomo was conscious that the nomenclature 'New African' designated a new historical awakening of the African people. He criticized the *Natives Teachers Journal* for calling black people 'Native', which he associated with colonial domination and European hegemony. The only nomenclature he accepted as historically proper was 'African' (ibid., "Teachers Journal and 'African Studies'").

deflecting criticism had resulted in the stagnation, obscurantism and mediocrity of certain organs of the ANC. Although addressing this observation directly to the Natal African National Congress, he felt it was symptomatic of the national organization itself. Forthright in his criticism, Dhlomo wrote: "Take this province for example. Congress is stagnant. It cannot claim to speak for the majority---let alone progressive African thought. Prosedure is invariably unconstitutional. Members dare not criticise the leaders in the meetings. The biggest branch, Durban, is for all intents and purposes dead. Congress officials make Press and other statements without consulting members or even their Executive Committee colleagues. Thus frequently one official says one thing, and another something diametrically opposed. In these elections the amazing statement has been made that critics of Congress and its policy---even if they are bona fide members of Congress---should not be voted for as they are 'enemies'!!! The Executive is torn from top to bottom on many important issues."¹⁶⁴ Dhlomo was fearful that schisms would develop which would eventually lead to the self-destruction of the organization. Approximately twenty years earlier in an essay on the responsibilities of the "National Organisation" in *Umteteli wa Bantu* Dhlomo had pleaded that a discussion of African problems, especially at a national level, should accomodate a diversity of thought and opinion.¹⁶⁵ He strongly believed that problems or issues should be approached from diametrically opposed angles. For a national organization to achieve full success, it must be fully representative of all the African people by accomodating and accepting all modes of construtive criticism.

Dhlomo thought the situation in which the Natal African National Congress had put itself to be tragically lamentable, since it was largely the Africans from Durban who found the national organization in 1912 in Bloemfontein.¹⁶⁶ He was alluding to Pixley ka Isaka Seme, Alfred Mangena, Richard Msimang, H. Selby Msimang, John Dube and others. It is interesting that Dhlomo never refers to them as 'Zulus'. He also mentions that Durban intellectuals were prominent in the Industrial Commercial Union of Africa founded by Clements Kadalie. Here Dhlomo was referring to A. W. G. Champion and H. Selby Msimang. Dhlomo's criticisms of the ANC was based on intimate knowledge because at this time he was a member of the Executive Branch of the Natal African National Congress under the Presedential leadership of Champion.¹⁶⁷ In fact, he used his columns to announce the time and location of the regional branch. He felt strongly that the organizational structure of the ANC must be radically transformed thereby it was the organization itself that

¹⁶⁴ Busy-Bee [H. I. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Congress", *Ilanga lase Natal*, January 31, 1948.

¹⁶⁵ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "National Organisation", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, August 31, 1929.

¹⁶⁶ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Paradox of Durban Africans", *Ilanga lase Natal*, May 28, 1949.

¹⁶⁷ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Congress", *Ilanga lase Natal*, June 30, 1945.

went to the people, rather than forcing the people to it. In his analysis the ANC could only renew itself by becoming a living force among the people: an organization possessing wisdom, patriotism and vision, leading the people toward unity and progress.¹⁶⁸ Dhlomo formulated specific objectives the organization should strive to attain in order to reach its fundamental goal of overthrowing the oppressive political system of oppression, racism and discrimination. In order for it to become the voice and the symbol of people's will, thought and attitude, the ANC must undertake particular research into the lived experiences of the African people. The resulting findings should be published so that the New Masses could have deep knowledge about their historical condition. Secondly, it should institute lecture programmes, in which both Africans and Europeans could participate. Thirdly, it must initiate and find structures that would enable the people, economically and socially, to help themselves. Fourthly and fundamental, all financial and other records must be kept.¹⁶⁹ In order to achieve all its objectives Dhlomo was convinced that the ANC must enlist the 'best brains' of the New African Talented Tenth.

Dhlomo was very critical of what he regarded as too much complaining and lamentation by Africans in politics and in writings about their oppression. Much more productive was finding avenues and opportunities, within oppressive conditions themselves, to help ourselves. There should be thorough consultation between the organization and the African people. Praise and criticism should be accepted in equal measure by all the organs of the African National Congress. Although Dhlomo strongly believed success can only reside in us Africans helping ourselves, he stated that he saw no harm in Africans accepting genuine help from 'non-Africans'.¹⁷⁰ Dhlomo was profoundly preoccupied with the demands and challenges modernity was making on the ANC as a political organization destined to unify the African people. His analysis of the 1949 Annual Conference of the ANC in Bloemfontein shows Dhlomo's deep understanding of that particular conjuncture. Dhlomo was gratified that although the organization was polarized between its two dominant wings, the moderates spearheaded by Dr. Alfred Xuma (then its President-General) and R. V. Seloape Thema, and the Youth Leaguers whose members included A. P. Mda, Jordan Ngubane, Nelson Mandela, it was clear about the danger and divisiveness of apartheid policies. Dhlomo was re-assured that the Annual Conference was in agreement in affirming African nationalism rather than Communism as a political philosophy that would enable the African people to resolve some of

¹⁶⁸ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Congress", *Ilanga lase Natal*, May 13, 1944.

¹⁶⁹ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Congress", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 17, 1945.

¹⁷⁰ Busy Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "and Political Responsibility

" Modernity

COMPLETE THE FOOTNOTE

the political contradictions inhered in the experience of modernity.¹⁷¹ Equally gratifying to Dhlomo was that the kind of nationalism ANC had adopted for decades was not characterized by fanaticism, narrowness, and exclusivism. In another context, Dhlomo wrote of the dangers when ideology becomes more important than race or nation.¹⁷²

From this appraisal of 1950 to his death in 1956, although convinced that the ANC would eventually triumph, Dhlomo was never complacent about the structural and ideological difficulties the organization would perhaps recurrently encounter nor the challenges the apartheid state was imposing on

¹⁷¹ Busy Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Bloemfontein in Retrospect", *Ilanga lase Natal*, January 14, 1950.

¹⁷² Busy Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "The New Martyrdom", *Ilanga lase Natal*, April 29, 1950: "A person's nation, race and country became everything. This has been so for a long time. But now the world is reverting back to the old order where ideologies seem to count more than one's own country and race. From Europe, America and Asia come reports of men and women who are prepared to betray their own countries and fellow-men for the sake of an Ideology." Dhlomo wrote this in criticism of Dr. Yusuf Dadoo's unyielding alignment with Communism, which for some strange reason he equated with betrayal of South Africa, since Dhlomo's perception was that Marxism did not serve the national interests of the 'non-European' people. Writing his **Unpublished Autobiography** fifteen years later about this period, Jordan Ngubane wrote with violent anger that when Walter Sisulu, then Secretary-General of the ANC, came supposedly under the influence of Yusuf Dadoo, it was one of the greatest betrayal that organization had ever been traumatized with. Dhlomo questioned the wisdom of Sisulu's 1953 trip to Eastern Europe and China (see: "Problems of the National Congress", *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 17, 1953). It would seem that it was because his perception, implied in **Unpublished Autobiography**, that through Walter Sisulu (who was not a Marxist or a Communist) the South African Communist Party had taken control of the ANC. This led to Jordan Ngubane's subsequent break with the ANC, and his joining the Liberal Party. Albert Luthuli, then President-General of the ANC disagreed with Ngubane, who had one time served Luthuli as his personal secretary. Some of the most extraordinary pages of Jordan Ngubane's remarkable document is preoccupied with the excruciating between the two of them. Despite the horrendous hostility that ensued between, clearly indicated that not even once Luthuli mentioned Jordan Ngubane in his autobiography, **Let My People Go**, Ngubane writing his **Unpublished Autobiography** after having read Luthuli's book, his love and admiration for Luthuli never waned. It is clear from reading Dhlomo's reflections of 1950 on the question of ideology, what brought him and Jordan Ngubane was their hostility to Communism, their commitment that African Nationalism must be made to triumph over Afrikaner Nationalism, their deep affection for Albert Luthuli and contempt for A. W. G. Champion, and most important, that the ANC is the greatest political instrument of modernization in South Africa (despite Ngubane's break with the organization). Despite many similarities in their understanding of their particular historical moment, given Dhlomo's greater possession of Western culture, European intellectual history and African American literary culture, he was never given in to Ngubane's impulsive and extremist political and personal alignments (Ngubane joining the Liberal Party [mid-1950s] and the Inkatha Freedom Party [perhaps secretly in the mid-1970s]). Ngubane's **An African Explains Apartheid** (1963) is not totally persuasive as for his justifications for joining the Liberal Party. His aim to through this book, at this particular time, to align South Africa with American imperialism, is enormous matter for another occasion. Far more important, the vastly different cultural textures of the intellectual thoughts of Dhlomo and Ngubane, cannot be overemphasized.

the African people. The historic importance of the 1949 Conference for Dhlomo was in the national organization having embraced the Programme of Action largely formulated by the Youth League, that the ANC must aggressively, radically and decisively challenge the apartheid state. Its other importance lay in having elected Dr. Moroka in replacement of Dr. Xuma, as the General-President of the national body. Dhlomo saw a major structural problem in the implementation of ANC national policy at the four regional zones of South Africa since consent of the regional president-general of the ANC was invariably necessary if the policy was to succeed.¹⁷³ Whereas for example Professor Z. K. Mathews as regional general-president of the Cape Province was enthusiastically committed to the Programme of Action, A. W. G. Champion in likewise position in Natal was opposed to it. Because of his opposition, Jordan Ngubane's **Unpublished Autobiography** depicts in detail how Dhlomo, Ngubane himself and other Youth Leaguers engineered a democratic coup de tat overthrowing Champion and installing Albert Luthuli.

In an important essay of 1953, "Problems of the African National Congress", Dhlomo wrote the following: "Congress must make decisions, sooner or later. It should sooner than later. It is up against difficult and grave problems the most urgent and delicate of which, is cleansing its own house. Here are some [of] the problems" First, the apartheid government was taking drastic action against the militant of the ANC, while initiating 'compromises' with bogus African political organizations or black institutions in civil society. Secondly, other more credible parties and organizations, such as respectively the Liberal Party and the Moral Rearmament Movement, were garnering and raiding for support from the African people who had traditionally supported the ANC. Dhlomo was particularly concerned the Moral Rearmament Movement since R. V. Selope Thema had exited from the ANC and joined. For Dhlomo at one time, brilliant journalism in South Africa was associated with the name of Selope Thema (Ngubane in his **Unpublished Autobiography** uses excessive terms of praise). Perhaps as a way of mitigating this threat, Dhlomo was enthusiastic about Professor Z. K. Mathews call for a national convention, which eventuated as the 1955 Congress of the People that formulated 'The Freedom Charter'. Thirdly, through its violent hostility to the ANC, more than against the apartheid state and government, the Non-European Unity Movement was distracting the organization. Fourthly, Dhlomo found the national organization lacking serious discipline, which resulted in unauthorized people thinking they could speak on behalf of the ANC. Fifthly, he urged the national organization not to fudge and speak in double talk as to whether its driving ideology was Marxism or African

¹⁷³ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Domestic Politics", *Ilanga lase Natal*, April 1, 1950. Approximately twenty years earlier, R. V. Selope Thema had broached the same issue among others: "The African National Congress: Its Achievements and Failures I, II, III", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, September 14, 21, November 2, 1929.

Nationalism. Dhlomo made it clear that for him Marxism was incompatible with the fundamental interests of the African people. Lastly, Dhlomo felt it was imperative that the ANC must make it clear to New African masses whether it was a Party or a mass organization.¹⁷⁴

Dhlomo chose to intellectually engage himself with the detrimental initiatives of the apartheid government, especially concerning apartheid itself and Bantu Education. In one of his early reflections on apartheid, Dhlomo criticized New African intellectuals in seeming to have been caught off by the institutionalization of apartheid as a result of the election of 1948. He called for a comprehensive study of its nature, history and the disastrous consequences it had visited on the African people. Dhlomo suggested to African scholars several topics that may facilitate a thorough study of apartheid: "1. History of South Africa and the policy of Segregation: Voortrekkers, British Settlers, the attitude of African Chiefs. 2. Land and Apartheid. 3. Economic and Industrial Development and Apartheid. 4. The Church and Apartheid. 5. Social Aspects of Apartheid. 6. Political Aspects of Apartheid: the policies of Leading Administrators such as Grey, Shepstone and Hertzog. 7. Cultural Aspects of Apartheid. 8. Apartheid, the Commonwealth and the Colonial Policies of France, Belgium and Portugal. 9. Apartheid and Modern World Trends and Opinion."¹⁷⁵ Dhlomo himself was to concentrate on the cultural aspects of apartheid.

Dhlomo lamented that the government had began to impose cultural, intellectual and spiritual separation. Government subsidies for cultural matters, social welfare and education were being given to organizations that subscribed to apartheid, and those which stood by their principles of repulsing were marginalized. For Dhlomo the forcible implementation of apartheid struck at two sacred principles: the democratic principle of choice and personal conscience. The net consequence of all this was the effecting of a dictatorship in cultural matters: "We all agree that the worst things about dictatorships is that they prevent individuals reading, listening in to music and news, attending plays and lectures, moving where and when, and meeting culturally, spiritually and emotionally the people and groups they like."¹⁷⁶ In effect, apartheid was atrophying the South African spirit and mind. Drawing an analogy with the Iron Curtain, he attacked apartheid as pulling a spiritual and intellectual curtain across the soul of South African culture. In his subsequent writings Dhlomo was constantly to refer to

¹⁷⁴ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Problems of the African National Congress", *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 17, 1953.

¹⁷⁵ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "What Answer to Apartheid", *Ilanga lase Natal*, May 27, 1950.

¹⁷⁶ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Cultural Separation", *Ilanga lase Natal*, November 25, 1950.

apartheid as an intellectual curtain.¹⁷⁷ In other words, apartheid unveiled a curtain of darkness, barbarism, heathenism against the enlightenment, civilization and progress of modernity; apartheid stood for ignorance, conservatism and backwardness like the African chiefs, towards whom Dhlomo was profoundly hostile at this time. Apartheid was against all the great things the the New Africans, like modernity stood for: progress, competence, sophistication, westernization.¹⁷⁸

Dhlomo was absolutely certain that the success or failure of apartheid depended much more on the attitudes and actions of Africans than on the official theorists and government administrators. Although he was well aware that Africans were not of one opinion, he stated the four reasons why on principle the Africans were adamantly opposed to apartheid: apartheid stigmatized and humiliated the African people; it stratified society with Africans at the lowest level; it is predicated on a continuous contravening of democratic, economic and human laws; and lastly, it encourages racial animosity and conflict.¹⁷⁹

Dhlomo was equally uncompromising in his hostility towards Bantu Education, the inferiorization of education for Africans in order 'to put the Native in his place'. In an editorial characterizing Bantu Education as "Intellectual Slavery", he vehemently denounced it as an attempt by the government to control the spiritual and intellectual content of the whole African nation.¹⁸⁰ Given that Dhlomo had always expressed his deep felt gratitude for missionaries in having educated Africans, in other words making their entrance into modernity possible, he was appalled that Bantu Education was partly intended to force the missionaries to hand over their religious private schools to the government. Secondly, he saw Bantu Education as it intended to making the teaching of Afrikaans compulsory, at the expense of geography and history: "History and geography introduce the mind of the child to the wider world. The two studies make the child realise that it [sic] is a citizen of the world State, and has human rights and responsibilities just like other people." Dhlomo interpreted this directive or edict as intended to make Africans "kaffirs" (niggers). Dhlomo also

¹⁷⁷ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Intellectual Curtain", *Ilanga lase Natal*, April 14, 1951: "The fact emerges clear and threatening. It is Nemesis. Apartheid measures are playing havoc with our moral and ethical values and ideas. It is creating dissention even among Europeans. Isw the country prepared to enslave itself intellectually and morally fot the sake of the policy of apartheid?"

¹⁷⁸ Even though now and then, Dhlomo thought of the dialectic between modernity and tradition in Manichean terms, his reflections on these matters were usually profoundly nuanced and complex.

¹⁷⁹ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Africans and Apartheid", Weekly Review And Commentary *Ilanga lase Natal*, July 21, 1951.

¹⁸⁰ Editorial, "Intellectual Slavery", *Ilanga lase Natal*, April 17, 1954. The style of thinking could only be that of Dhlomo. Some of the ideas expressed here had been articulated in articles written under his prorer name, than even under his pseudo names.

considered as equally galling that simultaneously with the introduction of Bantu Education, the apartheid also announced an increase in African poll tax to finance the education of Africans. He saw this as an attempt to make Africans pay for their own intellectual enslavement. Given Dhlomo's unshakeable conviction that education was the principle entryway into modernity, this attempted enslavement through inferior education, could only trigger his outmost outrage.

Perhaps it was this intellectual and historically driven outrage that compelled Dhlomo to write a series of editorials in *Ilanga lase Natal* on apartheid, the challenge it posed for the ANC, and the role of the New African intellectuals in making the ANC meet the challenge posed by the apartheid state. The implicit theme of these editorials, which was reflected in all of Dhlomo's reflections on modernity, was that in the then colonial countries (e.g. Kenya) and post-colonial countries (e.g. India) and countries simultaneously existing as colonial and post-colonial entities (e.g. South Africa), modernization was invariably also Westernization. The first editorial in this series, "A Queer Mentality", sought to show that by instituting apartheid policies and laws under the pretext of making Africans develop in accordance with their historical traditions, i.e. 'according to their own lines' by preventing them 'imitating' Western civilization, the net effect of these laws was to forestall Africans from embracing modernity.¹⁸¹ Rightfully seeing this as pernicious strategy of controlling Africans by keeping them in the darkness of tradition, in effect disenfranchising them, Dhlomo argued for a position that there was no alternative to modernity. Clearly Dhlomo's logic of argument seems to have been that had Europeans really wanted Africans to develop according to their own lines they would have been able or should have been to prevent European modernity from entering African history forcefully and colonizing it as an imperial empire. Since it was modernity itself that had made Europe triumph over Africans, there was no historical path for Africans other than the appropriation of that modernity itself. Dhlomo was correct in seeing implicitly that the aim of preventing Africans from embracing was in actual fact the intent of making Africans the objects of history rather than its active subjects and participants.

In the second of these editorials written in the last year and a half of his life, actually written two months before the previous one, opened the first two sentences with capital letters: "SOUTH AFRICA IS FAMOUS OR NOTORIOUS FOR ITS ALMOST INSANE DESIRE TO EXCLUDE AFRICANS FROM ENJOYING THE FRUITS OF WHITE CIVILISATION AND CHRISTIANITY. ONE CAN ALMOST LUDGE ANYTHING TO BE REGARDED AS A VERY EXCLUSIVE BY THE WARNING OR NOTICE ATTACHED TO IT TO THE EFFECT THAT IT IS FOR EUROPEANS ONLY. Immediately you see this sign anywhere you know that you are, that is if your

¹⁸¹ Editorial, "A Queer Mentality", *Ilanga lase Natal*, April 2, 1955.

skin is black, warned to keep away from the holy ground."¹⁸² As it bears no serious mentioning, ontologically speaking, no civilization or religious system is the exclusive ownership of a particular racial group. The third editorial in the series condemning apartheid, written a year earlier than the previous two, is the bitterest document of Dhlomo's. It concluded with a prediction, which happily 1994 has disproven: "The final crash will destroy master and slave."¹⁸³ It opens by arguing that the pre-industrial conditions of the poorer classes in England depicted in Charles Dicken's **Bleak House** have replicated themselves in South Africa with utter ruthlessness. Dhlomo appropriates a motif of the novel and thinks is applicable to South African history as the edict of apartheid: "Keep on moving there". The migrant labor system uproots Africans who are peasants or farmworkers from the countryside and transforms them into the proletariat in the urban areas. The pass laws and the influx control system turns them into an army of the dispossessed and homeless refugees: "So-called locations in the sky must be abolished and their thousands forced to travel the road to Nowhere." The Group Areas Act makes the permanent residence of Africans in the urban areas an uncertainty: "Keep on Moving." Bantustans are created to accommodate the dispossessed Africans in the countryside: "We said Africans are forced to travel the road to Nowhere. We are wrong. It is the road to chaos, strife, crime, bitterness, and destruction. Economically, it is downright robbery against the African." The whole cycle of capitalism uproots healthy Africans from their organic communities and returns them as broken and dispossessed proletariat in the poverty-stricken Bantustans. The passion of analysis in this editorial is unprecedented in the writings of Dhlomo. While displaying his analytical powers and unparalleled grasp of English prose, the editorial also displays his conservatism and reactionary politics: his fear that these policies would trigger the clash of fanatical nationalism and would also open the door to communism. That as it may, Dhlomo was not about to halt his indictment of the utter destructiveness of apartheid. He saw the role of the New African intellectuals and the ANC as paramount in this halting process.

In the fourth and final editorial of the series, Dhlomo counterposed the National Party's separatist ideology of apartheid to the ANC unifying ideology of integration. "Out of the Night" is characterized by analytical soberness. Viewing apartheid as extremist, full of contradictions and inconsistencies, as an unrealizable dream and nightmare, projected against world trends and opinion, and not recognized by universal laws, Dhlomo thought integration based on the natural laws of human evolution and a sound policy of sanity would inevitably prove more naturally human: "Integration regards civilisation as universal and as a matter of certain values, standards and ways of life and conduct. Apartheid is based on race and

¹⁸² Editorial, "For Europeans Only", *Ilanga lase Natal*, February 12, 1955.

¹⁸³ Editorial, "Forever Hamba", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 13, 1954.

colour. Integration recognises individual merit, and is based on the scientific fact that people are classified according to individual qualities and talents and opportunities. There is more kinship between African and European creative minds (in art, science, literature and philosophy), for example than between a European artists and a European prize-fighter, than between a white introvert and a white extrovert."¹⁸⁴ For Dhlomo Albert Luthuli was a supreme embodiment of these principles of integration.

Dhlomo had absolute disdainfulness for the Non-European Unity Movement and other organizations which attacked the ANC, while the national organization of the African people was engaged in a deadly struggle with the forces of apartheid. In his estimation, the fact that the ANC had built a progressive and a united African nation through merging of different African ethnic groups into one wholeness, through waging a constant battles against the internal weaknesses of ignorance, illiteracy and conservatism among different African nations, and through striving for economic, social and cultural progress, was a remarkable achievement in and of itself. Continuing further on his reflections, he felt the national organization should speak more promptly and authoritatively when upheavals and developments necessitated it. Lastly, the dramatic change of 1948 demanded strong protest action from the organization.¹⁸⁵ He saw the institutionalization of apartheid as the greatest challenge the organization had encountered.¹⁸⁶

In his appraisal of the Non-European Unity Movement, Dhlomo found its leaders (Z. Mahabane, Drs. Gool and Limbade and I. B. Tabata who were visiting the Natal Province to find more members) to be more metaphysicians than realistic and practical political leaders. The Movement had no supporters whatsoever among the New African masses, even among those who were Coloureds, which the organization purported to represent. Dhlomo objected most strongly to its penchant for attacking other organizations such as the ANC or the Indian Congress, instead of concentrating on formulating its own sound political policy. He remarked on certain qualitative distinctions between the ANC and the Unity Movement: while the former sought to politically educate the masses and in turn be educated by them, the latter was only interested in telling the masses what to do in accordance to its revealed edicts; while the former was deeply preoccupied with the difficulties of practical politics, the latter is merely satisfied with its rhetorics. The most crucial distinction for Dhlomo is that

¹⁸⁴ Editorial, "Out of the Night", *Ilanga lase Natal*, February 27, 1954.

¹⁸⁵ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Congress, What We Expected", *Ilanga lase Natal*, June 30, 1951.

¹⁸⁶ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "This Will Not Do", *Ilanga lase Natal*, July 7, 1951.

while the ANC organized itself on a unitary basis, the Unity Movement sought to do so on a federal basis.¹⁸⁷

It is clear from the following statement that Dhlomo in his political imagination coupled the Bantu National Congress and the Non-European Unity Movement as distractory adversaries of the ANC though lacking support among the African people: "Just as Bhengu [leader of the Bantu National Congress], the leaders of the Non-European Unity Movement thought they saw their chance in the state of confusion and flux that existed after Bloemfontein."¹⁸⁸ Dhlomo was alluding to the decision of December 1951 by the Executive Committee of the ANC at the Annual Conference in Bloemfontein to initiate protest demonstration that was to lead to the Defiance Campaign of 1952. Confusion ensued within the ranks of the ANC when conservative stalwarts and veterans of the organization such as R. V. Selope Thema in opposition to the decision formed an ANC 'National Bloc'. Given his high regard for Selope Thema, Dhlomo greeted this development with a sigh and a sense of sadness. As for S. S. Bhengu and I. B. Tabata, the leader of the Unity movement, he considered them "opportunists, informers, iconoclasts, theorists" who did not merit serious attention. This does not mean that Dhlomo put the Unity Movement and the Bantu National Congress on the same plane of political seriousness. As already stated, among the reasons for his hostility towards the Unity Movement was its Marxist ideology. For his historical moment, Dhlomo believed that African Nationalism was the valid and authentic ideology for the liberation of the African people. His ideological belief was enhanced and consolidated by the emergence of the ANC Youth League in 1943-44, the Programme of Action in 1949, the Defiance Campaign of 1952, the election of Albert Luthuli as President-General of the ANC, and the Congress of the People of 1955 while he was lying in bed terminally ill. As for the newly founded Bantu National Congress, Dhlomo regarded it as an opportunistic organization which lacked political and intellectual substance, led by a criminal.

In his **Unpublished Autobiography**, Jordan Ngubane states that the founding of the Bantu National Congress caused the utmost apprehension, anger and outrage in Albert Luthuli, then President-General of the regional Natal African National Congress, just before being elected to the head leadership of the national organization.¹⁸⁹ It was Luthuli who appealed to Dhlomo and

¹⁸⁷ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Unity Movement Leaders in Natal", *Ilanga lase Natal*, February 23, 1952.

¹⁸⁸ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Non-European Unity Movement", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 8, 1952.

¹⁸⁹ It is extremely unfortunate that some pages of **Unpublished Autobiography** have been lost. The document itself is confusion because of its two pagination systems. Despite this, it has the most remarkable portrait of Albert Luthuli ever written, much more insightful than Dhlomo's brilliant sketches. Ngubane had a deep understanding of the personality and political psychology of Luthuli. Given its extraordinary candor and absolute frankness, one doubts

Ngubane for assistance. Ngubane wrote in the autobiography that Dhlomo assured Luthuli to leave the matter to them. Dhlomo and Ngubane set about to destroy S. S. Bhengu and the Bantu National Congress, which they succeeded through their respective columns in *Ilanga lase Natal* and in *Inkundla ya Bantu*. They also set about, as the **Unpublished Autobiography** contends, building Luthuli as a possible national leader. These contentions of Jordan Ngubane are supported by the scathing articles in the early 1950s by Dhlomo on Bhengu, and by remarkably penetrative and laudatory portraits of Albert Luthuli. It is necessary to state that the great leadership qualities of Luthuli were already apparent to Dhlomo in the mid-1940s, nearly a decade earlier before embarking on a joint project with Jordan Ngubane. Many of the brilliant essays, articles, profiles and analyses that appeared *Ilanga lase Natal* from the late 1940s to his death in 1956, clearly show that H. I. E. Dhlomo was the most brilliant intellectual force behind the politics of the ANC, and the most seriously engaged within the organization to make it move the African people into the center of modernity in the twentieth century.

Dhlomo's scathing articles on Bhengu and Bantu National Congress should perhaps be interpreted as part of his construction of political modernity in South Africa. In this instance, a construction through elimination, whereas concerning Albert Luthuli it was a construction through centering and enhancing. As indicated, Bhengu launched the Bantu National Congress as a protest against the decision of the National Executive Committee of the ANC to launch protest marches, demonstrations, civil disobedience, whose first serious manifestation was the Defiance Campaign of 1952. Taking him seriously at first, not aware that Bhengu had been instigated by some Afrikaner conservatives to form a rival organization to the ANC, Dhlomo criticized Bhengu for not organizing within the ANC to democratically throw out through elections the leadership he found dissatisfactory, replacing it with the leadership reflecting his ideologically perspective. Dhlomo believes he should have attended the Annual Conference, and urge many ANC members to attend in order to a vote of no confidence in the leadership. By forming a rival organization, Dhlomo wrote: "He spurns and rejects and belittles what the whole African Race has done since 1912. Instead of working from within to right what he thinks is wrong, he tries to break down a

whether Ngubane wanted ever to see it published, let alone in his lifetime and that of Luthuli. It was written as an expression of a deep personal political crisis stemming from his having turned his back on the ANC because of his questionable perception that it had been take over by Communists and Marxists. The autobiography was really written to heal himself from himself. Although began in the late 1950s, the real driving force for the necessity of its writing was the crisis of 1960, the Sharpeville Massacre and the banning of all political organizations. Jordan Ngubane correctly perceived that Afrikaner nationalism had delivered a major blow to African nationalism. Following this tragedy, Ngubane, for the rest of his life, in **Ushaba, Conflict of Minds**, and in many historical biographical sketches, was to preoccupy himself with constructing a metaphysical system of African nationalism for the final battle, the mother of all battles, of the war between the two nationalism. These are reflections for another occasion.

national edifice that has been built with blood, sweat and tears."¹⁹⁰ What Dhlomo found more even more galling was that Bhengu argued that apartheid laws and all other discriminatory practices were for the benefit of Africans! This demented position, coupled with his opposition to Africans and Indians working politically together to fight apartheid hegemony, going so far as to outrageously call for the repatriation of Indians, as well as associatingly closely with certain unsavory Europeans, Dhlomo believed led to his undoing: "The eclipse of Bhengu and his movement has thus helped to clear the atmosphere in one direction."¹⁹¹ For Dhlomo the cleared atmosphere was for Albert Luthuli to occupy as a great leader and hero of the African people.

Dhlomo's understanding of the role of outstanding figures in history, especially within modernity, as already alluded to, was profoundly influenced by Thomas Carlyle's theory of history as constituted by heroic action. Dhlomo's enthrallment with, and fear of, Benedict Vilakazi was in the Carlylean manner of the Hero as Poet: "The Poet is a heroic figure belonging to all ages; whom all ages possess, when once he is produced, whom the newest age as the oldest may produce;---and will produce always when Nature pleases. Let Nature send a Hero-soul; in no age is it other than possible that he may be shaped into a Poet."¹⁹² Equally, Carlyle afforded Dhlomo the instrumentarium by which to conceptualize and theorize Albert Luthuli in the manner of the Hero as Divinity: "One comfort is, that Great Men, taken up in any way, are profitable company. We cannot look, however imperfectly, upon a great man, without gaining something by him. He is the living light-fountain, which it is good and pleasant to be near. The light

¹⁹⁰ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Bhengu Blunders", *Ilanga lase Natal*, February 23, 1952.

¹⁹¹ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Bhengu's Movement Is Stillborn", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 8, 1952. Over a year later Dhlomo posed a series of rhetorical questions about Bhengu: "It seems quiet on Bhengu's Bantu Congress front. What has happened to this organisation wghich we were told has a monster membership? Where are the thousands of pounds which the country was told the organisation possesses? Why is Mr. S. S. Bhengu himself so quiet and where is he?" (Busy-Bee, Weekly Review And Commentary "Bhengu's Bantu Congress", *Ilanga lase Natal*, July 18, 1953). What Dhlomo did not tell the readers of *Ilanga lase Natal* is that he himself had destroyed Bhengu and his organisation. According to Jordan Ngubane in the **Unpublished Autobiography** Dhlomo, through a complicated process, had instigated and manouvred a white newspaper, *The Natal Witness*, which had initially supported Bhengu through laudatory portraits of him as an expression of its hostility to the ANC, to publish an expose of Bhengu which the paper was unaware would lead to his long imprisonment. Dhlomo asked these questions knowing very well that Bhengu was in prison and Bantu Congress had self-destructed through his political machinations. In other words, Dhlomo was not just an arm-chair intellectual, but could get in the mud of politics and fight a dirty war when the fundamental political interests of the African people were at stake. Dhlomo prided himself in travelling extensively throughout the country, especially in Natal, in order to know the pulse of the people.

¹⁹² Thomas Carlyle, **On Great Men**, Penguin Books, New York, 1995 (1840) [Penguin 60s Classics], p.3.

which enlightens, which has enlightened the darkness of the world; and this not as a kindled lamp only, but rather as a natural luminary shining by the gift of Heaven; a flowing light-fountain, as I say, of native original insight, of manhood and heroic nobleness;--in whose radiance all souls feel that it is well with them."¹⁹³ Without doubt, Dhlomo viewed Luthuli as an incandescent light that enlightened the darkness of the world.

Dhlomo had at one time wanted to write a history of the heroic figures of the ANC. This was not to be. His long obituary of 1946 on John Dube, the first President-General of the organization, can be seen as an elementary prefiguration of the contours of what this Carlylean book would have taken. Dhlomo begins by postulating a principle that all forms of African creativity, or for that matter, all work of Africans, must be judged by the most absolute standards.¹⁹⁴ The criteria for this judgment is the opinion of the learned and the wise; the approval of the masses; and the judgment of time (posterity). Dhlomo states that Dube wanted to be judged in accordance with the following dictum: "Do not judge me by the heights I have attained, but by the depths from which I have come." In Dhlomo estimation John Dube overcame the handicaps, disabilities and ideologies of traditional tribal society in the form of superstition, regimentation, uniformity and conservatism. From these 'handicaps' John Dube discovered his strength, philosophy and uniqueness through constructing a great epic poem or symphony of modernity. Located in the profoundly problematic period of the transition from tradition to modernity, like many New Africans of his generation, Dhlomo marvels that John Dube took this as a challenge and opportunity to construct institutions that enabled many Africans to make an entryway into modernity: he built the Ohlange Institute in 1903, in which future

¹⁹³ *ibid.*, p.2. It cannot be strongly enough emphasized that Dhlomo's fascination with the heroic mode was not only because of Carlyle, for some of the greatest Zulu poets like Magolwane and Mshongweni sung in this mode.

¹⁹⁴ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Dr. J. L. Dube, Ph.D., M. R. C.", *Ilanga lase Natal*, February 23, 1946. On the same page as this obituary wrote two songs, one a sonnet with the following lines:

".....
Of battles fierce--great scholar,
author, sage—
Find time the Muses fair to serve.
Our mist
Of ignorance you raised, Light of
our age!
In pangs of birth we stood when
he began;
'Twas dark! God spoke! and there
arose this man!"

Dhlomo is celebrating that John Dube participation in the making of a New African through the conjunction of Christianity, civilization and knowledge (education) is analogous to God's creation of Adam! Dhlomo held John Dube in such high esteem that barely two years after his death called for a major biography of him (Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo] Weekly Review And Commentary "Ohlange and Dr. Dube", *Ilanga lase Natal*, November 29, 1947).

modernizers such as Vilakazi, Caluza, R. R. R. Dhlomo and others passed through during their formative education---an Institute modelled on the Tuskegee, founded by his mentor Booker T. Washington; he launched the newspaper *Ilanga lase Natal* (which was and still is bilingual: in English and in Zulu) in 1903, which not only enabled Dhlomo in the 1940s and the 1950s to theorize modernity in South Africa, but was essential in the political education of the future Youth Leaguers like A. P. Mda, Jordan Ngubane, Anton Lembede and others; he was one of the principal founders of the African National Congress which made the historic events of 1994 possible; and was one of the founders of the Zulu novel with **Insila ka Shaka (Jeqe, The Bodyservant of King Shaka)**.¹⁹⁵ In his estimation of the greatness of John Dube, Dhlomo was not so much taken with the institutions he had founded, as much as the effects they had had on the New African intelligentsia and on the New African masses. Dhlomo saw two interrelated incomparable achievements: in having "lifted the veil of backwardness" from the African people by changing their habits and thoughts through new ideas, new knowledge, and new forms of beauty. In comparing the tasks of Booker T. Washington and that of John Dube, Dhlomo found that of the African much more difficult than that of the African American, because whereas the New Negroes were relatively homogeneous, the New Africans were definitely heterogeneous. Having been immortalized in poetic form by Mqhayi and others, being a true democrat and statesman, and having stood for a united South Africa and for progress, Dhlomo eulogized John Dube as no longer merely a prominent leader, but a national symbol and institution. In this most detailed appraisal of any heroic figure in South African history, with the possible exception that of Shaka, Dhlomo was fully engaging himself with the Carlylean poetics of history.

Even though H. I. E. Dhlomo (born 1903) outlived John Dube (born 1871) by a mere decade, he experienced Dube as a historical figure who profoundly shaped the passages of transition from tradition to modernity, whereas Albert Luthuli (born 1898) for Dhlomo was a contemporary with whom he shared the same historical coordinates of lived experience as well as participating together, as with many others, in constructing South African modernity.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ In an essay evaluating his literary works, Dhlomo posits that with **Insala ka Shaka** John Dube had reached the summit of the literary heights of his brilliance, for its Zulu prose flows with musical rhythm, the descriptive passages are compelling, and its literary style is the consummation that of the *Ilanga lase Natal*. Dhlomo is enthralled with the story of the novella which is about Shaka "that fertile inexhaustible mountain" (X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Dr. J. L. Dube Ph.D., M.R.C., As Author", *Ilanga lase Natal*, August 19, 1944. The English translation: **Jeqe, the Bodyservant of King Tshaka**, trans. Professor J. Boxwell, The Lovedale Press, 1951). The peculiar spelling of Shaka is inexplicable.

¹⁹⁶ The only political sketch of John Dube by Dhlomo is of his struggle with A. W. G. Champion for the leadership of the regional Natal African National Congress. In this instance he makes observations: that Dube's career exemplifies the principle that in order to serve the people, a leader must have a deep sense of love for the people (Race in Dhlomo's invariable lexicon); the Cause of the Race should be the central issue for African politics; that although

Even though Dhlomo for over a decade preceding his death in several pieces reflected on the historical importance of Albert Luthuli, for instance when he was removed by the apartheid government as Chief because he would not endorse apartheid policies and in his conflicts with A. W. G. Champion for ANC leadership in the Natal Province, it was on two occasions that Dhlomo wrote major pieces on him. In a "Weekly Letter" which begins by stating his Du Boisian principle that it is through the action of the a few outstanding individuals that a national culture is truly known, and since Dhlomo considered him a member of the African Talented Tenth because of his achievements as a Chief, as a former teacher of Adams College, as a stalwart of the ANC, and having represented South African Christian missions in United States and India, Dhlomo wanted to know Luthuli's thinking on particularly vexing problems within modernity confronting the New Africans.¹⁹⁷ One particular issue was the seemingly inability of the Natal province African National Congress to confront the challenges posed by apartheid when the Youth League had suggested viable alternatives to challenging this confrontation! In other words, without mentioning names, without saying so openly, and doing his utmost not to ruffle feathers, Dhlomo was bluntly asking Albert Luthuli about his inaction concerning Champion who then as President-General of the provincial was doing all he could to block the execution of the Programme of Action which had been approved a few months before by the Annual Conference of the ANC in Bloemfontein in December 1949! As the **Unpublished Autobiography** reveals, the Weekly Letter to Luthuli was the beginning of the implementation of the strategy secretly arrived at by Dhlomo and Jordan Ngubane, without Albert Luthuli's knowledge, to prepare the public for the ousting of Champion and his possible replacement without Luthuli himself. Possible replacement, because as Jordan Ngubane's penetrative psychological profile shows in this extraordinary document, Albert Luthuli was deeply averse to politics.¹⁹⁸ He

white oppression has put many obstacles in the path of African progress, many others are of our own making because of the absence of proper organization and assertion of self-help; and that African leaders must work together (X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Dr. Dube's Triumph", *Ilanga lase Natal*, May 8, 1943). At this writing Dhlomo had not as yet violently against Champion, as he was to do a few years later. The seeds of distrust were already present, because Dhlomo said nothing about him, except a perfunctory statement that both of them are patriots.

¹⁹⁷ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Weekly Letter: To Chief A. J. Luthuli", *Ilanga lase Natal*, April 1, 1950.

¹⁹⁸ Jordan Ngubane had a profound knowledge of the political psychology of New African intellectuals. As his biographical portrait of Albert Luthuli is a masterpiece, his essay on Anton Lembede is rivetingly brilliant: "Lembede and Africanism" (in the Gwendolyn Carter and Thomas Karis Collection). It is extremely unfortunate that this nine-page essay was not included in **Freedom in Our Lifetime: The Collected Writings of Anton Muziwakhe Lembede**, op. cit. Since the editors were aware of this document, it is inexplicable why it was excluded. Did they doubt the veracity or authenticity of its narration! Its inclusion would have made a pertinent contrast to the perspectives of A. P. Mda and Walter Sisulu on Lembede in the book. What makes this essay fascinating is its autobiographical element concerning Lembede and Ngubane's student days together at Adams College; their decision to storm the citadel of the

hated the public noise and the amorality that sometimes accompanied politics. This is the amorality in which Champion thrived. Dhlomo and Ngubane made a conscious decision to do the dirty political work on his behalf, since Luthuli himself was constitutionally incapable of doing it. All of these decisions were made without Luthuli's knowledge. Dhlomo and Ngubane and other Youth Leaguers succeeded in ousting Champion and replacing him with Luthuli.¹⁹⁹ Perhaps one of the reasons Jordan Ngubane never published his autobiography, arguably the best political autobiography written in South Africa, whether one agrees with its politics or not, was a fear that it would offend Albert Luthuli. After the death of Luthuli in 1967,

Old Guard within the ANC through their founding of the Youth League; and their tragically vociferous anti-Communism. This essay is much superior to the Ngubane essay that found inclusion in the book.

¹⁹⁹ Perhaps as part of the strategy to deservedly defame Champion, Jordan Ngubane in the critical year of 1952 wrote a two-page biographical piece on him for the famous Masterpiece in Bronze series of the *Drum* magazine, in which not even a part of the sentence, let alone a whole sentence was about Champion's relationship with the ANC. The whole piece is about Champion's role in the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (I. C. U.) of the 1920s. The implicit meaning is that this was the only decade in which Champion was relevant to African politics. Presumably his role in the ANC in the 1930s, 1940s and the 1950s was purely destructive. The following deserves quoting: "Brilliance was not one of his gifts; nor did his performance in and out of class suggest a future teacher or Minister of the Church. But there were things he did which marked him out as a pupil quite distinct from the other boys. He did not take kindly to the discipline enforced in our schools at the time" ("A. W. Champion: The Courageous Fight of a Great Zulu for his People, and for the ill-fated I. C. U.", October, 1952). Note the praise as a 'Great Zulu', not as a great New African; and the implication is that the ill-fated nature of I. C. U. was due to Champion's undisciplined nature. It would be interesting to know what went through Champion's mind as he read this supposed appreciation. Although Anton Lembede's reading of Champion precedes the latter's open uncompromising hostility to the Youth League, it is interestingly different from that of his comrade-in-arms. In an appreciation, Lembede quoted Champion as having said the following: "Continuing he said 'I am two things: I am a Zulu and I am an African: I cannot be a good Zulu unless I am a good African'. He then pointed out that today we need a leader to lead the Africa of all united African tribes. Africans must learn to respect, obey and follow their leader. It is immaterial from which tribe this leader comes; he may be a Nyasa (like Kadalie) or a Xosa (like Xuma) but if he is placed before us as a leader we have no alternative but to follow him. Today we must think in terms of wider horizons of African nationalism" ("Councillor A. W. G. Champion In Johannesburg: An Appreciation", *Ilanga lase Natal*, November 24, 1945). Although perhaps the Youth Leaguers may have been willing to give total obedience to Anton Lembede himself because of their enthrallment with him, after his unexpected and tragic death, their unwilling to extend that privilege or uncriticalness to anyone else. From this quotation it is clear that a major study of the New African and African Nationalism is imperative. Also R. R. R. Dhlomo always had a high regard for Champion. As editor of the *Ilanga lase Natal* from 1943 to 1970 (?), perhaps R. R. R. Dhlomo never allowed his younger brother to openly attack Champion on the pages of the newspaper. Even more, for some years from 1964-74 R. R. R. Dhlomo gave Champion a column in the newspaper; perhaps the very column space that his younger had written astonishing things on modernity a few decades earlier. R. R. R. Dhlomo was later to write his biography: **A Biography of A. W. G. Champion** (included in **The Views of Mahlathini: Writings of A. W. G. Champion: A Black South African**, [ed.] M. W. Swanson, trans. E. R. Dahle and A. T. Cope, University of Natal Press/Killie Campbell Africana Library, Pietermaritzburg/Durban, 1982).

Ngubane abandoned the document to concern himself with the construction of the metaphysical system of African Nationalism.²⁰⁰ A crucial point to raise here is that although H. I. E. Dhlomo was never an official member of the Youth League, being eleven years older than its most senior member Anton Lembede (born 1914), he completely aligned himself with its political and ideological principles, especially concerning African Nationalism. To be convinced of this, one needs to note the laudatory comments on the Youth League by Dhlomo in *Ilanga lase Natal*.²⁰¹ In the intellectual public space of shaping the historical and political consciousness of the New Africans Dhlomo was more effective in articulating the political philosophy of the Youth Leaguers than any of its official members, more than Jordan Ngubane or Anton Lembede or A. P. Mda who wrote in *Inkundla ya Bantu* in the late 1940s, and certainly more than Nelson Mandela or Walter Sisulu who wrote in *Liberation* in the early 1950s.²⁰² The incomparable writings of Dhlomo in the Durban-based great newspaper are a testimony to this intellectual supremacy; a dirty word in our South African context. The greatness of Dhlomo in this particular instance resides in having synthesized intellectual content and political philosophy to a remarkable degree.

The second issue raised by Dhlomo with Luthuli concerned the nature and effect of modernity on the making of the New African. Here he was preoccupied with interrelated conundrums. Dhlomo asked Luthuli as to what should one make of the fact that a supposedly antiquated and anachronistic ideology of tribalism belonging in backward traditional 'tribal' societies was continuing and maintaining itself, despite the fierce opposition of New African enlighteners, in a modern and acquisitive society! In other words, wasn't tribalism a political phenomenon of tradition rather than modernity, which the founding of the ANC in 1912 set out to eliminate or destroy. If so,

²⁰⁰ A. P. Mda indicates that one of the life-time projects of Jordan Ngubane was to alter politics in South Africa through African Nationalism ("Jordan Ngubane", *Masterpiece in Bronze*, *Drum*, May, 1954).

²⁰¹ There were other reflections by Dhlomo on the politics of the Youth League other than those already referred to above: a piece analyzing the complex politics hindering the immediate implementation of the Programme of Action ("Programme of Action", January 12, 1952). A related piece reports on the clash between the ideologies of African Nationalism and class struggle in the ANC ("Clash of Ideologies"); an extended piece of the after effects of the Defiance Campaign of 1952 which will be considered more in detail below ("Bannings: The Political Situation", June 27, 1953).

²⁰² Dhlomo contributed a major piece in the intellectual forum of the Youth League, *Inkundla ya Bantu*, on the invitation of its editor Jordan Ngubane. Ngubane had inaugurated a series called Three Famous Journalists I Knew in which he wrote on John Dube (I), on Ngazana Luthuli ([II] took over the editorship of *Ilanga lase Natal* from Dube, was himself by R. R. R. Dhlomo in 1943), and on R. V. Seloape Thema ([III] June, Second Fortnight; July, First Fortnight; July Second Fortnight, 1946). Dhlomo followed this series, but unfortunately the issues of the newspaper in which separately two journalists appeared have been lost, only his piece on R. R. R. Dhlomo (II) survived (August Fortnight, 1946). It is with almost certainty that one of the other journalists Dhlomo considered was Solomon T. Plaatje. This has been a major loss for South African intellectual history.

what were the metaphysical, political and psychological reasons for its persistence in modernity? Related to this vexing problem of tribalism, Dhlomo requested Luthuli to inform him about the line of demarcation "between a tribal or rural African and the urban African worker." Dhlomo was interested in knowing how modernity structures class formation. Another related issue Dhlomo posed was the penetration of the capitalist relations of production into the feudal system of agriculture: what was the nature of the logic of capitalism of uprooting and causing upheaval in the rural areas through the migrant labour system, and yet still wish to maintain order thereby making possible the exploitation rural workers in agriculture. Dhlomo argued that these were crucial issues that the New African Talented Tenth had to make sense of in order to understand their historical moment of modernity.

The third set of issues he broached was the relation between knowledge and modernity. Believing as Octavio Paz was to brilliantly express it that United States was the perfect expression of modernity, Dhlomo wanted to know whether Luthuli could make it possible for the New African Talented Tenth to travel discourse with the New Negro Talented Tenth. This would enable the New Africans to disseminate information about the New Africa in the making to the American people, as well as learning more about their cousins in United States. At this time Dhlomo was deeply involved with W. E. B. Du Bois about the social responsibility of black intellectuals in modernity, with Countee Cullen about the nature of poetic form in modernism given the legacy of Romanticism, particularly Shelley and Keats, and with James Weldon Johnson concerning the Negro Spirituals, religious hymns and other African American songs. Lastly, he wanted to know whether the mission schools and the schools belonging to the Independent African Churches would play a role in resisting Bantu Education. Would the Christian Churches and African Churches put on a resolute resistance to apartheid. Dhlomo concluded his Letter in the following manner: "These are but a few of the question[s] one would like to address to you. Do not blame one for using the Press."

The usage of the Press to help in catapulting Albert Luthuli to the leadership of the New Africanism had been the calculated aim of Dhlomo and Ngubane. Two years later Dhlomo wrote an intellectual and political portrait of him. He began by noting that given the name Luthuli means dust, son of the soil, it is not surprising that he became an outstanding South African and leader of the people.²⁰³ His chieftancy gave him stature and usefulness, while at the same

²⁰³ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Chief A. J. Luthuli", *Ilanga lase Natal*, September 6, 1952. This is one of the few instances in which an article appeared under his name. It had originally in *The Bantu World* in Johannesburg, having been commissioned by R. V. Seloape Thema just a few months before his retirement of the as the editor of the newspaper. Due to a huge demand by Africans in Durban, to whom the Johannesburg newspaper was not easily accessible, R. R. R. Dhlomo in his newspaper. The relationship between the two brothers seems to have been an uneasy one at

time it enabled him to become a wise, progressive administrator. Locating him in an African School of Thought that believed in cooperation, realism, honesty and compromise, Dhlomo states that it was not surprising he became an excellent interpreter and mediator between Africans and Europeans, since his greatness was in overcoming obstacles. Dhlomo reads Luthuli historically as situated at the central fault lines of South African history: between the Old and New. In his political struggles against A. W. G. Champion he represented the New, but in his serious reservations about the Youth League, he was on the side of the Old. Dhlomo pays tribute and enormous gratitude to him observing that despite his hostility to the Youth League, as a democratic and standing for unity, he put into movement the Youth League Programme of Action, because it was what the majority of the African people had willed. He also commends him for having stood for the unity of Africans and Indians, when someone like Champion sought to take advantage of the poisonous atmosphere between the two people, as a consequence of the Durban riots of 1949 which resulted in many Indians being killed by Africans. Paying tribute to him as an intellectual, with an analytical and objective mind, Dhlomo sorrowfully wrote: "Chief Lit[h]uli's life is an example of the tragedy, contradictions and waste of human life inherent in our system. . . This is a bare outline, an incomplete picture of the man. But is there a greater theme, a more notable example, of the tragedy of race relations in South Africa!" In another context Dhlomo called on Henrik Verwoed who was then Minister of Native Affairs to meet with Albert Luthuli to attempt to resolve the tragedy of the race relations in the country. Dhlomo was indignant that Dr. Verwoed was lightly dismissing Luthuli, who had by then become President-General of the African National Congress. He was at a loss in understand the logic of the obdurate ideologue of apartheid given what had taken place recently: "The very fact that the voluntary defiance campaign showed the power and influence of Congress among the masses all over the country, should have made the authorities pause and think. Eight million people cannot be wrong nor can they be suppressed always by artificial laws no matter how drastic. Yet Dr. Verwoed says Luthuli chose the wrong path, spoke in such a way that the Department had to take notice of it, and that if he mends his ways and shows regret for the wrong he has done, his reinstatement might be considered."²⁰⁴ Enraged by this arrogance, Dhlomo prophetically wrote: "And as we say, time and history will not only justify,

times. Now and then Dhlomo jokingly complained, it was apparent that it was made in earnest, that the editor has refused to give him ample space or had made him cut short his thought. There is no doubt that R. R. R. Dhlomo viewed his younger brother as a naive enthusiast and apostle, and uncritical proselytizer of modernity. R. R. R. Dhlomo was extremely ambivalent about modernity, as is evident in his early writings in *Ilanga lase Natal* in the late 1920s and the satirical pieces, poking fun at the making of the New Africans, which appeared in *The Bantu World* in the 1930s. R. R. R. Dhlomo's sketches/stories in Stephen Black's *Sjambok* would make for an interesting reading.

²⁰⁴ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Luthuli], Weekly Review And Commentary "Verwoed and Luthuli", *Ilanga lase Natal*, August 1, 1953, my emphasis.

but will canonise him." This indeed has come to pass, for Nelson Mandela's recently published autobiography **Long Walk To Freedom** is a definitive political canonization of Albert Luthuli. Although Dhlomo wrote more pieces on Luthuli, as in this instance on the occasion of his dismissal as a Chief by the apartheid government, he slyly noted writing under his plume-nom-gurre "Busy-Bee" with tongue in cheek: "Only recently my journalistic colleague, H. I. E. Dhlomo, wrote about Chief Luthuli and race relations. I shall not repeat what this writer said, save to say this. Like Drs. Moroka, Njongwe, Conco and other leaders of the Resistance Campaign, ex-Chief Lut[h]uli is, comparatively speaking, a newcomer in active politics."²⁰⁵

As these repeated references make clear, the Defiance Campaign of 1952 had a most profound effect on H. I. E. Dhlomo. So much so that he devoted three political articles to its historical nature, effect and possible long lasting consequences. Not only did it bring him closer to the inner sanctums of the ANC, he in effect became arguably the organization's most vitalizing intellectual force. By this time, he moved completely into the realm of political philosophy and preoccupied himself less and less with directly cultural matters. In the process of the unfolding of the Defiance Campaign, Dhlomo assessed various opinions concerning its dynamic.²⁰⁶ Those opposed to it consisted mostly of Europeans and a few Africans who gave several reasons for their opposition: that it alienates sympathetic Europeans because it puts them in an awkward position; that not only are the African masses uninterested in it, it has caused division among Africans, Indians and Coloureds; that it will only lead to more animosity between Europeans on one side, and the Africans, Indians and Coloureds on the other; that Africans are being deceived and misled through it by the Indians; and lastly and principally, that it is against the law.

Those supporting the Defiance Campaign argued that it had deepened and strengthened the sympathy for it overseas and particularly in Africa; that it had shaken the government; that not only had it aroused the masses, but it had given a sense between Coloureds, Indians and Africans; that a democratic segment of the Europeans were in sympathy with it; and that history teaches that bad laws have to be broken as a part of the challenge to its hegemony. Assessing these different opinions, Dhlomo observed from his own personal observations that the majority of Africans were supportive of, and enthusiastic about, the Defiance Campaign. The reasons for Dhlomo's alignment with the Campaign were that women were playing a principal role in civil disobedience, it had infused a New Spirit among the people, and it

²⁰⁵ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Albert John Luthuli", *Ilanga lase Natal*, November 15, 1952, my emphasis. Elsewhere he writes that he chose the plume-nom-gurre "Busy-Bee" because like a bee he wanted to sting the 'Race' into awakening about the pleasures and challenges of modernity:

²⁰⁶ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Some Observations on the Resistance Campaign", *Ilanga lase Natal*, August 9, 1952.

had given a New Impetus to the movement itself. Dhlomo wrote the following words which seemed to indicate a monumental shift in his historical consciousness: "The fact that ordinary, obscure men and women and humble musket-bearer have volunteered shows that, not personal glory and heroism, but the Cause is THE thing; that discontent is universal; that individual leaders can no longer win glory, martyrdom and a name for themselves merely by going to jail. It suggests a great change in outlook, political consciousness and in tactics." It would seem then that the nature and impact of the Defiance Campaign changed Dhlomo's conception of history, a shift from the Carlylean vision of its making through individual heroic action, to the recognition that the masses play a fundamental role in its shaping. This change of perspective never had the impact one would otherwise have expected in Dhlomo's writings, because by this time he began to be besetted by health problems and wrote fewer and fewer essays and articles. Another possible explanation is that by the time of the change of this viewpoint, Dhlomo was no longer preoccupied with theorizing modernity but much more with describing its manifestations.

Assessing the situation a year later, when the government had crushed the Defiance Campaign and had turned the country into "a vast and inescapable inter[n]ment camp" through bannings of political leadership and many people, Dhlomo defended this historic manifestation as a noble cause which was relatively peaceful had been well organized by the ANC in order to avert a tragedy from happening: "It was emphasised and publicly repeated that the struggle was not racial or aimed against the Europeans as such. It was against unjust laws and a social system that could only lead the country to ruin. . . The leaders rejected the method of strikes, sabotage and other revolutionary methods."²⁰⁷ He attributed this achievement of the organization to its adoption of the Programme of Action in 1949 which imbued it with New and militant Voices (i.e. The Youth League) and a New Spirit of Nationalism. Dhlomo attributed the ferociousness of the reaction of the white minority government against the Campaign as properly having seen as connected to the rise of the Mau Mau in Kenya, both of which were the expression of the a new form of African nationalism. Dhlomo thought that the ANC would eventually prevail because its struggle was for justice, freedom and democracy: "For it is true today as it was yesterday and will be tomorrow that say of no man you know him unless he is at liberty fully and freely to express himself in words and in deeds." In the third and last essay reflecting on the political conjuncture of the Defiance Campaign, Dhlomo analyzed the dramatic changes that were set in motion by the advent of apartheid in 1948 and the oppositional forces that coalesced around the events of 1952. Looking at the political landscape, seeks explanations for the crises which the Liberal Party and the Federal Party were undergoing. He praises the

²⁰⁷ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Bannings: The Political Situation", *Ilanga lase Natal*, June 27, 1953.

Catholic Church for being steadfast against apartheid policies, while it was deflecting the hostility of the Dutch Reformed Church which condoned the policies of racial discrimination. Dhlomo salutes the incipient progressivism of the African Independent Churches which were under the watchful eye of the government. Praising the ANC for having initiated the Defiance Campaign, he again emphasizes the discipline the organization exhibited and the creative initiatives which were exemplified in the peaceful nature of the campaign. He profoundly laments the action of R. V. Selope Thema in forming the National Bloc in opposition to the national organization for politically joining hands with the Indians and the Coloureds.²⁰⁸ Dhlomo expressed a profound sense of apprehension that Selope Thema and A. W. G. Champion might form an alliance against the ANC.²⁰⁹ But the real importance of this document is in its indication of the very pronounced transformations Dhlomo was undergoing as the direct consequences of the Defiance Campaign: "Brief and sketchy though this review is, it shows that far from frightening and incapacitating the people, our policies have set about great and revolutionary movements."²¹⁰ This clearly indicates that besides his having changed the role of the masses in history, in this quotation Dhlomo seems to subscribe to the historical perspective of the necessity of revolutionary transformation of oppressive societies, relinquishing his earlier ideological position of subscribing only to evolutionary changes. This essay marked a new development in his political beliefs for it negated the maxim of Paul Valery which had underpinned his ideological beliefs: "Those who believe in evolution should not forget Paul Valery's words 'Revolutions

²⁰⁸ Although he did not hold it in high estimation, Dhlomo was concerned that while the ANC was being decimated by the white government through the banning of its leadership following the Defiance Campaign, this may open the way for Professor D. D. T. Jabavu's All African Convention which had been formed in 1936 as a response to Hertzogian bills to disenfranchise the African people even further. Dhlomo took this opportunity to indicate that history had proven John Dube correct in having opposed the formation of the Convention believing that one day it will would constitute itself as the rival of the ANC. This was conjuncture in which the Convention was insituating itself tp this role (Weekly Review And Commentary "Congress Sacrifice", *Ilanga lase Natal*, January 10, 1953).

²⁰⁹ Jordan Ngubane and H. I. E. Dhlomo's hostility toward Champion never relented and abated as can bee seen in two of their articles denouncing his political unscrupulousness, separated by six years: Jordan Ngubane, "Speak The Right Language Mr. Champion!" (Editorial), *Inkundla ya Bantu*, August 6, 1949; Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Mr. Champion's Blatancy And Bankruptcy", *Ilanga lase Natal*, January 8, 1955. Champion responded with ferociousness to Dhlomo's attacks, and seems to have hard an intuitive feeling that he was somehow collaborating with Ngubane: "One name was that of Mr. J. K. Ngubane. I am afraid, as usual. Mr. Ngubane's letters are too long to be reproduced. In any case they are on the lines of Busy-Bee's [Dhlomo's] attack on Senator Cowley and myself: that he voted for the Bill to place Coloureds on separate voting lists" (Busy-Bee Groaning With Political Pains", *Ilanga lase Natal*, January 22, 1955).

²¹⁰ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Moves and Counter-Moves", *Ilanga lase Natal*, August 8, 1953.

come from the slowness of evolution".²¹¹ Dhlomo held Valery in high esteem.

Simultaneous with these changes in his historical consciousness was his engagement with international affairs. Although it is evident from one of his earliest ever written essays of 1924 that the internationalism of pan-African perspective informed his intellectual imagination, unavoidable given the existence of the African diaspora, it was really from 1945, the moment of the founding of the United Nations Organization, that he preoccupied himself with world affairs in a systematic and serious way. It is necessary to consider this early period for it influenced his future major writings. Influenced by his senior colleague with whom he was to work together in *Umteteli wa Bantu* as a member of the New African Talented Tenth, R. V. Selope Thema, Dhlomo was also to articulate the view that the New Negro experience within American modernity had invaluable lessons for the New African experience within the newly emergent South African modernity. Selope Thema invented and theorized the construct of the New African(ism) which he modeled on that of New Negro(ism). Constructing on what Selope Thema had initiated, in this relevant essay "Hardship and Progress", Dhlomo was concerned to draw lessons for the New Africans from the New Negroes since he believed that Africans were undergoing a similar experience that the African Americans had undergone: modernity, racism, oppression, suffering, exploitation, etc.²¹² Dhlomo tabulated these lessons of New Negroism for New Africanism: that the experience of slavery made possible the unity and fraternity of the Negro; that slavery not only led to emancipation, it instilled a capitalist work ethic; that the horrible conditions of slavery did not lead to despair, but led to their transcendence and to success on the part of African Americans; given that Africans in South Africa were confronted with land acts, racialism, and retrenchment, they too likewise wanted to achieve success through self-determination; Africans too through daringness and hardwork can conquer all, for it depends on self-reliance and not on the white man; the New Africans too like the New Negroes were endowed with the same mental and physical powers and capabilities as anyone else; Africans too like their African American cousins must struggle for freedom which would enable them particularly to educate their to meet the challenges of the new era. Encapsulating his observations, Dhlomo called for a new leadership that would lead the people wisely, and that difficulty leads to fraternity, fraternity leads to progress, prosperity and peace. Dhlomo transformed himself into an agent of modernity exemplifying all of these values who theorized this particular historical moment. Thereafter he relinquished a direct engagement with this internationalism of the black world as it became a substratum of his

²¹¹ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], *Weekly Review And Commentary* "Race Relations Renaissance", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 16, 1946. Dhlomo did not concern himself with the pregnant but contradictory nature of the formulation.

²¹² Herbert I. Dhlomo, "Hardship and Progress", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, October 24, 1924.

thought, preoccupying himself, particularly in the 1930s, with major plays predominantly about the African past, writing poems haunted and debilitated by Romantic poetics, and constructing his extraordinary edifice of literary theory mediating the dialectic between tradition and modernity. When twenty years later in the mid-1940s, he began engaging himself with the international world order created by the Second World War, having in effect transformed himself into the intellectual voice of the ANC, Dhlomo in this newly defined context connected himself again to the historical constructs of New Negroism, for example Du Bois' concept of the Talented Tenth, the Romantic poetics of Countee Cullen, and James Weldon Johnson's theorizations on the multifarious forms of Negro Spirituals, hymns and Gospel music. But fundamentally this new internationalism which preoccupied him was what was necessitated by the emergent experience of the Third World.

The founding of the United Nations was the beginning point of his reflections. Dhlomo thought that the formation of the UN and what was beginning to emerge from its forums was prove that the New School of African Thought had been correct in wishing the South African racial situation and oppression to be seen within an international context.²¹³ The intellectuals and political leadership of The New School in contradistinction to the Old School had achieved this internationalization of the national situation through articulating the problems of the oppressed all over the world as essentially singular or one, through the belief that justice, peace and liberty were indivisible, and through the ideological perspective that Africans on the continent should cooperate with whatever progressive forces of other races they can work together with.²¹⁴ This last point had deep implications for the ANC inside the country that an alliance with the Coloureds and Indians would be essential in order for African nationalism to triumph over white nationalism. Perhaps this is the explanation that Dhlomo never supported the exclusive Nationalism or Africanism of Anton Lembede, Jordan Ngubane and A. P. Mda. He supported an inclusive form of African Nationalism. Dhlomo was enthusiastic that the New School of Thought within the ANC was being proven correct because the UN was taken up the issue of the 'Native policy' by means of its direct discussion of the Indian issue and the matter of the trusteeship of South-West Africa (Namibia). Because of the role of the Indian nationalist movement in bringing these issues to a head at the UN on the eve of attaining its independence, Dhlomo was to believe that India was in the forefront in illuminating the problems, if not finding solutions to them, of the colonial and oppressed peoples all over the world.

²¹³ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "UNO and Africans", *Ilanga lase Natal*, November 16, 1946.

²¹⁴ Interestingly and in another context concerning literary matters Fredric Jameson was to speak of the necessity of constructing an internationalism of national situations at the moment of the advent of postmodernism:

This explains the fact that the internationalism of Dhlomo, other than its obvious pan-Africanist projection, was nearly wholly concentrated on India, at whose center was an uncritical idolization of Nehru. Dhlomo was convinced that within the context of a developing and interconnected modernity in many parts of the world following the Second World War rendered the consideration of 'purely African' problems and grievances within a localized context historically untenable. Dhlomo was adamant that the New School must vanquish the Old School in its struggle to bring new changes and new great things to the African people.

The clash between India and South Africa at the UN "created a first class crisis in matters of race relations, especially in this country."²¹⁵ Dhlomo was alluding to one consequence of challenge in New York being the organizing of the Indian Passive Resistance by the Indian Congress in South Africa.²¹⁶ From this manifestation of a crisis in race relations at the national and international levels Dhlomo drew several "lessons". The first lesson for Dhlomo was that freedom can only be won by means of militant action or policy only. Dhlomo, without naming names, criticized the ANC for having failed to recognize for a long time that its policy of cooperation and accommodation had abysmally failed a long time ago. He believed that persistence on this policy of cooperation by Africans had been taken by the minority white government as a sign of their weakness and stupidity: "Only the militant and the mosy vocal are respected." The second lesson was that in order for this policy of militancy to succeed there had to be an extensive and intensive campaign of political education and organization. This organizing and educating would not clarify to the New Masses the reasons for fully supporting the struggle, but would also lessen the dangers of the ANC following the tactics and methods of other organizations blindly. Dhlomo believed the clash at the UN had had a profound effect on the nature of the struggle in South Africa against racial oppression. One direct effect on Dhlomo intellectual and politically was to prompt him to write a series of articles over the years on the state Indian-African relations.

Gandhi and Nehru, the two leaders of the Indian independence struggle held a deep fascination for Dhlomo. On the occasion of the tragic assassination of Gandhi, he wrote an obituary, which among other things said the following:

²¹⁵ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "UNO Creates a Stir", *Ilanga lase Natal*, January 4, 1947.

²¹⁶ Dr. Yusuf M. Dadoo, the great Indian leader who was imprisoned for having organized the Indian Passive Campaign, said in part following his release from prison for having organized it: "The struggle of the Indian and African people is welding unity and cooperation in action and we are forging the forces of democracy which alone can destroy fascist practices in our country" ("Speech at Mass Welcome Meeting in Johannesburg on Release from Prison, September 29, 1946", in **Dr. Yusuf Mohamed Dadoo: His Speeches, Articles and Correspondence with Mahatma Gandhi [1939-1983]**, compiled by E. S. Reddy and edited by Fatima Meer, Madiba Publishers, Durban, 1991, p.94.

"Gandhi's life was a reminder of the fundamental human urge or ideology to seek perfection of mind, personality and humanity through religious abnegation and submission. He was an apostle of things spiritual and mystical. Whatever we may say against this practice or method being translated into the mundane sphere of politics, the fact remains that he and others before him have used it with conspicuous success. Gandhi's life shows that greatness knows no colour and is respected everywhere."²¹⁷ Dhlomo speculated that some Africans would understand the impact of Gandhi's death only through internal politics, in that he was understood to have been against the exploitation of Africans by Indians. Dhlomo criticizing this as a narrow appreciation for, for him he was an exemplification paradoxically of the unity of Christian ethics and Platonic idealism projected against materialism and acquisitiveness.

Concerning Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, for Dhlomo he was "The Hamlet of Power Politics".²¹⁸ Dhlomo in his reflections on him exercised the most unbridled form of hero-worship that even Thomas Carlyle would have been ashamed of. Enthralled by what he considered Nehru's synthesis of Western education, aristocratic intellectualism and Indian politics, Dhlomo was captivated by how Nehru was attempting to resolve the historical problems besetting many of the newly decolonized countries or those that were preparing for or actually undergoing the process of decolonization: "And his country was oppressed and dominated over by the representatives of the same Western country or culture whose intellectualism, independence, modernity and even democratic ideals Nehru admired. On the other hand Nehru's own aristocratic intellectualism and modern outlook conflicted with, was impatient of and was embarrassed and even opposed to some of the hoary and retarding customs, traditions, beliefs and behaviour of his people. Nehru is not the first and only person to find himself in this predicament, this dilemma." Viewing Nehru as a fascinating enigma, a Hamlet of modern international politics and a genius who was synonymous with India itself "for in one sense (in politics) Nehru is India and India, Nehru", Dhlomo was mesmerized by the contradictory choices of political modernity that confronted the statesmen(women) of the newly emergent countries: Nehru being the enemy of colonialism, imperialism and capitalism yet aligned himself with Britain and made remain with the Commonwealth, and pursuing in India a capitalist mode development; forging a republic with monarchical tendencies---a monarchical republic; criticizing the NATO, SEATO and Warsaw power blocs, yet pushing hard for the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement consisting mainly of Asian and African countries;

²¹⁷ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Gandhi", *Ilanga lase Natal*, February 7, 1948.

²¹⁸ Anonymous, "International Review: Nehru, The Hamlet Of Power Politics", *Ilanga lase Natal*, November 20, 1954, my emphasis. The usage of Hamlet as a metaphor for political analysis can only indicate it was written by Dhlomo, who was fond of it.

utilizing his aristocratic intellectualism and idealism which "dislikes the regimentation, uniformity, vulgarity and brutality of communism, and its non-democratic tendencies", to attempt to construct an egalitarian society; admirer of China's achievements under communism, yet not wising to follow China into communism. Reflecting on the contradictory system of political modernity, Dhlomo thought of Nehru as a modern Hamlet caught in the dilemma of the political question: "To be or not to be." For Dhlomo Nehru was a Man of Destiny and the Voice of India (reverting to the Carlylean constructs he had momentarily abandoned), an enigma, a magnetic and tragic figure negotiating a complicated labyrinth of political modernity. Dhlomo was convinced that the political dilemmas encountered by Nehru would face African political leadership in the near future.

Shifting his engagements from international preoccupations to continental matters in Africa, Dhlomo focused on Ghana as opening something new in African political modernity: "To millions of Africans to whom the Gold Coast [it was to be known as Ghana three years later in 1957 upon attaining independence] is political gold, the current news from that country is somewhat disturbing. The country is political gold to Africans because success or failure of what is falsely, naively, arrogantly and mockingly called 'the Gold Coast Experiment' affects them all profoundly." Dhlomo was apprehensive about the consequences for Africa of the serious political clash between Kwame Nkrumah's Convention Peoples Party (CPP) and the Ashanti powerful political traditions, who had previously supported the CPP but were now moving to support a new opposition party, National Liberation Movement. In this context also, Dhlomo was concerned with understanding the dynamic dialectical structure of modernity and tradition. He was fearful that this intractable dilemma could be used by external forces as a pretext for intervenin in Ghanain affairs. As usual, here too, Dhlomo was profoundly attuned to the principal coordinates of history of modernity within a particular national inflection: "This is especially true of the Gold Coast whose enemies and detractors contend that her new status and the introduction of the democratic, parliamentary system of government will fail because these things depend on a modern, complicated and multiform social structure and economy, and an ages-long, diverse and specialised training that the Gold Coast with its tribal structure and recent and partial emergence from barbaric illiteracy, does not have."²¹⁹ Dhlomo was afraid that the complicated struggle

²¹⁹ Anonymous, "International Review: Gold Coast's Growing Pains", *Ilanga lase Natal*, December 18, 1954, my emphasis. The politically correct language of today would castigate Dhlomo for being supposedly mesmerized by the illusion of the binarism of tradition and modernity; going even further, this language of correctness may add the charge of essentialism. These are unconvincing philosophical and ideological perspectives of postmodernism. But the new African intelligentsia in the early part of the twentieth, from Blaise Diagne in Senegal through Azikiwe in Nigeria and Harry Thuku in Kenya to Walter Rubusana in South Africa, were appropriating that which enabled to triumph over Africa: modernity. They were all totally convinced that modernity must be made to triumph over tradition. Their lived

between the new and the old could be used as a pretext by Western colonialism and imperialism to retrench themselves deeper in Africa, particularly in Ghana. He urged Nkrumah to negotiate carefully this conundrum which he perceived as possibly threatening the upcoming independence of Ghana. Dhlomo was adamant that tradition must be made to yield to modernity. Concerning this particular context, he tabulated that efficiency, avoidance of nepotism, availability of foreign capital would enable modernity to concensually exercise hegemony over tradition. Dhlomo viewed the conflict within the Ghana experiment as the growing pains of entrance into modernity. Dhlomo believed that a particular kind of politics were necessary to insure the consensual hegemony of modernity over tradition: the politics of African nationalism and Pan-Africanism.²²⁰ African nationalism would forcefully dismantle all artificial racial policies by governing all the people living in a national territory under the same laws and system. A Pan-African perspective would enable Africans in their emergent modernities to inform themselves of the lessons of the more advanced modernities in the African diaspora, particularly that of United States.

The importance of Gandhi and Nehru to the political and historical imagination of Dhlomo was in many ways necessitated by the presence of the people of Indian descent in South Africa. The riots of 1949 between the two

experience informed that tradition and modernity were real historical forces of the present. I attempted to articulate these problematics elsewhere: "The 'Black Atlantic' and African Modernity in South Africa", *Research in African Literatures*, vol.27 no.4, Winter 1996, pp.88-96.

²²⁰ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Africa and the Union", *Ilanga lase Natal*, September 24, 1949. Elsewhere Dhlomo was anxious to distinguish his advocacy of African nationalism and an inclusive Pan-Africanism, from what he respectively designated as 'fanatical nationalism' and 'Black Pan-Africanism', both of which he associated with Garvey whom he found disageable, a position similar to that of other New African intellectuals; to Dhlomo it was clear that a multiracial solution had to be found racial crisis in South Africa: "They [Africans] do not want to dominate over or drive out the European. Not even the much maligned Indian. They want a South Africa where every person will have full citizenship rights, where merit and not race will be the criterion" (Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo] Weekly Review And Commentary "Black Domination Bogey", *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 3, 1953, my emphasis). The other part of the world, other than India, in which Dhlomo seemed to have had lasting interest was the tragic conflict between the Jews and the Arabs in Palestine. One of the important things that made him have deep interest in this conflict area was because of it being the origin place of the profound thoughts of human life that still resonated in the era of modernity: "There are many reasons why the tragedy of Palestine will stir the feelings of all democrats in every part of the world. Together with Greece and Rome, Palestine is the cradle of modern civilisation and the birth place of some of the most precious things and the highest ideals of modern culture" (Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Palestine", *Ilanga lase Natal*, May 22, 1948). With these reflections Dhlomo was indirectly re-emphasizing the point that the Bible was not only centrally important to the New Africans in the construction of themselves as the pathfinders of modernity, but also embodied ethical ideals which for them were important in the making of African modernities.

people which resulted in many Africans being killed and some Indians dying caused a spiritual and political crisis in Dhlomo. This was the context in which he began appraising the political relations between Africans and Indians over several years. In a major editorial, perhaps one of the longest that Dhlomo ever wrote for the *Ilanga lase Natal*, Dhlomo argued that it was the Indians who were to be blamed for the tragedy because of their ill-treatment and humiliation of Africans over decades. Because of the nature of apartheid, which favoured Indians much more than Africans, the Indians monopolised business among Africans by blocking Africans from obtaining licenses to start and participate in business ventures, and by using "unfair and immoral business methods". Using uncharacteristically harsh language, Dhlomo put the blame for the crisis on the shoulders of the Indians. Not only were Indians sabotaging African business ventures in several ways, Dhlomo was absolutely how Indian men behaved toward African women. On this matter, Dhlomo used very venomous language. Extending his sheet of indictment, Dhlomo was extremely angry about the exorbitant rents Indians were charging Africans, taking advantage of the apartheid laws which prevented Africans from owning property in the urban areas. He condemned the Indians for their practices, that while they did attend Fort Hare University and Adams College, for example, they prevented Africans from Indian higher institutions of learning. Using some of the harshest language he ever wrote, Dhlomo was unrelenting in his hostility to the behaviour of a large portion of Indians towards Africans: "Now it happens that the very Indians who oppose to the bitter end those Africans who desire to run their own buses, stores and cinema houses, behave with nauseating adolescent arrogance, superiority, patronage and even brutal insult to African customers and patrons. Where they can they segregate them. Where they cannot, they insult and humiliate them."²²¹ Although Dhlomo acknowledged that it was ultimately the apartheid system to blame for the abysmal relations between Africans and Indians, he held the Indians directly responsible for the tragic consequences that had resulted in their objectionable behaviour toward Africans. He called upon the ANC to intervene immediately to prevent a greater crisis from emerging. It is clear that the harshness of the tone of the editorial was partly governed by the need to prevent a large section of the African population from captivated by the rhetoric of A. W. G. Champion who was pushing for an extremist resolution to the crisis in favour of Africans against the Indians.

In another major editorial statement a few months later on, Dhlomo counseled against viewing the status of the relations between Africans and Indians only within the context of the racial riots which had occurred. He believed that a better vantage point from which to view these relations in

²²¹ Anonymous, "How Long, O Lord", *Ilanga lase Natal*, January 22, 1949. The stylistic tone is unmistakably that of Dhlomo.

South Africa was in the context of international politics.²²² In advocating for this larger context, Dhlomo was agreeing with Pundit Nehru's advice to the Indians in South Africa that they must forge a political unity with Africans in order to participate in gaining freedom for all. He was gratified to note that the new leaders of the South African Indian Congress in Natal and Transvaal were in agreement with this ideological position. The previous Indian leadership which consisted mainly of the merchant class which was extremely nationalistic had aligned its interests and those of the Indians with that of the white segregationist state. This old leadership of the merchant class looked with disdain at a possible political unity between Africans and Indians. Dhlomo mentioned five factors which made possible a progression toward this political unity: the Hertzog Bills of 1936 which politically disenfranchised all non-whites; the trade union movement where Africans and Indians had to work together for bargaining purposes against the employers as well as against the government; the awakening of the colonized and oppressed peoples in many parts of the world demanding independence and freedom in their struggle against colonialism and imperialism---this process of uniting many different people together; the emergence of the new Indian leadership which he characterized as "leftist"---Dhlomo had in mind Drs. Dadoo and Naicker, who began working closely with Dr. Alfred Xuma who was then President-General of the ANC; the Asiatic Land Tenure and Representation Act which specifically targeted Indians with certain white discriminatory practices; the emergence of the African middle class which in some areas associated with the Indian middle class. While these factors militated for political unity between the two groups, Dhlomo enumerated others which worked against this possible unity: the clash of economic interests between Africans and Indians; the Indian Organization opposed the Indian Congress by working against the political unity between the groups. Dhlomo believed that all of these factors have to be taken into consideration if the political unity of Africans and Indians is to have any tangible results.

In the last editorial consideration of these relations four years later, Dhlomo viewed them in the context of the nationalist independence movements in Africa.²²³ Surveying the continent as a whole, he marked the differential position of Indians from region to region: in West Africa they wanted to have an equal share of power in the post-independence African governments; in East Africa, specifically Kenya, the Indians were not only economically the most powerful group, they were allowing themselves to be recruited as soldiers by the British colonizers to fight against the Mau Mau nationalist movement---Dhlomo thought this last point would have profound and never consequences for Indians on the whole continent; in Central Africa the Indians' attitudes towards the attempted Federation (which consisted of the later independent countries of Zimbabwe, Zambia and tangentially Malawi)

²²² Anonymous, "United Front Or Separate Ways", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 26, 1949.

²²³ Anonymous, "Indians and Africans", *Ilanga lase Natal*, August 8, 1953.

was being followed throughout Africa because of the dictates of Pan-Africanism. Given these positionings of Indians throughout Africa, some of which he considered opportunistic, Dhlomo was intrigued and fascinated by Pundit Nehru's statement that Indians were guests of Africans in Africa and should not be positioning themselves to share in the spoils of Africa. Nehru made it clear India would not support such a position. Dhlomo was stunned by Nehru's further position that Indians must serve Africans, and if they were not prepared to do that they should definitely leave the continent. Nehru emphasized that India would not be prepared to intervene on their behalf in relation to Africans. Dhlomo reflected on the issue that had these utterances been made by an African, he or she would have been condemned as anti-Indian, and supporter of pogroms and riots. Dhlomo was awed by Nehru's forthrightness. Aware that some Africans and Indians would see the motives behind Nehru's statement in bad light, Dhlomo was anxious to point Nehru's long lasting commitment to Africa. Although not fully agreeing with all the points Nehru had made about the African and Indian relations, he found them to be characterized by veracity, originality and forthrightness. Dhlomo found them to indicate a profound understanding of Africa on the part of Nehru.

In this same year of 1953 Dhlomo undertook a major re-appraisal of the African and Indian relations. Conscious that such undertaking would be seen by some as jeopardizing the tentative political unity between the two peoples which had found concrete realization in the Defiance Campaign of the previous year, he made it unequivocally clear that his inquiry was distinctly 'sociological' rather than 'political'. The aim was to state the facts objectively with the intent of resolving the difficulties through scientific methods in order to facilitate a correct political action. Dhlomo stated the historical necessity for such an appraisal within the larger context of other adjacent conundrums which defined the complex nature of what was South Africa then: "The truth is that there is an Indo-African 'problem' in the sense that there is a tribal problem among Africans themselves, a religious caste system among Indians, a Boer-Briton problem among South African Europeans, and a 'cross-over' or 'remain black' problem among the Coloureds. It is so in other parts of the world. To deny the inter-play of race prejudice is idle as long as our political policy and thinking, our educational system, our social set-up and our cultural background remain what they are. Reform must begin there. Our duty is to study the cause and results and try and eliminate the evils."²²⁴ Dhlomo located the causative factors of the crisis between the two peoples in the 'divide and rule' policy of the ruling white classes in South Africa which gave rise to the caste system of race and colour, with Indians being given more rights and privileges than the Africans. He underlined four factors which accounted for this wedge: the Indian proletariat was more compliant

²²⁴ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Indo-African race Relations", *Ilanga lase Natal*, January 17, 1953.

than the 'tribalized' or 'casual' African worker to the interests of the white industrial class in making more profits; the Indian merchant classes had been given more privileges than any class of Africans; although the Indians as a group were not as privileged as the Europeans, they were nevertheless above Africans; and lastly, the Indians were utilized as a buffer between Africans and Europeans.

In a remarkable turn around from his 1948 obituary in which Gandhi was practically held as a paragon of the Carlylean heroic figure, here Dhlomo launched into a devastating critique of him, nearly debunking his greatness. He criticizes Gandhi for the fact while living in South Africa for about a decade in the late nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century formulated and executed a political policy that was against the unity of Africans and Indians. The organizations he founded were mainly concerned with interests of Indians, explicitly excluding Africans. Even more troubling for Dhlomo, he indicts him for having supported the imperial forces during Bambatta Rebellion of 1906, which Dhlomo designates as the 'Zulu revolution of 1906'. Dhlomo points that because of his religious philosophy, Gandhi sympathized with Africans as victims of the hostilities only: in other words, Gandhi had no historical understanding of Africans as the active subjects of history. Also profoundly troubling for Dhlomo is that long after he returned to India Mahatma Gandhi advised not to have anything to do with Africans, but be concerned only with pure matters that served only the interests of Indians.²²⁵ Castigating the Indian merchant class for having supported this political position of Gandhi, sounding like a Marxist despite his hatred for Marxism, he writes: "They regarded---and most of them still regard---Africans as a lucrative 'market' only. To deny this fact is to reject a universal phenomenon, namely that the petty bourgeoisie always supports the ruling class and exploits the masses. The fact that these things are sometimes done unconsciously and without knowledge of the implications, does not alter the matter." Again Dhlomo criticized the earlier history of the Indian Congress for having subscribed to the political line which ultimately only represented the interests of the Indian merchant class. He again repeated the criticisms he had made four years earlier.

²²⁵ One can rightly object that his appraisals of Indo-African relations were too one-sided, too extreme and profoundly Manichean, for they seemed to place the onus of blame only on Indians, totally absolving Africans of blame or responsibility in the matter. Though the appraisals were totally penetrative in thrust, they were perhaps not sufficiently nuanced in reflecting the complexity of matters at hand. Though enthusiastic about the new directions the young Drs. Dadoo and Naicker were taking the Indian Congress, unfortunately he never had occasion to reflect on their extraordinary feat in a major political piece, a feat that paralleled and was adjacent to that of the ANC Youth Leaguers. The achievement of the Natal intellectuals in the 1940s, across the racial divide, would rival and perhaps surpass that of the Sophiatown Renaissance of the 1950s. The 1940s still await its scholars. In other words, it is no longer acceptable that the Sophiatown Renaissance is always appraised in isolation, rather than within the longitudinal structure of South African intellectual history in the twentieth-century.

It was inevitable that sooner or later Dhlomo would have to concern himself with the other major group of people in South Africa who are non-Europeans, the Coloureds. One other distinguishing feature of Dhlomo, other than his great intellectual brilliance, was his forthrightness in interrogating the historical problematics that constituted the South African conundrum. His intellectual sharpness and impatience was not only reserved for Indians, Coloureds or Europeans, if anything they were directed more penetratively at Africans themselves: for instance, despite predictable howls of anger directed at him from some New Africans, he was fond of repeatedly complaining or stating that he found too many Africans who were lazy when the historical challenges facing us were so daunting. So his posing of the following 'dilemma' of Coloureds in South African history, is not because of malice or prejudice, but reflects the thoroughness of his intellectual searches: "The dilemma and tragedy of the Coloureds lies in their failure to decide 'where they belong'. That is no problem to the Africans, Europeans and Indians. They know where they belong, and take their stand with pride, defiance, and piece of mind and soul. Not so the Coloureds. Some would identify themselves with the Non-Europeans and the mass struggle. Others would prefer to be the political appendix of the European. These think they are somewhat 'superior' to Africans and even to Indians by virtue of their 'white' blood. Unlike the three other racial groups we have mentioned, the bitterest battle of Coloured people who think in this way is within and against themselves." Continuing on these racial contrastive modes, Dhlomo put forth the questionable thesis, that unlike other racial groups, Coloureds had no distinct language, culture and historical background of their own.²²⁶ It is not clear what Dhlomo meant by this concept of distinctiveness. After all the Coloureds were among the central participants in the creation of the Afrikaans language and in the making of Afrikaans culture.²²⁷ In any case, concerning this writer's cultural background, is Ndebele language and culture really distinct from Zulu language and culture, from which it derivated in the nineteenth-century; or for that matter, is Zulu language really distinct from its antecedents. How about Xhosa language and culture: are they really distinct from Khoisan cultures, which were fundamental in forming the language that Mqhayi made great through his poetic voice. Without wishing to sound postmodernistic: cultural processes are products of hybridization.

Much more compelling is Dhlomo thesis that by following the example of African Americans (then the 'American Negroes') in their historical choices of location and positionality, the Coloureds would be able to resolve their 'problems', 'tragedy' and 'dilemma' by choosing the side who were destined

²²⁶ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Dilemma of the Coloureds", *Ilanga lase Natal*, May 30, 1953.

²²⁷ Breyten Breytenbach,

to determine their future: the Africans.²²⁸ This is one instance of the exemplification of the prescient genius of Dhlomo. For Dhlomo Peter Abrahams was exemplary in having made the correct choice in "fully identifying with Africans, lived among Africans and attended African schools." In one of the most memorable pages in whole of South African literature, in an autobiography **Tell Freedom** published in 1954²²⁹, a year after Dhlomo's profound observation, Peter Abrahams portrays that historic moment in the late 1930s at the Library of the Bantu Men's Social Center in Johannesburg when he chose to intellectually and culturally identify with African American culture was in effect choosing politically as a Coloured to identify himself as an African: "I moved over to the bookshelves. . . I reached up and took out a fat black book. **The Souls of Black Folk**, by W. E. B. Du Bois. I turned the pages. It spoke about a people in a valley. And they were black, and dispossessed, and denied. I skimmed through the pages, anxious to take it all in. . . Du Bois's words had the impact of a revelation. . . But for all that, Du Bois had given me a key to the understanding of my world. . . I replaced the book and reached for others. There was **Up From Slavery; Along This Way**, by Weldon Johnson; a slim volume called **The Black Christ**; a fat volume called **The New Negro**. I turned the pages of **The New Negro**. These poems and stories were written by Negroes! Something burst deep inside me. The world could never again belong to white people only! Never again! I took **The New Negro** to a chair. I turned the pages."²³⁰ In turning him away from the white world, African American literature was actually directing Peter Abrahams to

²²⁸ I understand Dhlomo to be alluding to the fact that because of the nature of United States society, whatever composition of interracial mixture, especially with whites, involving an African American, that person is considered black or African, despite the lightness of the complexion. In other words, what Dhlomo was underlining, was that Coloureds were Africans. Dhlomo's preoccupation with the social positioning and historical location of the Coloureds was motivated by deeper concerns than only politics. It was really issues of cultural production which exercised his mind. Formulating a problematical thesis but fascinating because of the depth of the issues it raised, Dhlomo believed that until the Coloureds identified with the Soil and Soul of Africa, which he saw as represented and embodied by Africans, they would not ever in a position to create great art: "When he speaks of freedom and opportunity, the South African Coloured is really thinking of being allowed to go white. On the other hand the African wants freedom to express and assert himself as he is. Not from Coloured or European sources will a Dickens and a Milton, a Tolstoy, and a Pushkin, a Goethe or a Beethoven come. Such art comes from the soul of this soil, of the People. It is the African who by paint and pen must tell the Great Tradition and Spirit of the land---the pain and toil of the common man, the mute music and hidden beauty of the mountains, rivers and creatures of the land, the mythology and customs of the patriarch" (Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo] "Non-European Art Exhibition", *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 6, 1945). It need no emphasizing that positing patriarchy as an inspirational creative process is unacceptable, or at least, profoundly riven with contradictions.

²²⁹ In an interview of 1947 Richard Wright indicated that he had read the whole manuscript or part of **Tell Freedom**: "Why Richard Wright Came Back From France", **Conversations with Richard Wright**, (eds.) Kenneth Kinnamon and Michel Fibre, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, 1993, p.124. At this time Wright and Abrahams were sharing an apartment in Paris: Henry Nxumalo, "Peter Abrahams", *Drum*, December 1955.

²³⁰ Peter Abrahams, **Tell Freedom: Memories of Africa**, Alfred K. Knopf, New York, 1954, p.

his compatriots of a darker hue than himself. From this moment of encounter with classic African American literature, Peter Abrahams was to engage himself fully with the black world, as a delegate representing South Africa at the 1945 historic Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, writing a novel like **Wreath of Udomo** which is a fictionalization of the struggles, tribulations and victories of the Independence Movement in West Africa in the early 1950s, and his permanent residence for over thirty decades in Jamaica, in the Caribbean.

In his considerations of the political identity, historical choices and cultural location of Indians and Coloureds in the white dominated emergent South African modernity, Dhlomo was anxious to forestall the possible rejection of European intellectual and cultural traditions by Africans, Indians and Coloureds because of this oppression and domination. He sought to indicate that not all the Europeans in South Africa subscribed to racism, discrimination and apartheid. Dhlomo now and then reflected on the liberal perspective of the white experience. Severely criticizing the onset of the policy of Bantu Education²³¹ within the context of apartheid, he argued that not only was apartheid a perversion of the best European intellectual traditions, but he also felt imperative that democratic whites and oppressed people of other ethnic groups should work together using the forces of democracy and intellectual freedom represented by Milton, Voltaire, Shelley and Spinoza to defeat it. Not only was he appalled by the shockingly low economic resources being allocated to the education of Africans, he also lamented the devastating cultural consequences that were resulting from Indians, Coloureds and Africans being barred from using research libraries, attending excellent film showings, concerts, etc. Dhlomo characterized this working together of all South Africans for democracy and freedom against apartheid as the happenings of an "imperceptible revolution".²³² Dhlomo took this necessity of all South Africans working together to defeat apartheid with the utmost earnest, for his understanding of its destructiveness was very profound, whether at the civil, social or cultural level, as exemplified in these extraordinary words: "A dangerous situation has arisen in South Africa. It consists of using law to undermine law and create disorder; using the police to produce crime and criminals; using democracy to bring about regimentation and the dictatorship of a coterie; using Christianity to support and justify evil; using education to prostitute education and corrupt and enslave the minds of the young; creating courts of law in order to by-pass courts of law and deprive them of their independence and impartiality; 'preserving civilisation by destroying its essence and meaning; using Parliament to undermine parliamentary institutions and about a state of

²³¹ Dhlomo wrote three major articles on the genealogy and structure of Bantu Education:

²³² X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Significance of the Students Ban", *Ilanga lase Natal*, January 6, 1951.

anarchy."²³³ Dhlomo saw the role of enlightened Afrikaners with others as bringing about a halt to this enveloping state of anarchy.

Dhlomo was enthusiastic about the emergence of Europeans who were openly and boldly on the side of democracy and humanism.²³⁴ He was clear that they were not necessarily supporting the African cause, but putting themselves on the side of democracy and humanism. Although aware that given the political over-determined divide between blacks and whites, hence no personal contact between the groups, he urged Africans, Indians and Asians to extend a hand of friendship to the Europeans who had taken a courageous moral stand. Dhlomo expressed his deep admiration for Europeans who were doing all they could practically to alleviate the suffering of the oppressed and the dispossessed. Reflecting on Afrikaner Liberalism, Dhlomo indicated the danger of making political policy statements and decisions in terms of "them" against "us".²³⁵ He urged that people should be judged and assessed in terms of their individuality, because it is their convictions, upbringing, interests, ideals and thoughts that determines who they are, rather than race. Dhlomo paid tribute to present and past exponents of Liberalism among Afrikaans speaking people: J. H. Hofmeyer and Dr. Marais. As part of this tribute to him, he quoted part of a poem in which the man of letters, Louis Leipoldt, who had then recently passed away, condemned apartheid and re-affirmed his alignment with liberalism:

Ye say we shall sit asunder,
apart and separate,
And the way ye walk, ye judges,
ye proclaim a Christian gait,
Oh, no divided household shall stand
but as a sham,

.....
Ye vision a new-made world, part
white and part unwhite. . .
Oh, each is a piebald complex when
seen in the sun's clear light. . .

Since these reflections on the complexity of the lived experience of Europeanism in South Africa were written in 1952, there can be little doubt that they were made possible by the political success of the Defiance Campaign of that particular year.

Although these meditations were necessitated by a particular political conjuncture, from about the mid-1940s Dhlomo had been preoccupied with

²³³ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Using Law To Prostitute Law", *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 3, 1953.

²³⁴ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Review And Comments On Current Events "European Democrats and Humanists", *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 4, 1952.

²³⁵ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Afrikaner Liberalism", *Ilanga lase Natal*, November 29, 1952.

the possible forms cooperation or understanding between Africans and Europeans. In an Editorial he argued that it was through the co-operation between the missionaries, exemplified by figures like Livingstone, Moffat, Colenso, Schweitzer, and the 'broad-minded and far sighted Africans' that African modernity was constructed.²³⁶ Dhlomo was unimpressed by those Africans who saw missionaries as agents of colonialism and imperialism; to him such critics were 'fanatics' and 'extremists'. Co-operation around religion in building churches, education in building schools, health in building hospitals had made possible simultaneously the combatting of ignorance and superstition and the bringing of progress to the African people.²³⁷ Dhlomo was insistent on the role of missionaries in bringing modern African development into being. To him the invaluable work being done concerning African languages, literature, mythology and anthropology. Dhlomo urged African research workers, scholars, writers and musicians to build on the foundations that missionaries had laid down.²³⁸ Genuine co-operation had made possible the establishing of publishing houses, the founding of the Institute of Race Relations, the setting up of the Departments of Bantu Studies at various universities. Concerning publishing houses, he repeatedly urged New African intellectuals to establish autonomous institutions. As will be evident in a moment, in his first reflections on the importance of the city in the realization of modernity, Alice, which had made possible the efflorescence of Xhosa intellectual culture in the late nineteenth-century and early part of the twentieth-century, Dhlomo was fascinated and enthralled by the combination of an educational institution (Fort Hare College, later University of Fort Hare) and a major publishing house (Lovedale Press). One could postulate that as much as for Dhlomo the greatness of the Xhosa poet Mqhayi was inseparable from the Lovedale publishing institution, likewise the greatness of the Sotho novelist Thomas

²³⁶ Anonymous, "Afro-European Co-Operation", *Ilanga lase Natal*, August 21, 1945. Dhlomo's preoccupation here with the historical importance of missionaries in the realization of African modernity, is a theme he had broached earlier, as we have seen. His calling for reconciliation and reciprocity between Africans and Europeans was an attempt to mediate a profound contradiction that many New Africans encountered caught in the maelstrom of modernity: "Today Natives value, appreciate and understand the meaning of Western civilization. But they also value and want to preserve the best in Bantu culture" ("Native Policy in South Africa", I, II, III, IV, *Umteteli wa Bantu*, March 22, 29, April 5, 12, 1930). This is a major political document.

²³⁷ With the possible exception of Silas Modiri Molema, of all the New African Talented Tenth Dhlomo was conscious of the importance of the sciences, particularly the medical sciences, in the forging of modernity. In the 1930s, in the intellectual forum for the forging of African modernity, *Umteteli wa Bantu*, Dhlomo reflected on these issues: "National Health", August 30, 1930; "Health Problems", January 10, 1931; "Psychology of the Race Problem", February 7, 1931. And: X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Socialised Medicine", *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 9, 1943.

²³⁸ On the other hand Dhlomo was violently indignant of Europeans setting themselves as 'experts' concerning African matters: Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "Joint Council Social", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 10, 1945; Weekly Review And Commentary "Race Relations: Parliament and Speeches", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 17, 1945.

Mofolo is inseparable from the Morija Printing and Book Depot in Morija.²³⁹ Continuing on his reflections on the historic importance of co-operation, Dhlomo wrote the following words, which today, two years after 1994, have absolute pertinence: "This is as it should be for the peace and progress of any community depend[s] on mutual co-operation. . . Today we need co-operation between the races more than ever. But it takes men of great courage and vision to do so. It means sacrifice, tolerance, the readiness to give and take, the ability to see one's faults and weaknesses, and the gift to understand the other man's point of view and his difficulties and worth. . . It is the only path to a united, prosperous and peaceful South Africa" (my italics).

An essay on Edgar H. Brookes, who was a member of Parliament as well as occupying a seat in the National Representative Council, gave Dhlomo an opportunity to reflect on the principles at the center of his own political philosophy.²⁴⁰ He sought to understand the differences in perception between the New Africans who looked unfavourably at the way Dr. Brookes represented the political interests of Africans in Parliament out of his own volition, since Africans could not be officially represented, and the Old Africans who were enthralled with him. Dhlomo argued it was necessary to be tolerant of the methods and approaches one fundamentally disagreed with because South African political problems were too many and too complex to be comprehensible from only a particular perspective or viewpoint. He observed that although they may be agreement or consensus on principles and fundamentals, aims and objectives, there could still be irreconcilable differences about approaches and methods. What intrigued Dhlomo about Dr. Brookes is that although in his politics he was conservative and predictable, in his poetry he was radical and denunciatory of the way whites oppressed Africans, in effect the way they intellectually enslaved themselves. He was impatient with Brookes the politician whom he felt was always seeking appeasement, compromise, middle course and enslaved to an evolutionary method. This critique of Brookes clearly implies that for Dhlomo co-operation does not mean, or should not necessarily lead to unprincipled compromise, appeasement or acquiescence. The real importance of this essay of 1945 is its indication that because of the progressively deepening lived experience of oppression of African people at the hands of white South Africans, Dhlomo underwent a profound philosophical transformation, whereby he embraced a revolutionary method of transformation of society, in replacement of the evolutionary method he had originally favored. One consequence of this was the increasing politicization of his imagination, leading to his support of the radical options proposed by the Youth League

²³⁹ Thomas Mofolo seems to have had a pronounced effect on two writers participating in the national forms of their respective modernities: Edouard Glissant in Martinique and Saul Bellow in United States: Glissant, **Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays**, trans J. Michael Dash, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1992, p.134-35; Bellow,

²⁴⁰ X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Dr. Edgar H. Brookes: Poet vs Politician", *Ilanga lase Natal*, April 7, 1945.

and the methods of the Defiance Campaign, as we have seen. This progressive position of accepting a revolutionary method was accompanied by a regressive one of constantly searching for ways of delinking this method from its possible Communist or socialist outcome. From this moment of delinking, Dhlomo strove to harness the revolutionary method in the cause of African Nationalism, if need be, necessarily against Marxism and Communism. This is what cemented his ideological passion with the Youth Leaguers such as Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, A. P. Mda and others.²⁴¹

Still concerned with the historical meaning of the role of Europeans in South African history, Dhlomo undertook an examination of white political parties. The context of this appraisal in 1953 was the emergence of two new political parties, Liberal Party and the Union Federal Party, joining a political landscape already occupied by the Nationalist Party, the United Party and the Labour Party.²⁴² Subscribing to the rigid doctrines of Calvinism, hence seeing the Afrikaners as the chosen people, for Dhlomo the Nationalist Party was driven by the ideology of fanatical Nationalism bordering on fascism. The central aim of the Party was the establishing of an Afrikaner-dominated republic, possibly with one volk and one language. Dhlomo saw these rigid attitudes as partly explainable by the defeat of the Afrikaner people in the English-Boer War of 1899-1902. He had no doubt that its political policy and practice of apartheid, which was superficially known as the separation of races, when in actual fact was the entrenchment of a rigid caste system based on race and color ('perpetual domination of the Blacks by the Whites'), would fail because modernity was predicated on the integration of peoples and

²⁴¹ This question of consensus in fundamentals and principles and dissensus in methods and approaches, which so profoundly occupied the political imagination of Dhlomo in the 1940s and 1950s, was to bring to an end the historical role of the ANC Youth League as an autonomous entity, following the death of Anton Lembede in 1947, as the progressive wing of African Nationalism represented by Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and others clashed with the regressive wing of African Nationalism occupied by A. P. Mda, Jordan K. Ngubane and others. Dhlomo took an ambiguous position on this central divide, sympathizing with Ngubane but very much fearful that Ngubane's fanatical extremism could lead to disastrous consequences, which actually happened after the death of Dhlomo in 1956. We have seen Ngubane in his **Unpublished Autobiography** denouncing Walter Sisulu as Secretary-General of the ANC in the early 1950s for aligning his wing of African Nationalism with the South African Communist Party, in the person of Yusuf Dadoo. The spectacular result of this alliance was the Defiance Campaign which culminated in the Congress of the People drafting the Freedom Charter in Kliptown in 1955. Dhlomo limited himself in assessing these shifting political positions to asking who had authorized Walter Sisulu to visit Communist countries. Presumably Dhlomo was responding to Sisulu's enthusiastic report on his visit to China (see: "I Saw China", *Liberation*, no.7, February 1954). Nelson Mandela had some sharp words for Ngubane's characterization of the Defiance as a colossal failure in his column in the *Indian Opinion*, as well as his denouncing of the ANC alliance with the Indian Congress and the Communist Party (see: "Towards Democratic Unity", *Liberation*, no.6, November 1953). Jordan K. Ngubane, an intellectual giant, was one of South Africa's greatest political enigmas.

²⁴² Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], Weekly Review And Commentary "The Present Situation", *Ilanga lase Natal*, May 23, 1953.

cultures, however problematic the integration may be in actuality. Dhlomo vehemently disputed the self-proclamation of the Party that it stood for Western civilization (in his understanding: modernity). Rather, in his estimation, it stood for a backward form of an Afrikaner way of life. Since it rejected a Western way of life, quintessentially understood by Dhlomo as democracy and freedom, and its policy of apartheid was condemned by Western countries, including United States, and the United Nations Organization, how could the Party pretend to represent Western civilization! He was convinced that the complexity and contradictions of modernity would prove fatal to its hegemonic political power.

Although forged and defined by benevolent paternalism towards the Africans, Dhlomo believed that in essentials and fundamentals, the United Party did differ that much from the Nationalist Party. In contrast to the latter, its one central defining characteristic was its betrayal of the African people through disenfranchisement at the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. He criticized the Party of Botha, Smuts²⁴³ and Hertzog, supposedly a gathering point of white moderates and true patriots, for not keeping abreast with the dramatic changes which had been initiated by the rapid transformations of modernity. As for the Labour Party, Dhlomo found it moribund since it was more interested in representing the interests of 'advanced' workers (that is European), to the near total exclusion of 'true' workers (Indians, Coloureds and Africans). Sounding more radical than usual, he wrote: "The 'advanced' workers referred to (including Whites in South Africa) forget that their high wages and favourable conditions are the result of the misery and groanings of millions of colonial workers." In other words, the Labour Party had betrayed its historical mission by refusing to defend the class interests of all workers, only concerning itself race matters of white workers. To be sure, for Dhlomo class interests of all workers did not necessarily mean all workers of the world should unite to create a socialist state or society. The possibility of socialism or communism were a great anathema to Dhlomo under any circumstances. The other limitation with which Dhlomo taxed the Labour Party was its failure to lure the white workers from rabid nationalism and racism, with the aim of forming a progressive proletarian front with other workers.

Given that the Nationalist Party, the United Party, and the Labour Party were not that different from each other, Dhlomo was intrigued by the new political configuration he expected would result with the establishing of the two new white political parties. Part of the explanation for this new configuration was that 1953 was the year of the first elections since the elections of 1948 instituted official apartheid, and a year after the Defiance Campaign of 1952,

²⁴³ Over many decades Dhlomo was fascinated by Smuts whom he considered a brilliant political leader and a major intellectual force. His three columns in *Ilanga lase Natal* are replete with many references to him. For instance:

which was first manifestation of the Youth League's Programme of Action adopted by the ANC Annual Conference of 1949.

Dhlomo thought the ideology of the new Union Federal Party similar to that of the Nationalist Party, in that it too supported white supremacy and racism in relation to Africans, and believed also that the differences between the Afrikaners and the English-speaking whites were unbridgeable. The difference between these two parties concerning matters affecting white South Africans was that whereas the Nationalist Party wanted to absorb all whites into an Afrikaner volk republic and their way of life, the Union Federal Party believed each of the two white groups should have their own state, hence federation. Grappling with the absurdities of these political positions (or posturings), Dhlomo wrote: "Never mind that Europeans are so interwoven that (as in the case of apartheid) it is difficult where to start, in fact, to tell who is who. The policy is fraught with grave possibilities. Failure of federation might lead to a demand for partition. Refusal of partition might lead to a policy to gain it by force." Concerning Indians, Coloureds and Africans, the Union Federal Party believed their subordination to the interests of whites should be maintained and continued.

To Dhlomo the emergence of the Liberal Party was one of the most significant events of the time. He stated six reasons for his positive evaluation it: its presentation of a challenging political alternative to apartheid, segregation and racial discrimination; its attempt to bridge the racial divide; its interpretation of Western civilization as concerned with merit, values and standards, rather than with race and colour; its recognition of the importance of the dignity of the individual, human rights, ethics and justice; its taking cognisance of the fact that Africans were a central part of the experience of modernity; its analysis that South African racial problems are not so unique that they are not amenable to universal and historical solutions that have been tried in other societies. Dhlomo concluded by observing that while the Liberal Party was far in advance of European public opinion, it lags behind the demands of many New African intellectuals and of such organizations as the ANC. Perhaps this last point explains why Dhlomo was never tempted into joining it, thereby defecting from the ANC, as was tragically to be the case soon thereafter with Jordan Ngubane.

Dhlomo's concern with the political conjuncture of the 1950s led him to reflect on certain aspects of South African history. Postulating this history as a series of battles between Light and Progress and those of Darkness and Destruction, between Black and White, between Boer (Afrikaners) and British, he developed the interesting thesis that Africans were not defeated by Europeans by military means, rather, it was through religion, medicine, education, jurisprudence, rationalism, economic rationality and administrative efficiency: "These were victories over the mind and spirit and upon ways of living. . . The conquest of the Bantu [African] by these subtler

agencies was his salvation. He changed, learnt and multiplied, and South Africa remained a Blackman's country."²⁴⁴ Believing militarism as an insignificant part of it, for him it was modernity and the actualization of its ideas in lived experience that brought about the defeat of Africans at the hands of Europeans: the adoption by Africans of new patterns of life, Western standards and ways of living. It would not be misrepresenting his historical perspective to indicate that Dhlomo the missionaries were a much greater and potent force than soldiers in the success of the colonialist mission and imperialist project. It was with the ideas of modernity that Africans had been marginalized, and it was through them that they would have to reconquer.

This may be the fundamental reason why of all the New African Talented Tenth, Dhlomo was the most profoundly conscious of the historical forms of modernity, its actual cultural representations, social actualizations, and political manifestations. Merely theorizing on modernity was insufficient, creating the cultural forms of its representation was imperative. It was in this context that undertook the construction of a particular aspect of African modernism. Given that Octavio Paz states in the above epigraph that there are types of modernity as there are societies, are there also not as many types of modernism as there are corresponding historical national situations! Dhlomo's poetic philosophical meditations, much more than his plays and poetry would seem to be the cultural representations of African modernism.

Like the other New African intellectuals, Dhlomo was historically aware that modernity and modernism were the products of the cosmopolitanism of the cities: R. V. Selope Thema on Johannesburg, Solomon T. Plaatje on King Williamstown, Maseru and London, Lewis Nkosi on New York and Paris, Nathaniel Nakasa on Johannesburg and New York. It is important to note the first essays by Africans on the role of the city in the creation of modernity in South Africa by both Solomon T. Plaatje and H. I. E. Dhlomo were not about the country's major cities, be it Johannesburg or Durban or Cape Town or Bloemfontein or Port Elizabeth or East London, but two small towns adjacent to each other, respectively King Williamstown and Alice, which enabled the extraordinary efflorescence of Xhosa intellectual culture in their midst in the late nineteenth-century. This intellectual culture was created by the first group of black Talented Tenth who were conscious of themselves as the African pathfinders of modernity.²⁴⁵ John Tengo Jabavu, Walter Rubusana, Elijah Makiwane, Pambani Jeremiah Mzimba.²⁴⁶ All of them articulated their

²⁴⁴ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Bantu, Boer and Briton", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 20, 1954.

²⁴⁵ I have borrowed the expression 'African pathfinders of modernity' from great medical historian, Henry Sigerist, who in his great book speaks of the 'European pathfinders of medicine': **The Great Doctors: A Biographical History of Medicine**, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 1933 [1931], p.18.

²⁴⁶ Elsewhere I make detailed presentation of the historic importance of this group of African intellectuals in an anthology I have recently edited: "The Trans-Atlantic Connection of the

viewpoints and perspectives in the newspaper, *Imvo Zabantsundu* (Native Opinion), which was founded by John Tengo Jabavu in November 1884. It was among these intellectuals that the role of the city in bringing new ways of living, cultural expression and thinking was broached. In an Editorial to the first copy of *The Kaffir Express* (later published as *Isigidimi Sama Xosa* [The Xhosa Messenger]), a newspaper founded fourteen years earlier than *Imvo Zabantsundu* (published in King William's Town) Elijah Makiwane expressed the importance of Venice in the founding of the first European newspaper in 1563. He wrote that he expected *The Kaffir Express* in Lovedale [Alice] (the town from which it emanated) in collaboration with the missionaries through the means of education would bring about new ways of thinking among Africans: "The demand for the products of the press is a sure gauge of the intelligence of the people of any country and a just measure of the results produced by education. The newspaper of the present day is undoubtedly a great educator. . . The paper will be addressed to the intelligent portion of the native community who are able to read, or have an interest in what is going on in the world beyond their own dwellings."²⁴⁷ Jabavu who received his education on the pages of *Isigidimi Sama Xosa*, and subsequently became its editor, in founding his newspaper was continuing the cultural and intellectuals aims first formulated by Makiwane.

In the first editorial of his newspaper, paying homage to Elijah Makiwane, Jabavu mentioned the importance of cities, whether be they Pretoria or Port Elizabeth, in making available the new forms and experiences of modernity: "For over half a century Missionaries have been labouring assiduously among the Natives [Africans] of this country, and Government has invested, and is still investing enormous sums of money with the professed object of civilising them. The result---which will ever be mentioned in these columns with gratitude---is, that a large class has been formed among the Natives which has learnt to loathe the institutions of barbarism, and to press for the better institutions of a civilized life. Hitherto this newly formed class has been tossing from pillar to post, despised by its former friends of the heathen state, and misunderstood by the representatives of civilization in this country."²⁴⁸ It was this newly formed African intelligentsia that was sensitive and susceptible to the new ways of living and thinking made available by city-life experience. Elijah Makiwane, ever so exemplary in many ways, was the first African intellectual to write an essay devoted solely to the qualitative forms of lived African experiences in the urban social spaces. Although concerned to combat what he considered were the negative effects of city life experience, the social hierarchization along class lines among Africans, the accelerated rate of the incidence of alcoholism with the attendant social consequences,

New African Movement", **United States and South Africa: The Historical Field of Social and Cultural Interaction**, Verso, London, 1987.

²⁴⁷ Elijah Makiwane, "To Our Readers", *The Kaffir Express*, vol.1 no.1, October 1, 1870.

²⁴⁸ John Tengo Jabavu, "The Launch", *Imvo Zabantsundu*, November 3, 1884.

the economic exploitation of Africans by Europeans, and prostitution, Makiwane was gratified with the way Africans were adjusting and adapting to urban life, which indicated to him that they were accepting modernity and modernization: "Natives who have been long in towns are in some respects better than those who live in the country. While i am not prepared to say that they answer to the well-known comparison of town and country life. . . . it may be stated that town Natives have a better idea of the value of time; that they are more punctual and make an effort to do a days work each day; they attend-better to the inside of their dwellings and are more active both in body and intellectually."²⁴⁹ It could be said that Plaatje and Dhlomo were fascinated by the reposition of the mind and body which modernity made possible through city-life experience.

With their essays Plaatje and Dhlomo were paying homage to the Xhosa intellectual renaissance of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth-century, as well as seeking to establish affiliative links of African intellectual traditions across ethnic boundaries. Plaatje's essay was published a year before the founding of the ANC, a founding moment that transformed different ethnic groups in South Africa into aligning with the historical principle of the unity of the African people. Plaatje states that King William's Town was founded by the London Missionary Society in 1835. He explicitly salutes John Tengo Jabavu, remarking that he still wields a 'trenchant pen' which he has been doing since 1884 when he launched *Imvo Zabantsundu*.²⁵⁰ Comparing the town to Pretoria, he found King William's Town very picturesque, principally painted by the colorfully cultural contrast between the British and the Xhosa, and their respective languages, English and Xhosa. In relation to these languages, Plaatje was intrigued by the struggle of the German community for the recognition of their language. Having earlier in his young adulthood been a court interpreter in Kimberley, he was fascinated by the existence of two courts of Law, one principally concerned with the custom laws of tradition and the other with modernity by establishing procedures and contracts for mineworkers about to depart to the Johannesburg goldmines. Since the court of Law dealing with tradition had only white interpreters who spoke Xhosa, Plaatje wondered whether a European (presumably immersed in modernity) could ever understand the 'native mind' still dominated by the throes of tradition. In a statement celebrating the transformations modernity was effecting, Plaatje wrote: "You will not need to be told of the impracticability of segregation if you will but come here and see for yourself

²⁴⁹ Elijah Makiwane, "Natives in Towns", *Imvo Zabantsundu*, July 19, 1888.

²⁵⁰ Sol. T. Plaatje, "King Williamstown", *Tsala ea Becoana*, October 14, 1911. This celebration of John Tengo Jabavu by Plaatje was to change within a year when Jabavu opposed the formation of the South African Native National Congress (known from 1925 as the African National Congress) in 1912. In a chapter devoted to John Tengo Jabavu in his classic book **Native Life in South Africa** (1916) Plaatje traces the unfolding of this tragedy. Though profoundly pained by this, Plaatje never turned his back to Jabavu, as happened with many Africans, intellectuals and masses.

the flood of black peasantry from our surrounding locations pouring into the streets; see the natives walking up and down the thoroughfares staring at the shop windows, meeting and gossiping with friends, bartering with white men, and purchasing provisions: and you will be satisfied that, should segregation ever become an accomplished fact, fully four-fifths of the merchants would leave King Williamstown by way of the Bankruptcy Court." From this moment of the inception of reflections on the transformative effects of modernity by New African intellectuals, it was clear to them that in order for the African people to make a full entrance into modernity, all forms of artificial barriers imposed by the Other, rather than the real historical barriers of traditional customs, have to be actively combatted. The ANC was founded as one of the most effective instruments for this historical entrance.

Dhlomo, who had at one time wanted to write a cultural history of South African cities, in his consideration of Alice where Fort Hare University and Lovedale Institute are situated, emphasized the acquisition of knowledge and high learning as prerequisites for an effective negotiation with, and location within, modernity: "A post-matriculation student, one of my friends there, told me that the absence of attractions and amusements in the town was to them a boon as it not only helped students to live a life all their own, create an educationally elevating atmosphere and make their own traditions, but it was an incentive to study, concentration and application just because there was nothing else to do."²⁵¹ In Alice to attend a Conference organized by the American New Negro Max Yergan and the participation of other New Africans, R. V. Selope Thema, Charlotte Manye Maxeke, Dr. Xuma, Z. K. Matthews, D. D. T. Jabavu, among others, he reflected on the contrast between the town characterized by efflorescence, luxuriant colors, brightness, gleaminess, boldness, wealth, majesty and the poverty of the countryside: "The picture of the surrounding country, congested with poor Native huts standing amid untilled or partly-tilled lands, fills one with surprise and indignation. Right here we have heathen people living their old fashioned life, impervious and even hostile to the teachers of modern life. It is indeed a ghastly contrast of ignorance and education; modernity and heathenism; advancement and retrogression. The people are poverty-stricken." Dhlomo observed that while in the not too distant past Africans and Europeans had been engaged in a series of serious conflicts, around modernity, as exemplified by the Conference, there was agreement among the intelligentsia of both racial groups about the necessity of extending modernity into the country.

In his next consideration of the city in relation to modernity sixteen years later, Dhlomo was captivated by the personality the city projected, the traditions it embodied, and the history it dramatised. Meditating on the rank, reputation and status of Bloemfontein, he posed a series of questions: "What

²⁵¹ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "An Impression", *Umteteli wa Bantu*, July 12, 1930.

is a City: Is it the people or the buildings and the streets? Is it these combined or neither? I don't know. What I do know is that a City lives and breathes. It is more alive and enduring than some of its unfortunate citizens who many of them are but walking ghosts and rotting souls---victims of either themselves or the Social System. But a City is animate."²⁵² For Dhlomo the city symbolized the intersection of two major strands of South Africa history: the 1836 Great Trek of the Afrikaner people for whom the city was a resting place and a source of encouragement as they sought to escape British imperial rule in the Cape Province; and the political awakening of the African people, for it was here the ANC was founded in the wake of the Union of South Africa in 1910 which resulted in the disenfranchisement of black people by English and Afrikaner settlers. He lamented that because of the political hegemony of the Cape Province and the gold power of the Transvaal, Bloemfontein, geographically centrally located, was not chosen the Capital of the Union. Although aware that Bloemfontein was conservative and reactionary, Dhlomo hoped it would eventually become a center of new ideas, a fountain of spiritual ideas and move toward realizing the ideals of better race relations. Perhaps as part of the expression of this hope and ideal, Dhlomo, in another context, wrote a poetic song of struggle and freedom about Bloemfontein:

O Bloemfontein,---grim wars of
liberty.
Thou art the heart, the centre,
Capital
Of Bantu hopes, fears, throes and
strife. Here all
Our giants past and present stood
and fought,
And many great campaigns here
planned and wrought.
Rejected as the Capital by the whites,
Thou art the Capital of freedom's
fights.²⁵³ (Excerpt)

With the liberation of the country from racial oppression, Dhlomo expected African historians to write tomes on the calls from this city that launched many struggles.

The city dearest to Dhlomo's heart naturally was Durban. He begins his reflections with this thought: "The story of our cities has not been told. It requires telling as it is a great drama. Each of our leading cities---and even the humble dorps, the rivers, hills and main roads---has an exciting autobiography. . . Each has its idiosyncracies, glories, faults. . . what a mighty epic cannot these and other places relate! And relate it I mean to do some

²⁵² H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Bloemfontein", *Inkundla ya Bantu*, First Fortnight, October, 1946.

²⁵³ H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Bloemfontein", *Ilanga lase Natal*, November 20, 1948.

day."²⁵⁴ Dhlomo seemed to have had a deep fascination for the Great Trek, for the first event of historic importance he mentions in relation to the city is their arrival in Durban, having trekked all the way from the Western Cape. There are two areas in which the autobiography of the city centrally intersected with the history of Africans. In politics, Durban had at one point the largest number of ICU members than any other city. In this for Dhlomo the city played a leading role in 'National Liberation' struggle. Secondly, concerning intellectual and cultural matters, the city nurtured the likes of Jordan Ngubane, Rueben Caluza and John Dube; Dhlomo thought that it inspired and facilitated great creativity.²⁵⁵ The presence of Indians in Durban was celebrated by Dhlomo in the context of their presence having made the Indian government challenge the white minority government at the United Nations, as we have seen. The absolute uniqueness or distinctiveness of Durban for Dhlomo more than any other South African city was its equipose between city and country: ". . . is the only one where one can bring the country to the city and the city to the country." He believed the city would bring about the regeneration of Africa (perhaps an allusion to Pixley ka Isaka

²⁵⁴ X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "On Durban", *Ilanga lase Natal*, February 22, 1947.

²⁵⁵ It is interesting to note that Durban never inspired the great Portuguese modernist poet, Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935), who spent four critical formative years of his childhood in the city as well as for a short period in Cape Town (January 1896-August 1901). He was a shade too young for South Africa to have impacted on him in a fundamental way. It was here he learned English. One of the absolutely best essays on Pessoa has been written by Octavio Paz. Speaking of the heteronyms of Alberto Caeiro, Alvaro de Campos, Ricardo Reis under which Fernando Pessoa wrote, Octavio Paz ruminated: "The authenticity of the heteronyms depends on its poetic coherence, its verisimilitude. They were necessary creations because in no other way could Pessoa have devoted his life to living and creating them; what counts now is not that they were necessary for their author but that they are also necessary for us. Pessoa, their first reader, did not doubt their reality" ("Introduction: Pessoa or the Imminence of the Unknown", **Selected Poems by Fernando Pessoa**, trans. Edwin Honig, The Swallow Press Inc., Chicago, 1971, p.7). Likewise the heteronyms of X and Busy-Bee which H. I. E. Dhlomo used possess their own concrete reality and have become an absolute necessity for us. In all of his oeuvre on two occasions he reflected on his heteronyms. He explained his heteronym of Busy-Bee in the following manner: "Quick on our heels of criticism, the Activities Organiser has answered, not by nebulous words, but by action. That's the spirit! The Bee's sting is directed as a spur to progress" (Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], *Weekly Review And Commentary* "Bravo B. S. C.", *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 14, 1944). Since sometimes two separate columns on totally different matters would appear on the same page of *Ilanga lase Natal* under Busy-Bee and H. I. E. Dhlomo, once Busy-Bee jokingly explained that his colleague H. I. E. Dhlomo was plagiarizing and stealing his ideas (). As Busy-Bee, articulating the concepts and constructs of New African, New Africa and New Africanism, Dhlomo was simultaneously theorizing the transformations modernity was effecting in changing the Old Africans into New Africans, and the active interventions the New Africans initiated in shaping the form, structure and processes of South African modernity. Like most historical processes, especially concerning cultural matters, this essay has been arguing that the making of South African modernity as a historical process and event has involved both subjective intervention and objective structuring. Consequently, as Fredric Jameson would have said, Busy-Bee was preoccupied with cognitively mapping this emergent colossal form. As X, Dhlomo produced the cultural forms of modernity, the expressive forms of modernism: prose poems and poetic essays.

Seme who with the essay of the same name established the philosophical foundations of New Africanism).²⁵⁶

Dhlomo's other consideration of the city, "In Praise of Durban", which is a variation on the previous essay "On Durban", was notable for its contrasting of the way modernity realized its effect on the urban space of Johannesburg as opposed to that of Durban.²⁵⁷ He was surprised by the strong influence of public relations and advertising had on Randites (Africans who reside in Johannesburg), especially on the black middle class.²⁵⁸ The New Africans in Johannesburg are assertive, pushy, coercive, recklessly adventurous---these characteristics hidden behind the mask of humility, calmness and simplicity. They are wholly westernized because of their pride in shedding their Past, and their hallmark was sophistication and progress. On the other hand the Durbanites (New Africans in Durban) were seen by Dhlomo as being phlegmatic, staid and sedate, because for them the Past was pridefully treasured, and considered unique and rich. To them African tradition was to be grafted onto European modernity, rather than discarded in quest of sophistication. This deliberateness in life tends to make Durbanites more philosophical than the Randites. Taking these contrasts further, Dhlomo wrote: "Johannesburg glories in its teeming, kaleidoscopic, fast life. It leaves you breathless. In Durban you can relax and retire into the country (rivers, hills, birds, moonlight). No rivers in Johannesburg and moonlight is invisible." Being a sea-port, Dhlomo saw Durban as an opening to the larger world, while Johannesburg was turned in on itself being a congested metropolis. His love for Durban was enormous, as can be seen in one of the poems dedicated to the city:

Here with my lady nestling by my
side,
We sit and watch the launches fleet-
ing by,
Curled wavvlets dance, pied scenes;
while fish play hide
And seek, and ships like heaving
hills tower.

.....
Such calm removes all thought of
life's surcease.
How peaceful, lone and weird the
waters lie!
How beautiful and charmed the

²⁵⁶ Pixley ka Isaka Seme, "The Regeneration of Africa", *Royal African Society*, vol.5, 1905-6.

²⁵⁷ Busy-Bee [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "In Praise of Natal", *Ilanga lase Natal*, December 18, 1954.

²⁵⁸ During his *Umteteli wa Bantu* period Dhlomo wrote an essay reflecting on how advertising was changing the consciousness of Africans self-perception of themselves: "Advertisements", November 8, 1930. To Dhlomo advertising was the soul of modern commerce.

space poetry and prose, the individual and the collective, the ideal and the everyday."²⁶⁸

The third paragraph of the eleven paragraph prose poem "The Falling Leaf" reads in part: "It was in this mood [of forlornness] I boarded a bus and repaired to Brighton Beach the other day. After wandering about happily but aimlessly, enjoying the peace and the scenery, away from the filth and depression, the moise and unceasing garrulity of my slum residential area, I sat down in a dense bushy growth, my eyes, ears and mind fascinated by the music and magic of quietude and the sea. I took my pencil (my bosom friend) and wrote."²⁶⁹ The fourth paragraph continuing on the narration also reads in part: "My mind had outpaced my eyes and ears, running into and shattering itself, like the waves before me, on the rocks of the meaning of Nature and Man. And, like the beaten, humble waves at low tide, my mind now tired and listless after a tussle with these immensities and mysteries of life, began to wander aimlessly." The fifth paragraph which ostensibly modulates the real theme of the prose poem begins with these lines: "A leaf fluttered and fell. . . My mind caught at it---if only in revenge, despair, laziness! I looked up at the branches from which it came." The sixth paragraph begins with these two lines which conveys the real object of its intent, the critique of modernity: "The falling leaves themselves seemed to be in rebellion against the dictatorship and paternalism of the branches; appeared eager to escape the grip, regimentation and insipid safety of their own crowded life. And as they came down they fluttered and trembled with the joy of emancipation mingled with fear, danced a magic dance of life and death, and somersaulted with ecstasy and doubt."

Even in this excerpted form, the prose poem conveys the deep Romantic sensibility of Dhlomo, which was also true of other brilliant New African poets and writers: Benedict Wallet Vilakazi, J. J. J. Jolobe and others. Perhaps this explains Lewis Nkosi's deep ambivalence to this generation of

²⁶⁸ Jennifer Forrest and Catherine Jaffe, op. cit., p.289.

²⁶⁹ X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "The Falling Leaf", *Ilanga lase Natal*, March 11, 1944. Dhlomo was an intellectual who thrived in paradoxes. While his essays on the making of modernity were adulative of this historical process, his contruction of African modernism through the prose poems was critical of modernity as an incompletable eventuation as long as history and nature remained non-synchronous with each other. Likewise, his reflections on modernity postulated the necessity of Carlylean heroic in its making, his African modernism is devoid of any hero-worship mongering. It is interesting to know what Dhlomo would have made of Walter Benjamin's observation: "The hero is the true subject of modernism. In other words, it takes a heroic constitution to live modernism. That was also Balzac's opinion. With their belief, Balzac and Baudelaire are in opposition to Romanticism. They transfigure passions and resolution; the Romantacists transfigured renunciation and surrender. But the new way of looking at things is far more variegated and richer in reservations in a poet than in a storyteller" (**Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism**, trans. Harry Zohn, New Left Books, London, 1973, p.74).

intellectual which preceded his own, that of the Sophiatown Renaissance.²⁷⁰ Although his poetic master was John Keats, part of the fascination of the poem is its attempted marriage of two classic Romantic poems: William Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" and Percy Bysshe Shelley's "To a Sky-Lark". Despite this attempted poetic conjunction, there are various extensive allusions to Keats in paragraph nine of the prose poem: "I said Beauty. The enchantment of the tumbling leaf, brown or green (for some leaves are blown off in the strength and glory of the green life), brought to my mind back to that elusive entity--- Beauty. . . Watching the falling leaf, I wondered if the delicacy was an

²⁷⁰ Lewis Nkosi, **Tasks and Masks: Themes and Styles of African Literature**, Longman, 1981, p.113-115: "To put it as bluntly as possible, Vilakazi's revolutionary themes are not matched by a similar revolutionary approach to poetic technique. Consequently, repeatedly aware of these echoes from another tradition, we are obliged in discussing Vilakazi's work to confine ourselves only to those of his achievements about which there can be no dispute. . . The poem's ambitious scope [Dhlomo's **Valley of a Thousand Hills**], its combination of a 'nature' theme familiar to lovers of traditional English verse, with a vigorous protest at the defeat and humiliation of Zulu power, were crucial in ensuring for the author a wider attention at its publication than had hitherto accorded a work by an African writer. . . Though there is an unmistakable similarity between Dhlomo and Vilakazi's failure to adapt lessons learned from English verse to their own native tradition, Vilakazi at least enjoyed the advantage of having written mostly in his mother tongue, with the result that however derivative his poetics it could not include the use of an exact European imagery and terminology as Dhlomo was sometimes compelled to do." These astute observations are marred by Lewis Nkosi's constant reference to Vilakazi and Dhlomo as "Zulu poets". Even in the case of Vilakazi who wrote in Zulu this is unacceptable, for these were great continental poets. Dhlomo avoided referring to "Zulu intellectuals", for he used the designation of Africans from Natal or Africans from Durban. This essay on Dhlomo hopes to put some of these mis-conceptions to rest, even from our outstanding intellectuals, like Lewis Nkosi. This prevalent criticism that Dhlomo was incapable of adapting Romantic poetic sensibility to the needs of the present was always partially true even when referring to his poems. The eventual publication of Dhlomo's prose poems will dispel some of these illusions. Not all of Dhlomo's poetry which appeared in *Ilanga lase Natal* has been assembled together. Nick Visser and Tim Couzens' commendable effort shows inexplicable gaps and lacunae (editors of **H. I. E. Dhlomo: Collected Works**). There are serious scholarly problems with this edition. Without indication of where the poems assembled in this edition originally appeared, it would appear some of the poems are jumbled together or wrenched out of context or even broken in half. One example chosen at random should be sufficient. For instance the poem published as "Fuze" in the **Collected Works** (pp.341-43) appeared in *Ilanga lase Natal* (February 23, 1946) as "Valediction", a second song of two songs called "John Langelibalele Dube"; the other song is a "Sonnet". Since Dhlomo was in a habit of republishing some of his already published poems in slightly changed form, as well as the penchant for cannibalizing some of his essays, it is possible it appeared somewhere as it stands. The format in which the poems appear in this edition, not as they originally appeared in *Ilanga lase Natal*, destroys or profoundly disturbs their alliteration and rhythmic movement. Major and important poems all of which are excellent are inexplicably excluded from this edition: "Zulu (Traditional) Conceptions Of Universe" (*Ilanga lase Natal*, July 21, 1945), a poem about African cosmology, makes a connection between Mazisi Kunene and Dhlomo; two poems "Cetshwayo" and "Battle of Isandlwana" appeared under a collective title of "That Their Praise Might Be Reported" (*Ilanga lase Natal*, March 27, 1948), are patriotic poems reconstructing Zulu history and implicitly denouncing imperialism in the form of European intrusion ---appear in the Edition disjointed from each other.

essential attribute of Beauty. . . Still I could not believe that Beauty was not something strong, awe-inspiring, and eternal as Truth." What the prose poem seems to represent is a disjuncture in Dhlomo's being: between the historical consciousness which welcomed the arrival, creation and construction of modernity, and sensibility, largely Romantic in nature, which lamented that modernity brought the incompleteness of organic forms, which intertwined liberation and domination. Paraphrasing Walter Benjamin, it would be as though modernity made Dhlomo aware that every document of culture is equally a product of barbarism and civilization.

A detailed reading of the prose poem is in order. Dhlomo makes clear that "The Falling Leaf" is concerned with a search for spiritual solitude, not to be found in the physical and natural environment, but can only be attained through a peaceful discourse with the spiritual self. The physical journey he makes is a metaphor for the inner journey which is about to commence. Dhlomo also makes it clear that the spiritual journey was necessitated by the politically imposed obstacles of racism and discrimination imposed by whites on the African people. Beside this political reason for seeking solitude, he unequivocally states that the bustling crowds in the cities and the attendant patterns of chaos that are so characteristic of modernity also necessitate moments of peace, introspection, and solitude. In the process of writing the prose poem, Dhlomo reflects on the process of creativity in the context of modernity. He writes that in this historical context, the process of creating the new involves a disjuncture between the Mind and the Body, as well as the disharmony between Man (or Woman) and Nature. For Dhlomo there were no such disharmonies and disjunctures in the creative acts of the Romantic poets: their creative process was part of the organic process and harmonious unity with nature with which they hoped to hold in abeyance the chaos unleashed by industrialization. In the context of modernity, the creative act no longer possesses the spiritual power to hold in abeyance chaotic forms.

Dhlomo's critique of modernity is the incompleteness of the absorption of the Romantic organic project of creativity by modernism; the philosophical constructs of Romanticism not fully integrated into modernism. The spiritual journey is a search for organic forms so characteristic of the Romantic era which present day racial and political oppression in South Africa was making unrealizable. For him a particular organic form in South Africa would be characterized by the full realization of the democratic rights of the African people. The whole prose poem gravitates around the question: what kind of creativity is achievable when whole organic forms are unrealizable: what kind of Beauty and Truth the creative process makes possible in the context of modernity. Watching the fluttering leaf, Dhlomo wonders whether the mind can conjure and make sense of the natural world from which it emanates; he notes also that the branches are spread heavenward as though seeking inspiration and succour like himself. Here Dhlomo is posing the question of the source of inspiration and creativity: is it

nature or the imagination. He is fascinated by the branches, that the more they grow the more they expose themselves to the pruning dangers of the wind, yet it is in their growth that their beauty and splendour is realized. The leaf falling off the trees is escaping the paternalism and dictatorship of the crowded branches; in this they proximate to him the contemplator having escaped the chaos of the crowded streets of modernity. The leaf falling down 'tremble with joy' but 'mingled with fear' at the process of emancipation. Likewise the act of creation is an emancipatory process which is both a release of joy and the instilling of fear. The falling leaf is neither life nor death, but constant becoming. It symbolizes the dialectical and cyclic process of life: creation and constant remaking. Finally, for Dhlomo the falling leaf is an enchantment of beauty, like the beauty and truth which Keats found so characteristic of human civilization. Dhlomo ends the prose poem by reflecting on the processes and happenings of nature that precede humanity, and will continue after humanity has disappeared. He writes that this indicates that there is no inherent relationship between nature and humanity. The falling leaf is a challenge to humanity. Dhlomo in "The Falling Leaf" like many other of his prose poems is concerned with the discourse between natural history and human history, how the natural patterns of the former could possibly inform the makings and creations of the latter. In another prose poem on the theme of hair (symbolizing nature) in European literary history from the Bible and Milton's "Samson Agonistes" through Shakespeare's "Macbeth" and Pope's "The Rape of the Locke" to Keats and Byron's "Prisoner of Chillon", Dhlomo laments that the commerce and commercialism so prevalent in modernity by creating the illusion of the real has widened the possible unity between nature and history: "We waste time and money, tamper with our tempers, trying to grow bushes on our heads and deserts on our chins. Vain! Insane! And Nature, sane, opposes, fools and foils us all the time. But obstinate clay that we are, we refuse as tenaciously to work with Nature as we do to learn from History. In this, women are far wiser than men. Nature made their chins bare and their heads fertile with hair, and they themselves do everything in their power to assist Nature to keep things so. But men!"²⁷¹ Dhlomo states that the Bible has some of the best stories on hair, perhaps one of the reasons he considered it the greatest literary masterpiece.

The discourse between nature and history are a central preoccupation of many of Dhlomo's prose poems: the reluctance of the latter to be schooled in the lessons of the former: the constancy of change in one and its inconstancy in the other. The dialectic between nature and history is imbricated in what Dhlomo saw as the perennial struggle between modernity and tradition. Peter Dews has recently astutely observed: "The reverse side of modernity is the permanent crisis of tradition. Perhaps one could even go so far as to define modernity as the uncompletable task of questioning what is handed

²⁷¹ X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Hair", *Ilanga lase Natal*, October 7, 1944.

down."²⁷² As much as Dhlomo saw modernism as the uncompleted project of Romanticism, he also viewed tradition as not as yet fully integrated into modernity. Some of his prose poems are preoccupied with the incompleteness (?) of his historical moment. In the prose poem "Rain", as an indication of this incompleteness, Dhlomo contrasts the integration of nature (rain) into the countryside (tradition) and the resistance and hostility of the city (modernity) to it. Using rain as a metaphor in exposing the artificiality of the city and its ugliness, hence its falsity, he writes: "Just as there is a difference between the falling of the rain in the coastal belt and in the uplands, there is one between rain in the city and rain in the country. To me rain in the city instead of enveloping the place with its cloak of vigorous beauty, seems to strip it naked and expose its artificiality, callousness, and injustices. Think of the dirty city waters scurrying away to hide themselves in croaking drains---the nasty drains themselves sometimes refusing to swallow these filthy streams, and the conflict resulting in flooded streets. The gutters are city rivers---and what rivers! Pity the city! . . . At times rain forgives the city and shrouds and bathes it in all glory, mercifully shielding its ugliness, weaving at night halos around the electric light standards where mists, like clamorous, murmuring bees, seem to gather in silent swarms."²⁷³ In the country-side rain reveals the beauty, hence Keatsian truthfulness of life: "On the other hand, rain rejuvenates and crowns the beauty of the contry-side. Imagine the inspiring glory of riverson a rainy day; of mountains and valleys! The birds and flowers find delight in bathing, frolicking and hymning in its purity and freshness. Where can the rain be more musical, more magical ? Why, even the lone figure caught in the rain in the country, struggling along a muddy path, bre(u)shed (?) wet by the grass, and forcibly caressed by dripping branches, seems more happy, romantic, dignified and comfortable than the city man sheltered, shiveringly and sheepilly, under a street verandah. Mother earth herself exudes a strange pleasing perfume as she receives the cleansing showers." In this dramatic contrast lies part of the complex nature of Dhlomo's artistic and historical imagination: while his great essays beckoned and celebrated the new historical experience brought into being by modernity, the prose poems delineated its limited form because of its incomplete integration of natural history. For Dhlomo as for the Romantics, in nature resided the Keatsian beauty and truthfulness.

Is Ezekiel Mphahlele's characterization of H. I. E. Dhlomo's Romantic sensibility as making him a "thorough-going romanticist" justified?²⁷⁴ Perhaps such a characterization may be correct if one has considered only Dhlomo's poem **Valley of a Thousand Hills** as Mphahlele has done. But if

²⁷² Peter Dews, *The Limits of Disenchantment: Essays on Contemporary European Philosophy*, Verso, London, 1995, p.59.

²⁷³ X [H. I. E. Dhlomo], "Rain", *Ilanga lase Natal*, September 16, 1944.

²⁷⁴ Ezekiel Mphahlele, *The African Image*, Praeger Publishers, New York, Revised Edition, 1974 (1962). p. 223.

one considers his total oeuvre, one cannot fail to register that Dhlomo was a thorough-going modernist. While his Romantic sensibility may have substantially marred his poetry, as a general scholarly consensus has agreed, in the prose poems it has been of service in indicating the incompleteness and/or incommensurability of modernity as long as it does attempt to reconcile natural history and human history. The deep irony of the prose poems as instruments of critique make them one of the extraordinary achievements of African literary modernism. In this sense, like what Roberto Fernandez Retamar says of Jose Marti, Dhlomo "was one of the initiators of a different reading of modernity, a reading of modernity from the point of view of its other."²⁷⁵ Dhlomo enabled a different reading of modernity by synthesizing two intellectual traditions which are not usually associated together, the African American intellectual tradition represented by W. E. B. Du Bois and the European intellectual tradition exemplified by Thomas Carlyle. The point of view of the other from whose perspective Dhlomo wanted to participate in constructing this modernity was that of the New African in the maelstrom of utilizing the ANC as the essential instrument in modernizing South Africa. Like Jose Marti again, as Retamar emphasizes, Dhlomo was part of "an intellectual tradition of modernity."²⁷⁶ This intellectual tradition of modernity found its origins in Elijah Makiwane and John Tengo Jabavu (Xhosa cultural renaissance of the late nineteenth-century around Tengo's *Imvo Zabantsundu* weekly) was given intellectual armour by R. V. Selope Thema and Solomon T. Plaatje (the great *Umteteli wa Bantu* intellectuals in the 1920s, among whom Dhlomo found his intellectual teething) and amplified continentally and internationally by Lewis Nkosi and Ezekiel Mphahlele in the 1950s (the 'School' of *Drum* writers [Can Themba], photographers [Peter Magubane] and performers [Miriam Makeba]). Without a doubt, H. I. E. Dhlomo was the greatest exponent of this intellectual tradition which was terminated by the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960. In the last major statement written a few months before his death in 1956, Dhlomo reflected: "Past events cast shadows before them. The past is the womb of the future. It is a sign and reflection of things to be. For there is no beginning or end, there is constant becoming only. Otherwise life would cease. Despite set backs and disappointments, pain and calamities, frustration and failure, man believes and must believe in the idea of progress for his own sake. It is time, therefore, to take stock not only of man's material works but of man himself--whether he is changing and becoming more mature or is retrogressing in his

²⁷⁵ Roberto Fernandez Retamar, "These Are the Times We Have to Live In: An Interview with Roberto Fernandez Retamar", conducted by Goffredo Diana and John Beverly, *Critical Inquiry*, vol.21 no.2, Winter 1995, p.422.

²⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p.425. In another context Roberto Fernandez Retamar speaks of the American intellectual tradition of modernity founded by the disciple of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, with which Jose Marti profoundly sympathized despite his hostility to the then emerging United States imperialism: "Roberto Fernandez Retamar: An Interview", conducted by Roberto Gonzalez Echevarria, *Diacritics*, December 1978, p.80. Walt Whitman, Jose Marti, H. I. E. Dhlomo, what a perspective on world modernity!

nature, productions, ideas, standard of values, mind and spiritual life; are his greed power, pride, selfishness and materialism becoming more or less? Are the ideas of the Brotherhood of man [Sisterhood of woman], of the sanctity of the individual human soul and personality, of beauty and truth, of fundamental human rights gaining ground or are they being rejected and replaced by others?"²⁷⁷ These questions posed at the final moments of modernity are still relevant within the context of the emergent African postmodernity. The full historical meaning of the legacy of H. I. E. Dhlomo is still unknown to us South Africans as we about to enter the twenty-first century in a few years time, and as we approach in five years, in 2003, the centennial of his birth.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ Anonymous, "Thoughts At The Close Of The Year: Recapitulating Events of Importance", *Ilanga lase Natal*, December 24, 1955. Without a shadow of a doubt this was written by H. I. E. Dhlomo, as indicated by its preoccupations with Keatsian ideas of Beauty and Truth, as well its unending glorification of Nature.

²⁷⁸ Tim Couzens' outstanding biography opened the way to appraising this enormous and complex legacy (**The New African: A Study of the Life and Works of H. I. E. Dhlomo**, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1985). In recent years Dhlomo has been instrumental in re-mapping and re-constructing the intellectual and cultural history of South Africa in the twentieth-century. In a recent informative essay in which Liz Gunner reads the poetry of Dhlomo and Vilakazi as a reclamation of the meaning of culture through articulation of the constructs of land, history and nation, she mistakenly posits Dhlomo's **The Valley of a Thousand Hills** as an "inclusive black nationalist gesture" and a "South African nationalist poem" ("Names and the Land: Poetry of belonging and unbelonging, a comparative approach", in **Text, Theory, Space: land, literature and history in South Africa and Australia**, (eds.) Kate Darian-Smith, Liz Gunner and Sarah Nuttall, Routledge, London and New York, 1996, p.121-2, my italics). As this monograph has attempted to argue, Dhlomo did not subscribe to African nationalism as a possible metaphysical system, as was unfortunately the case with Jordan K. Ngubane, but rather as a historical necessity imposed by the hegemony of Afrikaner and white nationalism. Again in contradistinction to the tragedy of Ngubane, Dhlomo never collapsed African nationalism into black nationalism or Zulu nationalism. Dhlomo would not have accepted his poem being aligned with any form of nationalism, let alone black nationalism. Ngubane's reading in a *Ilanga lase Natal* review of **The Valley of a Thousand** within a few weeks of its appearance in 1941 as having infused a new spirit into South African literature was very acute. In other words, it had infused a modernist spirit, rather than nationalist spirit, into African cultures. Ian Steadman, in a theoretically stimulating formulation, situates Dhlomo as the founder of modern African theater, which subsequently found new voices in Lewis Nkosi, Gibson Kente and Black Consciousness theater ("Toward popular theater in South Africa", in **Politics and Performance: Theatre, Poetry and Song in Southern Africa**, (ed.) Liz Gunner, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1994). Bhekizizwe Peterson considers how the founding of the Bantu Dramatic Society in 1932 by Dhlomo and others, and the staging and performance of his plays such as **Dingane**, **Cetshwayo** and **Moshoeshe**, initiated a new sensibility in South African theatrical space ("Apartheid and the Political Imagination in Black South African Theatre", in **Politics and Performance**, op. cit.). All these three formulations are constructing new ways of incorporating H. I. E. Dhlomo into our South African imagination.