

**IDENTITY, CULTURE AND CONTEMPORARY SOUTH
AFRICAN POETRY**

by

MASHUDU CHURCHILL MASHIGE

THESIS

**submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree**

DOCTOR OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY



FACULTY OF ARTS

at the

RAND AFRIKAANS UNIVERSITY

PROMOTER: PROF. D.C. KLOPPER

JOHANNESBURG

2004

DECLARATION

I, Mashudu Churchill Mashige, hereby declare that the thesis submitted for the degree D Litt et Phil in English to the Rand Afrikaans University, apart from the help recognised, is my own work and has not been formerly submitted to another University for a degree.

Signature



Date

DEDICATION

To my mother Tsakani Anna, children Rotondwa, Rolivhuwa and Rofhiwa, my siblings Tshifhiwa Harold, Khathutshelo Percy, Ndivhuwo Patience, Ntanganedzeni Kenneth and Maanda Christon.

In memory of my father Phineas Ligudu Ben, whose exemplary life of service, humility and gratitude I have yet to emulate.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am indebted to my promoter, Prof. D.C. Klopper, whose patience, constructive criticism, perceptive comments and consistent encouragement throughout the years, transformed our acquaintance into an enduring academic relationship. The completion of this thesis is testimony to the sturdiness of his constructive academic intervention. To him I owe a significant personal and scholastic debt. May God continue to bless him abundantly.

My sincere gratitude also goes to various colleagues in the Department of English, for their personal interest in, and academic support for, my studies, and to other colleagues within the University of Venda for offering emotional, moral, spiritual and academic support when the sails of my life's ship were being rent asunder by turbulent storms.

Thanks are also due to Mr SC Ndaba for being kind enough to let me use some of his translations of Nyembezi's poems, which were extremely helpful in the analyses of worker poetry.

I owe a debt of love to my gifts, my daughters and my son, Rotondwa, Rofhiwa and Rolivhuwa respectively, for being the sunlight that continues to shine in my life. Their unwavering love and faith in "Daddy" continue to catalyse the articulation of my identity. My deepest appreciation also goes to members of my

family, especially my mother, Tsakani Anna, and my brothers and sister, for their support in seeing this thesis through.

Thanks are also due to numerous personal and family friends for their prayers of intercession, love and encouragement. May God return their good wishes many times over.

My sincerest gratitude is due to God the Almighty, for His grace and mercy, without which this thesis would not have seen the light of day.

I also wish to acknowledge with gratitude the financial assistance of the University of Venda's Research and Publication Committee towards the cost of this research. However, opinions expressed and / or conclusions arrived at in this study are those of the author and are not to be regarded as those of the University of Venda's Research and Publication Committee.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	vii
Chapter 1. Identity and Culture	1
Chapter 2. Poetry of the Self	29
Chapter 3. Black Consciousness Poetry	66
Chapter 4. The Poetry of Revolution	95
Chapter 5. Worker Poetry	130
Chapter 6. Feminist Poetry	163
Chapter 7. Towards a New Aesthetics	189
Bibliography	215



ABSTRACT

The main focus of this thesis is to examine how identity and culture are conceived and articulated in a representative selection of contemporary South African poetry. In the introductory chapter, an examination is made of the concepts of identity and culture, in the course of which the polarities of inside and outside, self and other, personal and political, subjective and objective, are carefully examined. Then, through close textual reference to relevant poems considered under the titles "Poetry of the Self", "Black Consciousness Poetry", "The Poetry of Revolution", "Worker Poetry" and "Feminist Poetry", the thesis attempts, by tracing the dialectical relationship of these polarities, to analyse how each putative body of poetry conceives and articulates cultural identity. The concluding chapter of the thesis, titled "Towards a New Aesthetics", argues that current research into the relationship between identity and culture opens the way to a "new" aesthetics, a new literary-critical practice, one that takes into cognisance the intersubjective complexities that shape cultural expression.