

TRENDS IN THE FORMALIST CRITICISM OF
"WESTERN" POETRY AND "AFRICAN" ORAL POETRY:
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED
CASE STUDIES

by

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
ABSTRACT	
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	
CHAPTER 1: PRELIMINARIES	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 The debate on critical methods	3
1.3 Method of this study	19
CHAPTER 2: CRITICAL METHODS AND CASE STUDIES (1)	
2.1 Introduction	23
2.2 Russian Formalism 1915–1930	27
2.2.1 Roman Jakobson (1896–1982)	37
2.2.1.1 Language and Poetics	41
2.2.1.2 Poetry as verbal art	52
2.2.2 Viktor Shlovsky (1893–1984)	75
2.2.2.1 Poeticity of poetry	75
2.2.3 Jan Mukařovský	76
2.2.3.1 Poetic language	77
2.2.3.2 Poetry as art	85
2.3 Conclusion	88
CHAPTER 3: CRITICAL METHODS AND CASE STUDIES (2)	
3.1 Introduction	91
3.2 New Criticism	92
3.2.1 Ivor A. Richards (1893–1979)	102
3.2.1.1 Functions of meaning in poetry	104
3.2.1.2 Rhythm and meter	108
3.2.1.3 Figurative language	113
3.2.2 William Empson (1906–1984)	119
3.2.2.1 Verbal analysis of poetry	121
3.2.3 Cleanth Brooks (1906–)	138
3.2.3.1 The nature of poetry	140
3.2.3.2 Images (metaphor and symbol)	142
3.2.3.3 Rhythm, rhyme and meter	148
3.2.3.4 Intention and meaning	152
3.3 Conclusion	156
CHAPTER 4: CRITICAL METHODS ON ORAL POETRY (1)	
4.1 Introduction	158
4.2 Critical methods	159
4.2.1 Isaac Schapera (1905–)	160
4.2.1.1 The context of Tswana praise poetry	161
4.2.1.2 The poetic structure of praise poetry	162
4.2.2 Archibald C. Jordan (1906–1968)	170
4.2.2.1 Context of oral literature	171
4.2.2.2 Structure of songs and poetry	173
4.2.3 Trevor Cope (1928–)	187
4.2.3.1 The context of Zulu praise poetry	187
4.2.3.2 The poetic structure of praise poetry	190
4.2.3.3 Thematic structure	199
4.3 Conclusion	204

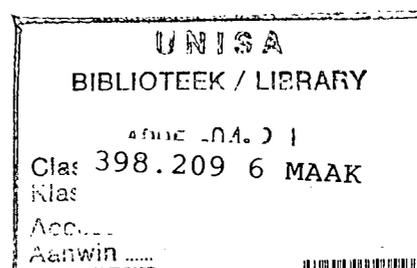
CHAPTER 5: CRITICAL METHODS ON ORAL POETRY (2)

5.1	Introduction	206
5.2	Critical methods	208
5.2.1	Daniel P. Kunene (1923–)	208
5.2.1.1	The context of Sotho praise poetry	209
5.2.1.2	Grammatical analysis (deverbatives)	210
5.2.1.3	Classification of eulogues	213
5.2.1.4	Paragraph versus stanza	217
5.2.1.5	Parallelism and structure	223
5.2.1.6	Figurative language	227
5.3.1	Jeff Opland (1943–)	242
5.3.1.1	The context of Xhosa oral poetry	242
5.3.1.2	Critical analysis	243
5.3.1.3	General structure	256
5.4	Conclusion	262

CHAPTER 6: COMPARATIVE META-CRITICISM

6.1	Introduction	265
6.2	Assessing proposed syncretic analysis	268
6.3	Conclusion	280

BIBLIOGRAPHY	282
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DECLARATION

**I DECLARE THAT THIS IS MY OWN WORK AND THAT ALL THE SOURCES
THAT I HAVE USED HAVE BEEN ACKNOWLEDGED BY MEANS OF
COMPLETE REFERENCES**

N. P. Maake

ABSTRACT

This thesis sets off from an *a priori* hypothetical position that the universality of certain language features, particularly poetic expression, provides an opportunity for syncretism in the reading, analysis, explication, and interpretation of African literature, specifically oral poetry, our teleological point being the formulation of a syncretic approach.

In the first chapter we undertake an overview of the debate which has been ensuing among 'African' critics in the search of an 'African' poetics. We proceed, in the second and third chapters, to undertake a study of two 'Western' schools of thought, namely Formalist-Structuralism and New Criticism, with a view to setting the critical theories and practice of some major protagonists of these schools of thought against sample readings of African oral poetry. In the fourth and fifth chapters we proceed to select and analyse some of the most prominent critics of African oral poetry, and undertake detailed case studies of their critical assumptions and practice, in retrospective comparison with the theoretical paradigms and practical readings dealt with in chapters two and three.

In the sixth and final chapter we assess the syncretic approach suggested, together with its implications for the future research and teaching of African oral poetry. Our findings suggest that the case studies of critiques of African oral poetry reveal certain shortcomings which might have been strengthened by a perspicacious awareness of Formalist-Structuralist and New Critical methodology.

From this *postpriori* perspective we suggest a syncretic approach which, in its sensitivity to the idiosyncratic features of African languages, will at the same time acknowledge, adopt and adapt sophisticated poetical analyses which have been developed by Western poetics. Our findings also suggest specific ways in which Western standards could be evaluated with a considerable degree of exactitude. We conclude by, *inter alia*, opening directions of research which could advance the debate towards an African poetics beyond doctrinaire wrangle, so that progress can be made through further close studies of other schools of thought and theories in order to assess their applicability and/or adaptability to African poetry and other genres.

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NYEHELO/DEDICATION

**To my wife, Matshediso Maake
and
my mother, Thokozile Queeneth Maake**

CHAPTER 1

PRELIMINARIES

1.1 Introduction

There are two distinct trends in the debate on the search for critical standards of reading, analysing, explicating, interpreting and especially judging or evaluating African literature. On the one hand there are proponents who suggest that African literature shares universal features with other literatures, and therefore the standards used in the criticism of this literature are also universal, while on the other there is strong pressure expressed by some proponents for the search of standards which should be 'African'. The suggestion of the latter school of thought affirms the autonomy of African literary criticism, and *ipso facto* the rejection of 'Western' standards.

Critics of African literature are more than ever before divided on what should comprise the standards for judging African literature. This debate has implications for the teaching of African literature, for most critics are engaged in literary criticism firstly as part of their full-time profession, which is in most cases primarily teaching literature, and to a lesser extent as a freelance commitment. As a result literary criticism is more inextricably linked with the teaching of literature in schools, universities, academies and other institutions of learning than any other profession.

The importance of this debate in shaping the direction of literary scholarship cannot be over-emphasised, and its influence is also evident in the fact that prominent among the wranglers on this subject are writers who have been, or are still, teachers of literature, whilst those whose contact with literature is merely journalistic are few indeed. Thus the polemicists are influential in directing the course of literary scholarship by setting up prescribed curricula, examining students and supervising dissertations and theses at universities.

The objective of this chapter is to study briefly some of the views which have been expressed on this theme. Though our emphasis will be mainly on the debate as it concerns South African literature, our interest applies as much to the African continent as a whole. We propose to examine different views which have been expressed by commentators apropos of this vexed question of standards of judging African literature, and to indicate both the strength and weakness, in these views

before we proceed to undertake an examination of case studies in chapters two, three, four and five.

Before we can proceed with our discussion we firstly find it necessary to clarify a few points as to the definition of "African literature". Generally the term "African literature" is used to refer to African literature written in European languages, English, French or Portuguese, while African literature written in African languages is often qualified with a triple epithet, African Language Literature. This distinction is also significant in the names of departments of literature in South African universities. Departments which teach African literature written in African languages tend to use the term "African Languages" or "African Languages and Literature" in their title, as the Universities of Cape Town, Rhodes, South Africa, the Witwatersrand, and others; or take the name of a particular language, for instance, the departments of Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, Xhosa, Venda, and so forth, as in the Universities of Fort Hare, The North, Zululand, and others. But those which teach anglophone African literature tend to adopt the title "African Literature" or "African Studies". The latter title is normally used for interdisciplinary departments, such as at the Universities of the Witwatersrand and Cape Town respectively. Some teach African literature under the auspices of Departments of English, where in most cases it is regarded as an inferior species of literature, and is accommodated begrudgingly.

We do not propose to contend with definitions of African literature, for our purpose here is mainly concerned not with literature itself but with canons of literary scholarship, and by the term canon we shall adopt Ashcroft et al's definition, that:

A canon is not a body of texts *per se*, but rather a set of reading practices (the enactment of innumerable individual and community assumptions, for example about genre, about literature, and even about writing). These reading practices, in their turn, are resident in institutional structures, such as educational curricula and publishing networks (Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin, 1989:189).

Another guiding principle in our approach is the view that African literature encompasses such a vast corpus of texts that it cannot be reduced to an absolute definition. Chinweizu et al also agree with this view:

It should be clear by now that the concept of African literature, like the concept of other national literatures, is one whose denotation is an

evolving set, it cannot be defined with a simple, clear-cut, dictionary-like definition, through an enumeration of necessary sufficient conditions (1985:307)

It is in view of this acceptance that in this thesis we shall use the term African literature to refer to African literature written in any language, even though our particular interest in this thesis is mainly on African literature written in African languages, specifically oral poetry. But if and when occasion arises which calls for specificity we shall resort to using the terms ‘anglophone’, ‘francophone’ or ‘lusophone’ African literature, to qualify African literature written in English, French and Portuguese. This is purely for the purpose of explicitness.

We are fully conscious of Ngugi’s argument in regard to the above definition of African literature. Though it is not our concern to contend with it in this thesis, we find it worth noting. Ngugi argues that literature written in non-African languages does not qualify to be called African literature: “It is *Afro-Saxon Literature*, part of that body of literature produced by African writers in foreign languages like French, Portuguese, Italian, Spanish, that we should correctly term: Afro-European literature” (Ngugi, 1981:59).

Our concern in this thesis is mainly the criticism of Western poetry as opposed to that of oral poetry. We shall use the terms “oral poetry”, “traditional poetry” and “praise poetry” interchangeably as synonymous equivalents to refer to that poetry which is composed in praise of a person, group of people, or any phenomenon, sometimes referred to as ‘panegyric’ (Finnegan, 1970), a *laudate*. We shall also use the term ‘Western’, loosely to refer to all non-African canons of literature, including those which originated in Eastern Europe and Asia, such as Russian Formalism.

1.2 The debate on critical methods

In July 1959 a conference on “Bantu literature” was held in Atteridgeville, and the renowned Zulu writer and critic, Nyembezi, then Professor of African Languages at the University of Fort Hare, made the following statement in a lecture which he presented, in which he was discussing problems facing the African writer in South Africa:

The white reader has the background of European literature. I do not believe that it is easy for such a man to forget some of the great names of European literature as he goes through a Bantu manuscript. The temptation must be considerable to view the manuscript from a

European point of view. It should be remembered that the African author is addressing himself in the first instance to his own people with whom there is fellow feeling. These are the people who in the last analysis must pass judgement on the works of African authors. And certainly, in so far as language is concerned, the best judges of what is good and beautiful in the language will be the Africans themselves. If the African critic is to be able to judge intelligently the works of African authors and to assess their merits, he must be adequately equipped for this important task by receiving training in literary appreciation (1959:18)

There are a number of implications which develop from the above assertion. Firstly, the writer makes it clear that a non-African critic is not the suitable judge for African literature, and therefore the African is the sole judge of African literature. At the same time Nyembezi is aware that there is a need to train African critics to judge their literature. This creates a paradoxical situation, in which we are aware of a potential of standards which are resident in a fluent native speaker who lacks proper training in the explication of the text, on the other hand there is a non-native speaker who is vested with standards of judgement established through a long tradition of European literature with which he or she is familiar. The race consciousness of the statement also suggests exclusion of other readers of African literature, for the term 'African' in this statement can be read as a biological reference. As far as this thesis is concerned the question of race is not relevant, as illustrated by the choice of the critics of oral poetry in chapters 4 and 5. Unlike perhaps two or three decades ago, the definition of what it means to be African has become more fluid, and will continue to be so, in such a manner that the biological element will cease to be a major common denominator.

Incidentally, a contemporary reader will also be conscious of the underlying sexist nature of the term 'a man', which seems to be used in an exclusive sense by Nyembezi. However, language sensitivities in regard to gender specifics are not the central concern of this thesis and I shall therefore choose to interpret the term 'man' inclusively.

More important than the question of race and gender per se, seems to be the question of what would constitute, in Nyembezi's terms, an 'African critic' who would be able "to judge intelligently the works of African authors and to assess their merits ..." (Nyembezi, 1959:18). More than a decade after the conference at which Nyembezi made the above assertion and already argued from a 'post-colonial' as opposed to an 'imperialist' perspective, his scepticism in regard to a reader well

versed in European traditions is echoed by L. N. Jordan, in his introduction to A. C. Jordan's (1973) study of African literature:

While many of us are relieved by the fact that entrenched European colonialism has to a certain extent died out, a new menace has appeared on the scene: The American or European academician, with camera and tape recorder, running hither and thither, collecting material for his latest book on African literature ... If literature reflects the society which produced it, then understanding the social forces at work in that literature is vital in appreciating that society's literature ... What African literature needs is work by African scholars who know and understand the cultures and peoples of Africa (Jordan, 1973:vii–viii).

The first question which comes to mind here is which standards does the hypothetical African scholar have to be equipped with in order to become a competent judge of the literature written in his or her own language. Jordan's main concern is the necessity of understanding 'social forces' only, whereas Nyembezi does not seem to be particularly interested in broader social issues, so that, in his notion of an 'African critic' he does not specifically pay attention to the requirements defined by Jordan, that an understanding of social issues is a prerequisite for an ability to appreciate a society's literature. The following questions seem significant: Does the African qualify solely by virtue of the knowledge of his or her language and culture to become a critic? On the obverse, the same question applies to a person well grounded in critical standards of non-African literature: Is that person competent simply by virtue of his or her experience and knowledge of critical methods and approaches applied to the literature which he or she is vested in? Another problem implicit in any attempted definition of a hypothetical African reader is that it seems to suggest that Africa is a monolith, without stratification and differentiation of region, gender, class, etc.

One would expect that a plausible suggestion would be to call for a solution, which on the one hand would equip the African language speaker or student of literature with the methods available, which are, inevitably 'Western', so that he can evolve new methods of analysing his literature, and on the other hand equip the 'Western' critic with intrinsic manifestations, if there are any, of African literature so that he or she can adjust his or her standards to suit it. This would facilitate the evolution of a synthetic approach to African literature.

Since Nyembezi's statement, a number of African critics have expressed the same sentiment in their judgement of Western standards, among them the often quoted Okpaku, who once asserted, in unwitting concurrence with Nyembezi a decade after the latter's statement, that:

The primary criticism of African arts must come from Africans using African standards. We cannot accept either of the two existing approaches to criticism of African literature. It is undesirable to plead for leniency in criticising African works as it is absurd for Nkosi to ask that Western critical standards be used. Western critical standards are developed in the Western tradition and are applied by Western critics to interpret and criticise Western literature to the Western audience ... So, when a Western critic looks at an African work he immediately tries to find out which Western works it best resembles so he can use this to establish communication with the Western reader. His comparisons are made against the background of Western literature and, therefore, Western culture. By the same token, an African critic trying to relate African literature or any other literature to Africa must draw upon the patterns of African aesthetic. In other words, he must use African critical standards (1969:139).

Okpaku was referring specifically to anglophone and francophone African literature, and his attack of Nkosi arises, we suppose, from the objection which Nkosi made about the exclusion of other critics from African literary works, in which he expressed scepticism to call for African standards to be applied to African literature. Nkosi raised the following objection:

In the interest of some exclusive notion of African 'culture', we are now being asked, in evaluating some African literary works (most of them written in European languages, some clearly using European models), to apply to them only those criteria based on 'African aesthetics'. In judging modern African works, which are by definition only too aware of the outside world, we are not simply asked to broaden our terms of reference sufficiently in order to take into account certain African cultural facts, but it is being suggested that African critics ought to eschew 'Western' criteria altogether and instead use indigenous critical apparatus. How this great feat, this cordone sanitaire around African art and criticism is to be

accomplished, nobody is saying. What we get are mainly assertions ...
(1981: Preface).

Nkosi, former journalist and lecturer in African literature in different Universities, and subsequently Professor of Literature at the University of Zambia, is more sensitive to implications which Okpaku is not aware of, or ignores, namely, the medium in which anglophone and francophone African literature is written. This calls for a stronger case than Okpaku's, who seems to ignore the fact that these languages in which the literature is written are not African, and thus a literature written in them implies a certain degree of risk which the African writer who has chosen that medium subjects himself to. Perhaps a more rational view is that expressed by Mphahlele, also Professor of African Literature in several Universities in America and eventually the University of the Witwatersrand, when he said:

Those of us who have chosen to write in metropolitan languages know that we have abandoned the direct route leading from tradition, which is the mother tongue, for the most intricate and perilous one of interpreting in a language and genre that belongs to a historical tradition outside our own origin. It is a perilous commitment ... another peril lies in the fact that we have to be judged in terms of the tradition in which we write - English or French or Portuguese (1973:131).

The implication in Mphahlele's suggestion is that writing in African languages stands a better chance of being judged by standards of its own. This is still far from being the truth, in that when one studies the criticism of African literature the yardstick used is that borrowed from Western standards, more so because the criticism itself is written in European languages, as evident in institutions of higher learning like universities, where dissertations and theses are presented in non-African languages even when the works being studied are themselves written in the medium of African languages. One cannot divorce the act of literary criticism, in whatever language, from the 'West', since the exercise itself is a Western concept, conceived in institutions which are Western in nature.

The question of the medium of criticising African literature has long been noted and debated upon. In the minutes of a conference on "Literature for the South African Bantu" which was held in Bloemfontein and Johannesburg in June and October 1936 respectively the minutes note that:

A question by the chairman: Should studies on the history, folk tales, etc. be submitted for publication in English or in a Bantu language, led to keen and interesting discussion on the use of Bantu languages as literary media. Some speakers said that the motive of Europeans who urge the use of Bantu languages were questioned by Africans. Africans desired the utmost freedom to use whichever language they desired. It is true, they held, that Africans must write for Africans, but English is the medium through which Africans can be reached (1936:16–17).

In South Africa the question of choice between English and the African languages has been confounded by the Bantu Education Act from the early 1950s, which advocated the use of African languages for reasons which were not humanitarian, as a result it became politically expedient for African scholars and educationists to opt for English as a unifying language, resulting in a myopic perspective of the psychological reality of language acquisition, namely, that a child learns a foreign or second language relatively easier when he or she has mastered the mother tongue proficiently. The adoption of English as a language of liberation thus relegated the African languages to an inferior position, to such an extent that they could not feature as an important concern in the debate on language and criticism.

There have been many adherents to the doctrine of exclusion of Western standards, in Africa as a whole and South Africa, and this, as indicated in Nkosi's response, has given rise to the voice of the opponents of this view: "My friend, Mr Okpaku", says Nkosi, "who has had periodic bouts of this malady, became so ambitious that he wanted to build 'a body of African critical standards for not only African literature, but all literature' " (Nkosi, 1981: Preface). It is evident here that Nkosi and Okpaku are at the extreme polarities of the debate. The former's stand is supported by his critical works, in which he uses what would be generally regarded as Western standards.

The main thrust of the argument for the rejection of Western standards is that African literature developed from a culture which is intrinsically different from European culture, with its own uniqueness which calls for peculiar standards of judgement. Perhaps the argument would be stronger if it was limited to African literature proper, as opposed to what Ngugi (1981) calls Afro-European literature, that is, African literature which is written in English and therefore does not qualify to be called African literature. But even then the question of genre still challenges the stand. On the one hand it can be argued that Africa had a literature which dates far back to pre-colonial times, as A. C. Jordan put it: "The history of the literature of southern Africa begins long before these people knew anything about writing and

long before the advent of Europeans” (1971:3), and on the other, as M. L. Maile, one of the early Southern Sotho dramatists, stated: “As you know, until the coming of the White man, the African had no literature, nor any method of recording or communicating his thoughts or the events of his life by any sort of engraved or written symbols” (1956:121).

While Jordan’s view has become the received principle, it ought to be admitted that certain literary genres are purely Western, while others are African, or common to both traditions. The novel and short story mark themselves, arguably, as genres of Western origin. If that be the case, the advocacy of the rejection of Western standards in these genres is untenable. However, there is an argument which seeks to set aside the African novel as distinct from the Western novel, and this case is put forward, amongst others, by Chinweizu et al, who assert that:

In addition to extended written narratives in African languages, there was in pre-colonial Africa an abundance of oral narratives which are in no way inferior to European novels. It might be noted that some of these, especially the epics and epic cycles, when written down, are comparable in length to quite a few European novels ... Since there are these pre-European African narratives, both oral and written ... there is no reason why they should not be considered African antecedents of the African novel, antecedents out of which the African novel might entirely have evolved, without hybridization by the European novel (Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike, 1980:27).

This argument is more than just plausible, for it is supported by narratives such as Niane’s epic-cum-novel, *Sundiata (Sunjata) an Epic of Mali* (1965), which is based solely on oral narrative, and it is far divorced from the Western novel. If it is accepted that some genre are purely African in their origin, then there can be no stronger argument against the rejection of Western standards. Nevertheless it still does not address the question of the role of criticism. The African oral literary forms were mainly communal experiences which were drawn for communal consumption, and they constitute “a distillation and clarification of a community’s thought and feeling”, to use Goodwin’s (1982:xv) phrase, whereas literary criticism is a uniquely Western phenomenon, directed at an individual reader. By this we mean that reading was not a collective activity which could be shared communally, as in the rendition of the oral poetic text, where the audience can share the recited text gregariously. Moreover, as Mazrui argues, reading is not part of enculturation in Africa as it is in the Western world. He correctly asserts that “the readership of

African literature is also affected by the fact that African literature is a child of education ...” and that “it is too intellectualized, too self-consciously didactic, partly because it is a child of education and not of socialization” (Mazrui, 1972:44). Criticism, we wish to add, is also part of Western but not African socialisation, therefore, while we concede that African literature should be read without losing perspective of its genesis, we also wish to argue that its contemporary form can only be read, explicated, analysed and interpreted in full cognisance of Western standards. Our view, however, is not meant to be prescriptive or dogmatic, but shall be substantiated with an analysis and comparative study of critiques of Western poetry and African poetry, in the second, third, fourth and fifth chapters of this thesis. A case study of critiques of the novel would be an interesting study apropos of this debate, but it is not within the scope of this thesis.

Our suggestion that criticism, as it is practised in the institutions of learning, is a Western exercise in essence, does not necessarily mean that there was no criticism at all in the performance of African poetry, or other artistic forms for that matter. This point is made clear by Ikkiddeh, in his astute argument against the adoption of Western standards in African literature, when he explains that:

In traditional practice, as far as we know, third party criticism was unknown. The practised performer was his own critic, the reaction of his audience acting as a barometer with which he gauged his lapses, his failures and moments of triumph. The audience remained the ultimate judge. Thus, appreciation or rejection was instant ... the traditional artist expected comments of his audience and would be disappointed if nothing was forthcoming (1987:135).

This statement indicates a contradiction in terms, that is, in the rejection of Western standards in a discipline which is Western in nature. It underlines the difference between the role and nature of criticism of African oral performance in its primordial context and the role and nature of poetry in Western institutions. The introduction of African oral poetry into institutions of Western education offers it as a sacrifice to the standards set by the new context, irrespective of whether the proponents of rejection would like to admit this or not. The criticism of this poetry is no longer a dialogue between the performer and his audience but a discourse between parties outside the area of performance. In this situation it is difficult to conceive how Western standards can be eschewed, though of course we must qualify this by mentioning that they cannot be adopted in totality.

Ikkiddeh does not, however, favour the use of Western standards on African arts. His stand in the post-colonial discourse is that of unreserved and outright rejection of Western standards: “We insist that our dual heritage [African and Western] criticism of modern African literature has suffered from imported abuse, the appreciated (sic) of our oral literature should be saved from that” (1987:137). His assertion goes even further:

In a broad sense, all literature exists in its composition and appreciation within a cultural context, but with its traditional leaning, oral literature perhaps stays closer to its cultural soil. The critic who will make bold statements backed up by cross references to enrich the appreciation he passes on to his audience must be one whose understanding of the work under consideration goes beyond the text (Ikkiddeh, 1987:139)

This statement supports our view, and by implication suggests that the act of criticism as practised presently transplants the text, especially oral poetry, from its context, and analyses it outside its domain of operation.

In order to be understood in a proper perspective, the debate for the search of African standards should be seen as part of the post-colonial experience, the thrust towards the decolonisation of Africa. The term ‘decolonization’ has become the main thematic concept in the post-colonial discourse, in addition to ‘post-coloniality’ and ‘neo-coloniality’. When African states gained their independence from European powers, movements like Nkrumah’s Pan-Africanism, the Negritude of Leopold Sedar Senghor and Aimé Césaire, the Afro-American Black consciousness movement in North America, and later the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa, asserted the need for African assertion and total liberation of the African from the former colonial masters, thus art in general, and literature, as part of a wider cultural spectrum, was part and parcel of the greater movement of decolonisation. The thrust of the Négritude approach is succinctly summarised by Ashcroft et al, in their discussion and critique of theory and practice in post-colonial literatures, as follows:

Black culture, it claimed, was emotional rather than rational; it stressed integration and wholeness over analysis and dissection; it operated by distinctive rhythmic and temporal principles, and so forth. Négritude also claimed a distinctive African view of time-space relationships, ethics, metaphysics, and an aesthetics which separated

itself from the supposedly 'universal' values of European taste and style. The danger was that, as a result, it could easily be re-incorporated into a European model in which it functioned only as an anti-thesis of white supremacy, a new 'universal' paradigm (Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin, 1989:21).

The rejection, or the advocacy of rejection of Western standards in the study of African literature was therefore part of this post-colonial renaissance of Africanness or Blackness. Since the post-colonial stage is not a definite but an evolutionary spatial and temporal state which phases imperceptibly into the neo-colonial stage, the wider cultural debate, which is the context of the literary discourse, still continues. The concept of post-coloniality in the attempt to appropriate post-independence aesthetics, is predominant. Ashcroft et al (1989:24) mention the general acceptance of the nomenclature 'post-colonial' in favour of 'colonial literature' and 'Commonwealth literature'. Although the coinage of new terms would seem to imply that the realisation of Africanness constitutes a break with Western culture and traditions, the very presence of 'colonial' in the concept 'post-colonial' points to an inevitable intertwinement of 'Western' and 'African' notions. It is not surprising, then, to find critics like Nkosi drawing attention to the necessity of a recognition of the 'colonial experience' in the shaping of a notion of what should constitute an 'African' literature and criticism. The significance of the colonial experience in defining Africanness is emphasised by Nkosi, in his reminiscences of a conference of anglophone and francophone writers which was held at the capital of Uganda, Kampala, in 1962. The seemingly futile attempt of the delegates to define African literature led him to this observation:

Whether the delegates wanted it to be so or not, it seemed to me that, ultimately, what linked various African peoples on the continent was the nature and depth of colonial experience; and this was the final irony. Colonialism had not only delivered them unto themselves, but had delivered them unto each other, had provided them, so to speak, with a common language and an African consciousness; for out of rejection had come affirmation (Nkosi, 1983:124).

In 1983, nearly two decades after the beginning of the post-colonial period, a conference was held at the Africa Centre in London, and its central theme was, "research priorities in African literatures and to formulate strategies for supplying the scholarly tools that would facilitate work in these new literatures". It is worth

noting that at this conference Ngugi emphasised the necessity to consider the effect of imperialism on the development of African literature. This means that the discussion of standards to be used in describing and judging African literature is contextualised as an inevitable outcome of what Nkosi called the 'colonial experience'. Ngugi expressed his point of view as follows:

Now one thing affecting the development of African literature is imperialism, the most important social force in Africa in this century. But most scholars in African literature have refused to recognise that there is such a force as imperialism. Indeed, if it is discussed at all, usually it is to dismiss it as phrase-mongering work of politicians only. Such literary scholars tend to say, "Oh, that's politics. That's not really for us". Scholars in other disciplines -- economics and politics, for instance -- have long recognised imperialism as a social force in Africa, but literary scholars are suspicious of it. When it creeps into academic studies, they claim that such studies are not really acceptable as literary scholarship, and so on. Yet imperialism, both in its colonial and neo-colonial stages, is the one force that affects *everything* in Africa - politics, economics, culture, absolutely every aspect of human life. African literature itself has grown and developed in response to imperialism (Lindfors, 1984:8).

In short, what the above statement means is that even literature is influenced by the West, that African literature developed partly because of cultural intercourse with the West, just short of saying that it developed from it. The implication here is that the African, as a critic, cannot divorce herself or himself from Western standards of literature. A view corroborating the above was expressed by Chinweizu, a journalist-critic and ardent proponent of the decolonisation of African literature, who put it as follows:

I would suggest that scholars who wish to discourse on African literature should remember that one of the cardinal purposes of any worthwhile scholarship is to assist people to achieve the kind of self-awareness that will help them carry out their historical projects ... To that end, scholarship would do well to exhume and study Africa's classical traditions, and clarify and disseminate them, so they can be useful to us ... The subservient role of the scholar needs to be emphasized because 25 to 30 year history of Western scholarship on

African literature has given some of us cause to wonder whether Western scholars, when they turn to interpret African literature, do not somehow find themselves encouraged to become pontiffs, whereas when they turn to their own literature, they hardly adopt that tone ... Too many Western critics, despite that wide bend of territory between interpretation and pontification, manage to slide across it to mount all too easily the pontifical dais of infallibility when making pronouncements on African literature. Some humility on their part would be welcome (Lindfors, 1984:15).

This declamation rather comes short of providing any insight as to the question of the relationship between African and Western criticism, but merely talks about attitudes. It is for this reason that our investigation into this issue will be presented in a different form and that any inferences in this regard will be based on a comparative analysis between critics exemplifying both 'Western' and 'African' critical practice.

In the early stages of the debate on African standards most South Africans who found themselves attracted to it were mainly those in exile, for instance, the above-mentioned Nkosi and Mphahlele, because in the mother country literary scholarship was engaged outside the discourse of post-independent Africa, and such a debate was still premature. Since this debate was taking place on an international stage obviously the main focus had to be on African literature written in international languages, with implications for African language literatures.

It is only in the 1970s and 1980s, especially in the latter decade, that some views on the matter began to be expressed by critics, most or all of whom, as already indicated, were practitioners of literary criticism engaged in teaching literature in Universities. However, the debate was slow to take off, perhaps one of the main reasons was that the ethics of "publish or perish" had not yet taken root in South African universities as it has always been abroad. In other words, the universities were 'teaching' institutions rather than research or 'publishing' institutions.

Whether or not this debate will continue for longer or will decline towards a denouement it is no longer an important question, for it has been going on for so long that it seems that there is nothing new to be added for or against Western standards. The proponents of this Afro-centric view of literary criticism have expressed no more or less vehement views against this stand than their Euro-centric opponents, and the important task now is to see whether it has had any apparent

fruitful results manifested in the actual criticism of African literature, which is the main concern of this thesis.

An important step which cannot go without mention was made by Anozie (1980), among others, in moving beyond the debate and practically finding ways towards a “poetics of African” literature. However, being a product of the Paris-Sorbonne he could not have weaned himself of the influence of French Structuralism, and to some extent semiotics. Anozie was guided by the principle that “no adequate sociological theory of African literature, the novel in particular, can be formulated outside a framework of structuralism” (Gates, 1984:106). Consequently in essence his study is an adaptation of French Structuralism to African literature, thus we find that his study is a case for the adoption and adaptation of Western methods rather than developing African aesthetics or methods of analysing African texts.

In this thesis we have decided to select two major schools of literary scholarship, Russian Formalism of the *Opojaz* and Moscow Circle (including the Prague Circle) and New Criticism, choosing three theorists from each, Roman Jakobson, Jan Mukařovsky and Viktor Shlovsky from the former, Ivor A. Richards, Cleanth Brooks and William Empson from New Criticism, in order to compare their critical and analytical methods with the methods used by five major critics of South African oral poetry, namely, Isaac Schapera, Archibald C. Jordan, Trevor Cope, Daniel P. Kunene, and Jeff Opland. In order to make more sense of this debate we have chosen to undertake case studies rather than engage in polemics, so as to see whether there has been any advance in terms of practice, as opposed to merely debating.

The two groups, Formalist-Structuralism and New Criticism on the one hand, and critics of African oral poetry on the other, stand dialectically opposed, and provide an opportunity to highlight the debate. In the first instance, the Western critics we have chosen purport to be interested in the intrinsic aspects of the text. Given the insistence such as Jordan’s on a consideration of social factors for a proper understanding of African literature, it would seem that African critics favour an extrinsic approach. Taken at surface value, there seems to be no overlap between the two polarities, whereas a study of the self-proclaimed sociological approach of the latter has used many aspects of New Critics and Formalist-Structuralism. This will therefore concur with our argument for a synthetic approach to the study of literature.

It will be noticed that the two major schools of thought we have chosen have dominated literary scholarship since the second decade of this century consistently up to the early 1980s, and that some of their pioneers or their protégés have survived

up to this decade and to date. The five critics on South African oral poetry span over four decades, the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Though few and far between, we have decided that our analytical survey should cover such a relatively wide period so as to determine whether there are any apparent influences by Western standards on the criticism of such a unique genre as praise poetry, and to establish whether there are any apparent differences and evolution in their critiques, since they converge from different academic influences and persuasions.

Our *a priori* and *post priori* hypothesis is that as long as genres such as oral poetry are studied, analysed and interpreted in the medium of English, or any other foreign language, the tendency will be to carry over standards which are practised in the canons of the medium of criticism. No language can be adopted without importing its cultural baggage. It is only when African literary genres written in African languages are analysed in the medium of these languages that the full weight of their culture can be brought into play. In this regard the advantage of being able to read the text in its original language, and analyse it in that language can play an important role in establishing new standards, against Western standards. This fact has been missed by African critics, and those who advocate new standards. They are trapped into arguing in Western languages within parameters set by the context in which they argue, Western institutions. In arguing within this limitation they forget even the fundamental issue, namely that no matter how divergent Western and African language can be, there are certain universal features which transcend geographical, ethnic, national and political boundaries, such as figurative use of language - irony, metaphor, simile and synecdoche, and the use of devices such as parallelism and alliteration, as this discussion will illustrate.

A further note of justification is in place here, as to the omission of other influential schools of thought prevalent in the study of literature, namely, French Structuralism and Post-structuralism, Post-modernism, Marxist critique, Feminism, and Sociology of literature. These approaches may be helpful in our understanding of the need for the poetics of African oral poetry, or other genres for that matter, but we have chosen to narrow our scope in order to focus attention on one particular genre, and it is in this field that Formalist-Structuralists and New Critics, perhaps more than any other schools of thought which came after them, have had a lot to contribute in terms of Western standards. It is for this reason that we have decided to study what may seem to be an outdated model. It is our hope that other scholars will pursue the study of post-Formalist-Structuralist theories and contribute to the debate towards the search for an African poetics. A sociological approach is however, implied in the analyses of Schapera, Jordan, Cope, Kunene and Opland. Moreover, we have suggested, in the foregoing consideration of opposing views

from scholars of African literature, that a specific analysis of critical practice could be more productive than a mere reiteration of already established attitudes, even though such attitudes are offered within a contemporary post-colonial frame of reference. Since our objective is to undertake a detailed study of aspects of the critical practice resulting from the theoretical paradigms we have chosen, we find the imperative to curtail our scope inevitable, and secondly, the schools of thought mentioned above seem to have made a far less significant impression on the canons of African language literatures, and their influence still has to make a mark, more so on the genre which we have chosen, oral poetry.

Central to the argument which we wish to present, but only *postpriori* is the assumption that the advocacy of the rejection of Western standards in favour of a purely African approach to literature is a dissipation of scholarly advancement and an irrelevance. The main question is how far has a synthesis been created between what is termed Western standards and the demands required by the unique aspects of African literature, and how this can be used in order to advance a further synthetic or syncretic approach. This can be done only through meta-critical and comparative case studies, instead of argumentation. So far as we are aware, no study of this nature has been undertaken. Underlying the debate in favour of relegating Western standards is a presupposition that in a dialectical relationship between an imperial and subject culture the polarity remains static, and that in order to impede domination of one by the other the choice has to be made strictly between two incompatible polarities, the African or colonial on the one hand, and the Western or imperial on the other. To the contrary, our thesis argues in favour of a synthesis, in concurrence with Gérard's suggestion, in his discussion of language and literature in the Western tradition, that: "Clashes between cultures of unequal power have occurred frequently in the history of human societies. Contrary to appearances (and claims) they seldom end in complete annihilation of the 'weaker' culture by the 'stronger'. Acculturation is not a one-way street" (1990:27). However, it must be acknowledged that domination has always been the characteristic in the relationship of inequality between the colonised and the imperial subjects, and cases of 'assimilation' have shown that there has been annihilation of some colonised cultures by imperial ones.

As already mentioned, other serious implications of the criticism debate concern the medium in which texts are studied. We shall consider this question briefly and in passing here, in the hope that the field in that direction will be traversed by other scholars. There are two trends in this regard. In some South African universities criticism of African literature is written in the medium of a second language, while in a few the medium of criticism is the language of the text.

The reason for this development is that literary criticism is directed at or meant for different audiences.

Firstly, there is the student of African literature whose native language is the language of the text, and therefore studies the literature and undertakes the criticism in the original language of the text. This is so especially in the formerly exclusively 'African' universities like Fort Hare, Transkei, Turfloop (North), Zululand, and others. In these universities Bachelor of Arts with Honours dissertations are in most cases written in the African language, while Master's and Doctoral degrees are submitted in either of the formerly 'official' languages, English and Afrikaans. Unfortunately the results of research undertaken in these universities, and presented in an African language, seem to have hitherto exerted little influence in the efforts to define critical standards informed by an African aesthetics. Secondly there is the student to whom the language of the text is a second or foreign language, as a result criticism at undergraduate level is undertaken in either Afrikaans or English, as in the formerly exclusively 'white' and formerly so-called 'open' universities like Cape Town, Natal, Port Elizabeth, Potchefstroom, Pretoria, Rand Afrikaans, Rhodes, and the Witwatersrand, including the correspondence University of South Africa.

In the past few years there has developed a trend among some Africanist oriented scholars to advocate the writing of the critical text in the source language, and this is apparent, for instance, in some critiques of the novel, drama, and oral poetry by M. Damane's *Maratha a Dilepe a Puo ea Sesotho* (1960), S. T. Chaphole's *Dihaeya* (1985), D. J. M. Ngcangca's *Majwana a Motheo Dingolweng* (1987), C. T. Msimang's *Izimbongi Izolo Nanamuhla I and II* (1986, 1988), J. Opland's and P. Mtuze's *Izwi Labantu* (1994), to name but a few. However, this trend, in practical terms, is still in its infancy and it has to be seen how it will develop in the future. It must be noted that the writers mentioned above are not necessarily of the opinion that criticism has to be written in African languages, but that their works may be regarded as a manifestation of this inclination.

The significance of the latter movement on the debate and teaching of African literature cannot be undermined, in that it indicates two extrinsic influences in the system of our teaching of literature. The first is the apartheid nature of our social and educational system, which deprives the speakers of other languages, except in an insignificant number of cases, of the opportunity to mix socially with African languages speakers to an extent that they can reach proficient levels of these languages, so that on the whole one finds academics who know only enough of the language to write some critical works on poetry, specifically, and little on other longer genres. The second influence is imperial, that is, the orientation of scholars towards an international readership, this being a legacy of South Africa's colonial

past which imposed upon our university system Oxbridge standards, which have since made the African languages parochial media which gave place to English, even in the study of the literatures of these languages. Also notable is the fact that the legacy of English imperialism carried over the influence of English literary scholarship, which limited approaches to literature to the New Criticism, and the Leavisite "Great Tradition".

In addition to the bias towards Africanisation there is also a movement now beginning to manifest itself in the teaching of literature in universities, which is evident in the new departments which seek to embrace other non Anglo-American critical methods, and one can name two examples, the departments of Comparative Literature and division of African Literature at the University of the Witwatersrand, and the department of Theory of Literature of the University of South Africa. The division of African Literature is inclined towards a sociological approach to literature, while Comparative and Literary Theory departments are theoretical and eclectic in their approaches.

Other universities have become interdisciplinary, where literature is taught as part of an "African Studies" programme, which ranges over history, politics, anthropology, sociology, and economics. In such cases literature usually takes the background, like a kind of tolerated discipline which has not quite developed its own scientific methods. It is in view of this situation that this thesis seeks to make sense of the debate on literary critical methods.

1.3 Objective and method of this study

The method in this thesis will follow this outline: (1) In the second chapter of this thesis we shall undertake an overview of Russian Formalism and Prague Structuralism, which we will classify under the common nomenclature of Formalist-Structuralism, giving a brief historical outline, then follow up by selecting major figures who have made everlasting contributions to the study of poetry in general. As we proceed we shall compare the case studies with some approaches used by critics of African oral poetry, which will be dealt with in chapters four and five. We find Formalist-Structuralism to be the most appropriate and more relevant for our purpose because it is one of the major schools of thought which concerned itself almost exclusively with the study of the nature of poetic language (especially Russian Formalism), up to an extent which no school of thought has ever done. Arguably, no school of literary criticism in the twentieth century has had more to do with poetics than Formalist-Structuralism. We shall study the contribution of the following critics in the study of poetic language through case studies: Roman Jakobson, Viktor

Shlovsky, and Jan Mukařovský. (2) In the third chapter we shall follow the same approach with New Criticism. We shall select a number of pioneering proponents of this school of thought, do a case study of their analyses, and in the same way look at how their approach could be or has been utilised in the study of oral poetry. Furthermore, we shall also look at how their contribution has been used without attribution. Our selection will be Ivor. A. Richards, Cleanth Brooks and William Empson. (3) In the fourth and fifth chapters we shall follow the same approach of selection and case study. We shall do a case study of the analyses of a number of critics of African oral poetry, so that we can illustrate the influence of 'Western' schools of thought, specifically the main two which we are studying in the previous two chapters. In this regard the criteria for selection of critics are based mainly on their influence in the study of oral poetry, since there is no specific school of thought, in the strict sense of the word, they can be said to adhere to. We have selected Isaac Schapera, Archibald C. Jordan, Trevor Cope, Daniel P. Kunene, and Jeff Opland. Our study of these critics with reference to the two 'Western' schools which we have selected will serve a dual purpose. In the first instance it will be a comparative study of the methods and approaches used by Formalist-Structuralists and New Critics on the one hand, and the critics of African oral poetry on the other. In the second instance it will serve as a criticism of the reading of oral poetry, where we will indicate how we would use an eclectic and synthetic approach in the reading of the case studies, instead of an approach which falsely claims, implicitly or explicitly, to be purely 'African' and not derivative. The choice is further justified by the fact that the critics of African poetry we have selected are contemporaries of the Western critics we have chosen.

Our preference for case studies instead of looking at general characteristics of what could be termed 'Western' or 'African' criticism is guided by the hypothesis that the two terms can be misleading. There are as many Western methods and approaches to the reading of poetry as there are individual theorists, even though there are of course common characteristics that they share, which can to a certain extent justify the use of a collective nomenclature. This hypothesis extends to African criticism, which can be misleadingly said to be monolithic. The case studies will illustrate that the diversity of approaches to oral poetry defies the simplistic generalisation of referring to Africa as a homogeneous entity. Moreover, it goes beyond mere polemics, and presents concrete evidence of practical examples, and therefore puts us in a better light in understanding the quest for an African poetics.

We have left out other major schools of thought which dominated the study of literature in this century because, as stated earlier, the two we have chosen were the only ones concerned strictly with the nature of poetic language. Secondly, our

conviction, as we propose to indicate in our conclusion, is that the study of extra-textual or exophoric reference, though helpful, does not provide us with tools for analysing poetry, or with a theoretical framework. It is mainly the intrinsic nature of poetic language, irrespective of the origin of the text, which provides ways of understanding its expression, for language, being peculiar to human beings, bears more universal and common elements than peculiar elements. As my case studies will illustrate, the difference of what is poetry in one language cannot be infinitely diverse from what is poetry in another, it can only be marginal, it is for this reason that we find that the Formalists' concept of 'defamiliarisation' and 'foregrounding', for instance, can be universally applied, and cannot be replaced by any concept, for that is what determines the poeticity of poetry, in any language, and it can be helpful in the definition and study of oral poetry. This genre can justify its *raison d'être* by defining itself through the devices of 'foregrounding' and 'defamiliarisation'. We also wish to contend that the study of cultural, historical, economic and other extra-literary material is not a domain of literary studies, but that of other disciplines which may be complementary but do not have to be an integral part of poetic studies.

Our main argument is that language is the *sine qua non* of any text, therefore the study of a text should primarily consider its linguistic form, and this can be done without much recourse to the historical or socio-political context of the text. While the context does lead to wider understanding of what contributes in the making of text, it is in the study of language that a deeper understanding of poetry can be reached. We shall illustrate this point explicitly in the fourth and fifth chapters, particularly when we study Kunene's and Jordan's critiques of oral poetry. The fact that Formalist-Structuralists and New Critics never came across each other's works, but there is a coincidence in their analysis of poetic language may be construed as further evidence that all languages and texts carry aspects which are fundamentally and broadly universal. There are also some overlaps, whether coincidental or derivative, between these Western critical methods and those of the critics of African poetry we have selected. It is thus that we would wish to argue for a syncretic approach, which will reveal universal tropes.

Yet another motive guiding our preference to doing a historical study of Formalist-Structuralism and New Criticism is that these schools have contributed in many ways to the study of African oral poetry, even in the approaches such as Kunene's, which seem to be original. This has come about because the direct ancestry of some of the Formalist-Structuralists' and New Critics' ideas have been diffused over time, so that their ancestry and origin cannot be easily traced. Perhaps with the latter it can be more easily done than with the former, since there has been

a direct historical link between the anglophone world, especially Britain, with South Africa and other anglophone African countries and ex-colonies, whereas the influence of Formalist-Structuralism took a long detour from Eastern Europe, and by the time it reached the developing world it had already been diffused with American critiques, as the story of Jakobson's migration from Russia via Eastern and Western Europe to America will partly indicate. The task of tracing the influence of New Criticism from its earliest pioneer in the nineteenth century, Matthew Arnold, is within our ability to discuss *in extenso*, but not within the scope of our purpose in this thesis. Our historical overview of Russian Formalism/Prague Structuralism and New Criticism case studies will be narrowed to what is relevant, leaving out the contribution of New Critics in the study of other genres.

In conclusion, we would like to briefly reiterate our main objectives in this study: 1) To consider by means of a comparative analysis of selected case studies, the relevance of 'Western' critical standards for an understanding and evaluation of African oral poetry. Our underlying assumption here is that a detailed analysis of the critical practice of some European theoreticians may disclose useful scholarly tools for an informed analysis of African oral poetry. Our focus will be on understanding rather than evaluation - we will consider skills required for the analysis and interpretation of African oral poetry. Our underlying assumption here is that a shift of focus from preoccupation with criteria for judgement to a consideration of scholarly tools for analysis and interpretation will result in a constructive contribution to the study of African oral poetry; 2) To propose a synthetic or syncretic approach as a response to the on-going debate in regard to the merits and demerits of either adopting 'Western' critical standards or opting for an exclusive 'African' aesthetics. Our underlying assumption here is, notwithstanding the need to take into account the genesis of African oral poetry, that its contemporary form can only be read, explicated, analysed and interpreted in full cognisance of Western critical practice.

CHAPTER 2

2.1. Introduction:

The first difficulty which is often encountered in defining a school of thought or movement is finding general terms which will encompass all that the movement stands for in its entirety. Not least daunting is the task of choosing the main protagonists of the movement, upon whose theories one can claim to find generalisations which justify inclusion of some and exclusion of others, as Erlich puts the position with reference to Russian Formalism: "No individual theoretician, however dynamic or influential, could claim full credit - or assume full blame - for the Formalist methodology. It was a product of intellectual team work rarely paralleled in the history of literary scholarship ... " (Erlich, 1981:70).

Even a monolithic deism such as Christianity has its own schisms: Catholicism and Protestantism; established church and nonconformist church; high church and low church ethics; celibate priesthood and matrimonial ministry; established and separatist or syncretic denominations and so forth. It is therefore logical that phenomena without a centrifugal force, like secular schools of thought, philosophies, or even ideologies, should embrace as many variant versions within themselves as there are individual proponents. The case is not more true of any philosophy than any of those schools of thought or theoretical paradigms which this thesis sets out to discuss, namely, Formalist-Structuralism and New Criticism.

With reference to Russian Formalism some five years after its beginning there came a rift between some of the major theoreticians, embodied by the two institutions which formed the Formalist school. On the one hand the Petrograd group was mainly concerned with literary history and resorted to linguistics as an area of ancillary interest, while on the other the Moscow circle of linguists regarded poetics as an integral part of linguistics.

The rift between the two groups was personified in the conflict between the linguists Jakobson and Borgatyrev on the one hand, and the literary historians Eikhenbaum and Shlovsky on the other, and the Formalist sympathiser Zirmunskij. As Erlich puts it: "Jakobson stated the case for a consistently linguistic approach to poetry in no uncertain terms ... 'Poetry', wrote Jakobson, 'is simply language in its aesthetic function ... ' " while Eikhenbaum argued that "Poetics is based on the teleological principle and therefore uses as its point of departure the concept of device. Linguistics, like all natural science, revolves around the category of

causations, that is, the notion of the phenomenon as such" (Erlich, 1981:95). Zirmunskij, on the other hand, insisted that there was a relationship between literature and society, despite his sympathies with the Formalist critical methods and theories which excluded extra-literary elements in the study of the text. He was attacked by Eikhenbaum, who asserted that Zirmunskij had never been a real Formalist: "Zirmunskij found the Formal method of interest only as one of a set of possible scientific rubrics - as the technique of breaking material down into various groupings. With such a conception of the Formal method, nothing else could have been expected of him than what he in fact produced" (Matejka and Pomorska, 1971:23). Zirmunskij eventually parted ways with the Formalists. The gradual disintegration of the Formalist school was noted by Bakhtin (who was not part of the movement), though with some degree of exaggeration:

Formalism was no longer the unified movement it had been in its first period, although its basic premises and habits of thinking were still completely intact ... The process of dissolution of formalist theory and the disagreement among its practitioners is reaching its climax at the present time [1920s]. Strictly speaking, formalism should now be considered a thing of the past. The movement has no unity. The militant slogans have faded. There have become as many formalisms as there are formalists (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1985:68-9).

Despite their major differences on the place of poetics in relation to linguistics, there are, however, some common features of the critical methods of these theorists which guaranteed their continued categorisation or definition as Formalists. The problem of direct discrepancies and incidental ones is also characteristic of the other critics which we are going to discuss here.

A comment about our decision to leave out Bakhtin, a contemporary of the Russian Formalists, in the list of theorists selected for detailed attention in our case studies, is perhaps required. Though being rediscovered in certain critical circles, including South African literary studies, Bakhtin's views, together with his contribution to the study of the literary text, present a three-fold problem: Firstly, he never joined any school of thought, nor wanted to influence any, and never debated issues with Formalists personally; secondly, most of the works which are attributed to him cannot be verified to be his exactly, finally, he did not regard himself as a literary theorist although he brushed shoulders with Futurists, and "whatever else he may have been, Bakhtin was an opponent of canons, and to claim that any version of him is somehow the correct one would be to straightjacket the

philosopher of variety, to 'monologize' the singer of 'polyphony' " (Clark and Holquist, 1984:4). The controversy over three major works now attributed to Bakhtin, Medvedev and Voloshinov is discussed in the detailed biographical discussion of the development of Bakhtin's thoughts by Clark and Holquist, in a chapter entitled "The Disputed Texts" (1984:146-170). The fact that Bakhtin was influenced by both Formalists and Marxists, thereby suggesting a possible inter-articulation between the so-called intrinsic and extrinsic approaches, not only supports this view, but, more importantly, it may be construed as an indication that the proposed syncretic approach advocated in this study could perhaps best be guided by his theories on language and the dialogic nature of literary discourse. The extent to which his theory deviated from the ideas of the Formalists and Structuralists resulted in an incorporation of some of his concepts of post-coloniality in the "post-independence aesthetics" noted above (see chapter 1: section 1.2), and it might well be a worthwhile enterprise to consider Bakhtin's relevance for the study of African literature. However, our focus in this study is primarily on the critical practice of some African critics of oral poetry; whereas Bakhtin's theories of discourse, particularly the polyphony of voices present in utterances, refer to a different genre, namely novels. It is for this reason that we have excluded him from our selection of case studies.

This problem of schism of methodological and theoretical differences also manifests itself in other schools of our choice, and ramifies into a second problem, that of selection. With a school of thought such as, for instance, New Criticism, which attracted a wide variety of rigorous and talented scholars it is not easy to choose representative figures: It is difficult to justify the choice, as we have done here, of I. A. Richards, William Empson, and Cleanth Brooks but exclude F. R. Leavis, T. S. Eliot, John C. Ransom, John Tate, C. K. Ogden and J. Wood. It may also be argued, as Gräbe does, that "this group was not homogeneous, and its members differed radically on many issues - there was no question of a "school" in the sense that Russian Formalism constituted a school" (Gräbe, 1985:101). This strengthens our case study approach, for it illuminates individual contributions at one level, and coincidences of analyses at another, partly arising from the universal aspects of language, which cannot be avoided in the reading of any text.

We admit the shortcomings of this selection, and that it is not meant to indicate or imply the superiority of some theorists and methodologists over others, but is purely an expedient way of attempting to illustrate by case studies the main purpose of this discussion, which is to compare critical methods applied in the study of South African literature, specifically oral poetry, with the general trend of changes in literary scholarship in general over a certain period of time, in view and context of

the debate and search for critical standards for African literature. Implied also is our intention to open up the field for other scholars who may take interest in looking at the contribution of other critics not studied here.

The third problem in dealing with amorphous phenomena such as movements or schools of thought is that a discourse of their theories is inextricably intertwined with its history, which gives rise to the classic problem of periodisation. The problems of periodisation can perhaps be illustrated by an anecdote which concerns Roman Jakobson: In 1943 he was invited by one of his protégés, Sebeok, to an American University. When he arrived there he was asked by another colleague to give an impromptu lecture. When he suggested that he was going to talk on the theme "The theory of the sign", his host in that lecture interjected by saying that the idea dated back to Medieval philosophy. Jakobson retorted that "it goes back at least to Plato" (Sebeok, 1979:228).

The point we are trying to make here is that the beginning of a movement or school of thought cannot be clearly marked in terms of individuals or a specific time, for all that has come before always has a bearing on what seems to be a new idea. As a result our reference to Formalism will be understood to include both Prague and French Structuralism, which both hinge on Saussurean semiotics.

Though our intention here is to study the theoretical and scientific methods of the schools mentioned above, we find ourselves bound to encroach upon the history of the movements per se, and also that of the protagonists themselves. Therefore in this chapter our objective is to: (1) Give a brief background to the school or movement, and then (2) go on to give an overview of biographical background of the theoreticians we have chosen, though the latter will of course be circumscribed to what is pertinent to their theoretical contribution to the methodology of criticism, and (3) finally undertake a full study of their general theories and methods, by selecting sample case studies of their analytical practice - Formalist-Structuralism. In the process we shall be constantly making references to critiques of African oral poetry, and make suggestions as to possibilities of using these theoretical methods in the critical reading of African literature.

Having stated the above, there are, however, certain generalisations which we can make without the danger of over-simplifying with reference to these literary approaches mentioned above, namely that they each originate in a particular geographical area, or at least philosophical or ideological milieu at a particular period, which can be roughly mapped out. For instance, Russian Formalism, as the name indicates, developed in pre-Soviet Russia and migrated to Czechoslovakia (The Prague School) as it followed the migration of its protagonists such as Roman Jakobson, Viktor Shlovsky and Eikhenbaum; and New Criticism, dealt with in the

third chapter, originated in England, particularly Oxbridge, and across the Atlantic to its other leg of English literary and cultural continuity in the United States, mainly the Vanderbilt University based agrarian movement, the Fugitives. The anglophone critique has a common root further back in the nineteenth century, in its Victorian forebear, Matthew Arnold.

An all embracing generalisation would therefore be that these schools of thought can be traced to one of the following: A particular protagonist or critic, if not a group of them, a group of critics; an institution, academic, cultural or social in its nature; a specific political unit e.g. The *Opojaz* in Moscow, literary Structuralism in Paris, New Criticism in Cambridge, Linguistic Structuralism at the Prague school in Czechoslovakia etc.; and finally, that the principles are related to other disciplines, history, linguistics, sociology, anthropology or even social criticism, in terms of how they have sought to be divorced from them.

2.2. Russian Formalism, 1915–1930:

One of the protagonists of the movement which became known as 'Russian Formalism', Eikhenbaum, explained that: "Our method is usually referred to as 'Formalist'. I would prefer to call it morphological, to differentiate it from other approaches such as psychological, sociological and the like, where the object of inquiry is not the work itself, but that which, in the scholar's opinion, is reflected in the work ... we are not 'Formalists', but if you will, specifiers" (Erlich: 1981:171).

Russian Formalism began with seminar meetings of two groups, one consisting mainly of scholars of philology, the Moscow Linguistic Circle founded in 1915, under the chairmanship of Roman Jakobson, and the *Opojaz*, an acronym meaning Society for the Study of Poetic Language, which was founded at the then city of St Petersburg (Petrograd) in 1916 under the chairmanship of Viktor Shlovsky. These two schools were subsequently guided by the work of the Swiss pioneer of structuralism and semiotics, Ferdinand de Saussure's thesis (1916), which postulated that language was composed of signs (*signifiers*), which are autonomous from what they signify (*signifié*).

Saussure suggested that meaning was not inherent in a sign or word, but was arbitrarily attributed to it in terms of its paradigmatic relationship with other words whose meaning is different, for instance 'cat' was understood because it was different from 'bat'. This idea of the autonomy of the sign, or the word, or language, laid the foundation for the Formalists' divorce of the text from the context, taking it as an autonomous object. To Saussure language (*langue*) was the centre of attention but not the content. This also gives rise to the Formalist's concern

with the form rather than the content of the text, which in their case was poetry. One of the Prague Structuralists, Jan Mukařovský, was echoing Saussure when he asserted that:

Every work of art is an autonomous sign composed of: (1) an artifact functioning as a perceivable signifier; (2) an 'aesthetic object' which is registered in the collective consciousness and which functions as 'signification'; (3) a relationship of a thing signified (this relationship refers not to any distinct existence - since we are talking about an autonomous sign - but to the total context of social phenomena, science, philosophy, religion, politics, economics, and so on, of any given milieu) (Matejka and Titunik, 1986:9).

Mukařovský's well-known distinction between artifact and aesthetic object may be used in defining some unique features of an oral text. The actual words and expression of an oral poem, whether spoken or written, constitute the constant element which we would be able to recognise objectively as an 'artistic artifact'. There is, however, a difference between the artistic artifact and the 'aesthetic object', in that the former may be registered or concretised differently in the "collective consciousness" of different readers. Whereas the artistic artifact would remain constant regardless of whether it is spoken or written, in the case of concretising oral poetry, the concretisation of the aesthetic object will be complicated by differences between an oral rendering of a poem as opposed to its written transcription. We shall comment on the communication situation of oral poetry generally in our case studies of African critics in chapters 4 and 5. Suffice it to say at this point, that given the uniqueness of the communication between bard and audience in an oral performance of a poem, one would expect that the audience's perception may to some extent be directed by the bard performing the text. Jeff Opland is one of the African critics referred to subsequently (see Chapter 5: section 5.3.1) who even insists that elements such as the bard's voice, gesticulations, pitch and other aspects are part of the oral text. However, we would like to argue that such 'extratextual elements', precisely because they are part of the performance, are not part of the artistic artifact. We would like to argue, then, that transmission aids used by the bard during an oral performance, whilst it will influence the audience's concretisation of the oral text, will nevertheless leave the artistic artifact intact.

The Formalists' objective, among others, was mainly to propose a scientific study of poetic language, and was primarily a reaction to the prevalent general trends of Russian literary scholarship, among them Symbolist poetics, which focused

strongly on religious and philosophical matters. Eikhenbaum explained the vehement Formalist rejection of Symbolist metaphysics as follows: "We engaged in battle with the Symbolists in order to wrest poetics from their hands and, once having divested poetics to any ties with subjective, aesthetic, or philosophical theories, to redirect it to the route of scientific investigation of facts" (Matejka and Pomorska, 1971:6).

However, there was a positive cross-fertilisation of ideas between the Futurists, an avant-garde group which included the poets Klebnikov and Mujakovskij, and the Formalists, especially because of the editor of the Futurist journals, *Lef* and *Novy Lef*, Vladimir Mujakovskij. Mujakovskij had personal and methodological contact with the Moscow Linguistic Circle and the *Opojaz*. Another bond which brought together the Formalists and Futurists was their mutual hostility towards Symbolism, especially because the aggression and radical offensive of the Futurists made room for the Formalists. The major difference, initially, between Formalism and Futurism was that the latter school ascribed certain devices in literature to ideological significance as a means of promoting political awareness, while the Formalists deliberately meant to move from an extra-textual and eclectic approach to the study of literature which involved other disciplines without a clear boundary that demarcated literary studies as an independent discipline, to a text-*qua*-text approach to critical study of literature; their main objective was, in Eikhenbaum's words, to discuss "ideas on fundamental problems of literary theory free from the restrictions imposed by the official curricula ... they were eager to explore, by common effort, new ways in the study of language and of literature" (Erlich, 1981:63-4).

Looking at Formalism on its own, what binds the two groups, the Moscow Circle and the *Opojaz*, and their individual members as a 'school' is firstly, their common area of interest, language and poetry. Other characteristics which they share are summarised by Eikhenbaum as follows:

The Formalists came up with their own characteristic orientation towards linguistics, a discipline contiguous with poetics in regard to the material under investigation, but one approaching that material from a different angle and with different kinds of problems to solve. The linguists in their own turn took an interest in the Formal method, inasmuch as the facts of poetic language, brought to light by its juxtaposition with practical language, might be regarded as a purely linguistic sphere of problems as facts of language in general. What came about was something analogous to the relationship of mutual

utilization and delimitation, such as exists, for instance, between physics and chemistry (Eikhenbaum, 1971:8).

In order to understand the objectives and methods which the Formalists set out to adopt in their study of literature it is necessary to be conscious of their comprehensive statement of 'principles', which were laid out by the protagonists and founder members of the school, Jakobson and Tynjanov. These eight principles, which could be regarded as a kind of manifesto, mapped out both the state of literary studies and the direction Formalism sought to take. It also places the school of thought in proper perspective and context of theoretical issues prevalent at the time of the origin of the school. We quote the manifesto *in extenso* here, so that we can place it in the larger framework of our discussion of the African debate:

(1) The immediate problems facing Russian literary and linguistic science demand a precise theoretical platform. They require a firm dissociation from the increasing mechanistic tendency to paste together mechanistically the new methodology and old obsolete methods; they necessitate a determined refusal of the contraband offer of naive psychologism and other methodological hand-me-downs in the guise of new terminology.

Furthermore, academic eclecticism and pedantic "formalism" - which replaces analysis by terminology and the classification of phenomena - and the repeated persistence to shift literary and linguistic studies from a systematic science to episodic and anecdotal genres should be rejected.

(2) The history of literature (art), being simultaneously with other historical series, is characterised, as is each of these series, by an involved complex of specific structural laws, it is impossible to establish in a scientific manner the correlation between the literary series and other historical series.

(3) The evolution of literature cannot be understood until the evolutionary problem ceases to be obscured by questions about episodic, nonsystemic genesis, whether literary (for example, so-called "literary influences") or extraliterary. The literary and extraliterary material used in literature may be introduced into the orbit of

scientific investigation only when it is considered from a functional point of view.

(4) The sharp opposition of synchronic (static) and diachronic cross section has recently become a fruitful working hypothesis, both for linguistics and history of literature, has a systemic character at each individual moment of its existence ...

(5) The concept of synchronic literary system does not coincide with the naively envisaged concept of chronological epoch ... An indifferent cataloguing of coexisting phenomena is not sufficient; what is important is their hierarchical significance for their epoch.

(6) The assertion of two different concepts - *la langue* and *la parole* - and the analysis of the relationship between them ... has been exceedingly fruitful for linguistic science. The principle involved in relating these two categories ... as applied to literature must be elaborated. In this latter case, the individual utterance cannot be considered without reference to the existing complex of norms.

(7) An analysis of the structural laws of language and literature and their evolution inevitably leads to the establishment of a limited series of actually existing structural types (and, correspondingly, of types of structural evolution).

(8) A discourse of the immanent laws of the history of literature (and language) allows us to determine the character of each specific change in literary (and linguistic) systems. However, these laws do not allow us to explain the tempo of evolution or the chosen path of evolution when several, theoretically possible, evolutionary paths are given. This is due to the fact that the immanent laws of literary (and, corresponding linguistic) evolution form an indeterminate equation; although they admit only a limited number of possible solutions. The question of a specific choice of path, or at least of the dominant, can be solved only through an analysis of the correlation between the literary series and other historical series. This correlation (a system of systems) has its own structural laws, which must be submitted to investigation. It would be methodologically fatal to consider the

correlation of systems without taking into account the immanent laws of each system (Jakobson, 1981:3-5).

The first and second principles are significant in the sense that they explain the problems which faced Russian literary scholarship at the time, and emphasise the need for a new approach, in relation to prevailing tendencies and practices in this discipline. The state of literary scholarship as described above is reminiscent of the state of African literary scholarship which, in terms of the debate, seeks to find a new route and wean itself of the established traditions set by the Western standards, in much the same way as the Formalists sought to depart from "obsolete methods". However, Formalism goes a step further by delineating its objectives specifically, which is to establish the study of language as a systematic science. One of the reasons that the African debate is less coherent and disparate from Formalism, and perhaps Structuralism and New Criticism, is that it is not spawned by a particular school of thought or philosophy based in a recognisable institution.

Further to the coherence of explicit contextualisation of its persuasion, Formalism went beyond the African debate, with the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth principles which lay out explicitly the guiding paradigms, namely, the exclusion of non functional extraliterary material, adoption of the comparative method of dialectic positioning of the synchronic and diachronic, acknowledgement of "hierarchical significance" of literary systems in a synchronic study, the assertion and systematic study of the relationship between language and speech, a diachronic study of the evolution of language and literature in order to determine extant structural laws, and finally the study of literature (a system) in relation to history (another system) with recognition of each discipline's immanent laws in a diachronic study, in order to understand any changes in language or literature.

It can be deduced from these principles that Formalism is both a continuity with the past and at the same time a rejection of some of its outdated models, in so far as the Formalists themselves saw it. The rise of the Formalist school was not a result of a political status quo, though later, especially after the revolution of 1917, it had to contend with the state ideology, and the rise of Marxism. It is in this sense that the African debate differs from the contest of the Formalist debate, in that the former resulted directly from a political situation, and from the onset it was an offensive cultural *kampf* rather than a specifically literary and linguistic polemic.

A lesson from the principles laid down by the Formalists is that it maps out the direction which they want to take, working from general principles to the specific, whereas the debate in search of an African poetics cannot move forward

mainly because it works neither deductively nor inductively, there are no set principles except generalisations, and the cases of studies which are available have not been used to form principles. The cause of this trend may be the superficial and sometimes tacit consensus that Africa is a monolith, with a literature which sets it apart from 'Western' literature, and therefore there are phenomena which can naturally develop out of a supposed uniformity of the colonial or other experiences. This fallacy cannot be more explicitly obvious than in the study of poetry. There is also a lack of co-ordination between the study of literature and language in African universities. As long as Linguistics and Literature are seen as different entities, no headway will ever be made beyond the general utterances about the search for an African poetics.

Further to the principles, central to the Formalist critical theories was the idea of 'defamiliarisation', that poetry made strange (*ostraneniya*) what was familiar in ordinary speech or the real world, introduced by Shlovsky. It is this aspect of poetry or literature which makes it different from other forms of discourse - its 'literariness'. They were concerned mainly with poetry, which they regarded as the prime medium which transgressed grammatical rules and used certain formal structures which were 'foregrounded', and thus called for attention. This is yet another device which the critics of African oral poetry can borrow in defining the structure of oral poetry, for the basic characteristic of this genre is not how it differs from Western poetry, but how it deviates from other genres, across languages and historical, geographical or cultural boundaries.

The Formalists opened themselves to attack not because of faulty reasoning, as is often the case, but mainly because they had clearly laid out principles, upon which they developed analyses of poetic texts, unlike their adversaries, the Marxists, who did not have a theory on language, but tinkered with ideas about society, literature being part of a larger discourse which did not develop a specific thesis on poetry per se. It is also for this reason that we have circumvented Marxist criticism on literature, for, like the Formalists, we would like to focus on the specificity of poetic language and hence respect the idea of the "autonomy of the aesthetic function". In his definition of Formalism Jakobson asserted that:

It has been fashionable in critical circles lately to profess certain doubts about what is called the formalist study of literature. The school, says its detractors, fails to grasp the relationship of art to real life, it calls for "art for art's sake" approach, it is following the footsteps of Kantian aesthetics. Critics with objections in this vein are so completely one-sided in their radicalism that, forgetting the

existence of a third dimension, they view everything on a single plain. Neither Tynjanov nor Mukařovský nor Skřlovskij [Shlovsky] nor I - none of us has ever proclaimed the self-sufficiency of art. What we have been trying to show is that art is an integral part of the social structure, a component that interacts with all the others and is itself mutable since both the domain of art and its relationship to other constituents of the social structure are in constant dialectal flux. *What we stand for is not the separatism of art but the autonomy of the aesthetic function* (Jakobson, 1981:749–50).

In support of the above, and what could be regarded as a defence of the Formalist method against accusations that it was a *l'art pour l'art* approach Mukařovský said: "Is a poetic work, as a work of art, deprived then, of any relevance to reality? Were the answer in fact in the affirmative, then art would be reduced to a game whose sole purpose was to stimulate aesthetic pleasure. A conclusion of that sort would, at the very least, be incomplete" (Matejka and Titunik, 1986:161).

In their concern with defining what made literature different from other forms of discourse the Formalists argued against the traditionally held view in aesthetics that imagery was the distinctive feature of poetry or literature. Jakobson, Shlovsky, Eikhenbaum and Zirmunsky were unanimous in declaring that imagery was found in ordinary speech, and that poetry could dispense with images. Imagery was verbal art, and the poet did not create images but found them in or recollected them from ordinary speech, retrieving it and substituting some ideas for it, thereby creating a "semantic shift" which made the familiar unfamiliar or defamiliarised it (*priëm ostraneniija*). The literary artist took what people have grown so accustomed to that they merely recognised without actually seeing and foregrounded it, to use Eikhenbaum's words: "Art is conceived as a way of breaking down automatism in perception, and the aim of the image is held to be, not making a meaning more accessible for our comprehension, but bringing about a special perception of a thing, bringing about the 'seeing' and not just the 'recognising', of it" (Eikhenbaum, 1971:13–14).

On the question of divorcing 'content' from 'form' the Formalists were almost unanimous that the two were inextricably integrated in a work of literature. They replaced the two terms with theirs, 'material' and 'device' (*priëm*), which became the central concepts in their analysis of literature. To them 'material' referred to the elements of which literature was made, and 'device' to the manner peculiar to literature, in which the material was arranged. The opposition to the separation of

content from form was summed up in Shlovsky's words: "People who try to 'solve' paintings as if they were crossword puzzles want to take the form off the painting in order to see it better" (Erlich, 1981:187), Eikhenbaum made clearer the Formalists' understanding of the concepts, 'content' and 'form': "As for 'form', all that concerned the Formalists was to shift the meaning of that badly confused term in such a way as to obviate its persistent association with the concept 'content', a term even more badly confused than form and totally unscientific" (Matejka and Pomorska, 1971:14).

Though the Russian Formalists denied the charge that their approach was not drawn from 'art for art's sake' methodology, the difference between them and the Futurists ought to be underlined. The Formalists had no manifesto in the true sense, and were not committed to any fixed methodological or ideological principles. Eikhenbaum put their position succinctly when he said:

We establish concrete principles and adhere to them to the extent they are proved tenable by the material. If the material requires further elaboration or alteration, we go ahead and elaborate or alter them. In this sense we are relatively detached from our own theories, as indeed a science ought to be, seeing that there is a difference between theory and conviction (Eikhenbaum, 1971:4).

On the contrary, the Futurists, following their prototype which began in France in 1909 through the visit to Russia of the Italian leader of the Futurist movement, Filippo Tomaso Marinetti, Russian Futurism, under the founders in Russia, Muyakovsky and the mystical poet Velemir Khlebnov, drew their own manifesto in December 1912, following the one of May the same year by their French counterpart. Marinetti's manifesto declared war on the art of the past and exalted energy, strength, and movement, in a manner reminiscent though even more robust than Masculine Christianity in England in the nineteenth century. One of the movement's objectives was to revolutionise art and literature, but in Russia it did not survive long after the 1917 Revolution. And by the beginning of the 1920s Futurism had also run its course in Europe.

The Russian Futurist manifesto also drew on Marinetti's as a model, and was entitled: *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste*. The idea was to shock the reader into a sudden awareness by rejecting received structural forms of poetry and adopting the language of the streets in their poetry. The arch-Futurist, Majakovskij, initially appealed to the Russian regime, but later changed the tune as he got disillusioned

with Soviet bureaucrats and satirised the regime in his plays, *The Bedbug* (1929) and the *Bathhouse* (1930). This disillusion was diagnosed as a cause of his suicide in 1930.

The Formalists, contrary to the Futurists and Marxists, took a clear stand which divorced them from political controversies. They did nevertheless find themselves set against Marxism. Their controversy with the Marxist school is summed up by Bakhtin as follows:

The Marxists stubbornly tried to convince the formalists that social factors affect literature. In fact, the formalists never denied the effect of these factors, or if they did so it was only in the heat of the argument ... The essence of formalism in no way denies the influence of external factors on the factual development of literature, their ability to directly affect the intrinsic nature of literature. From the point of view of a consistent formalist, external social factors could completely destroy literature, wipe it from the face of the earth, but they are not able to change the intrinsic nature of the literary fact, which is, as such, non-social. In a word, formalism is not able to admit that an external social factor acting on literature could become an intrinsic factor of literature itself, a factor of its immanent development. Formalism stands opposed to Marxism on this point. But this did not become the centre of polemics (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1985:67).

After the revolution political ideology eventually caught up with the Formalists. As a result some of its protagonists had to eschew their view and propagate the new political agenda by either denouncing their past Formalist work or subscribing to the state ideology in their subsequent writings, as we will indicate later in this thesis. Thus they shared a common fate with the Futurists.

Among the figures we have chosen to highlight the Formalist-Structuralists' contribution in the study of poetic language Jakobson will be treated in detail, for he is the major contributor, and provides us with an opportunity to study both his theory and practice, while the other two, Shlovsky and Mukařovský, will not be treated in such detail, as their contribution is more in general principles of the study of poetic language, rather than presenting major theses with practical studies. Mukařovský will, however, receive more attention than Shlovsky. The contribution of these two can thus be defined as supplementary to Jakobson's. We consider them here in order to avoid the impression that Jakobson was the only theorist in the Formalist school.

2.2.1 Roman Jakobson (1896–1982)

In this section we shall discuss Jakobson's analytical approach to the relationship between poetry and language, and undertake case studies of his analyses. Our discussion shall be based mainly on the following analytical essays, which were reprinted in a 1981 collection of Jakobson's studies of language and poetry: "Linguistics and poetics" (1981:18–51), "Poetry of grammar and grammar of poetry" (1981:87–97), "Grammatical parallelism and its Russian facet" (1981:98–135), "What is poetry" (1981:740–750), "The dominant" (1981:751–756). We shall also refer to analyses of Shakespeare's and Blake's poems. As we proceed, we shall illustrate the relevance of his theory to the analysis of African oral poetry. Jakobson is one of the most formidable scholars of the twentieth century, straddling across continents and leaving behind long lasting influences of his works. Many critics of African poetry would be better served by getting acquainted with his theses on poetry, for they would be spared the task of reinventing the wheel. His main interest was in Slavic languages. He was a founder member of the Moscow Linguistic Circle in the first decade of the twentieth century, and later the Prague School in Czechoslovakia. His initial research and scholarly activities later widened to other areas beyond linguistics. After starting the Circle in 1915 he became Professor of Russian at the Higher Dramatic School in Moscow. In 1920 he moved to Czechoslovakia, where he founded the Prague Linguistic Circle in 1926, and two years later, together with some colleagues of the Prague School he announced a departure from the Saussurean structural linguistics.

The Prague School comprised of a large number of scholars, mainly European, whose scholarship was influenced by Jakobson's, Trubetskoy's and Mathesius' works in the decade preceding World War II. The Prague school was characterised by the pursuit of the analytical study of the structure and function of language. Jakobson and his colleagues proposed that language sounds could be studied both synchronically and diachronically, as opposed to the Saussurean synchronic approach. They paid particular attention to the function of elements in a language, the ways these elements stand in polarity to one another, and how these polarities or contrasts form a whole system. It is in the Prague school where the distinctive feature theory of sound was incubated, and later developed in Jakobson's work in the United States, and carried over into transformational grammar by his colleagues, Chomsky, Fant and Halle. The Prague school, in its heyday in the late 1920s and 1930s, also took interest in a functionalist approach to the study of

language, looking at how language is composed of cognitive, expressive and conative elements (see Jakobson 2.2.1.1).

From Prague Jakobson moved on to Masarykova University in 1933 as professor of Russian philology and later Czech medieval literature. Because of political reasons he fled to the university of Copenhagen in Denmark, to Oslo in Norway, and Uppsala in Sweden, and served as visiting professor. In 1941 he arrived in New York, and took a teaching post at Columbia University in 1943 until 1949. From there he went to become professor of Slavic languages and literature and General Linguistics at Harvard University until he retired in 1967. In 1957 he was Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.) He had a tremendous influence on American structural linguistics. His works ranged from studies in child language, aphasia, analysis of language - phonological, semantic, lexical, and poetic structures.

His arrival in the United States brought along with him the influence of his works on Anglo-American New Criticism, which is sometimes called Formalism. In the study of language he collaborated with Gunnar Fant and Morris Halle in studying the phonemic contrast in a number of languages. Together (Jakobson, Fant and Halle, 1952) they reached a conclusion that segmental phonemes could be described in terms of twelve distinctive features, the first account of distinctive feature theory. These features were binary, in the sense that a phoneme (unit of sound) either had or did not have the phonetic attributes of the feature e.g. phonemes could be either consonantal or not (vowel), voiced or not, nasal or not, continuant or non-continuant etc. (1952:3). Later Chomsky and Halle (1968) developed this theory, building on Jakobson's pioneering ideas.

This study of linguistic sounds could be put to use in analysing sound effects in oral poetry, especially in clarifying often vaguely defined concepts such as onomatopoeia (words which imitate sound), and alliteration. In the poem [114d] quoted and analysed by Kunene (see section 5.2.1.4), there are lines which describe a person who is hard. Kunene does not make any analyses of the sound effect. Supposing he had, the only observation that might have been made, we suppose, is that there is some alliteration, and perhaps its effect would be discussed in vague terms, as is often the case with this poetic device. But if we were to use Jakobson's method of defining sound, some significance could be found in relation to the sound and the object described. The stanza describes a person who is 'hard' and "does not parry blows retreating", to quote from Kunene's translation. In the original version the sounds could be described phonetically, and their 'hardness' signify the object described. But 'hardness' could be described more specifically in terms of how the repeated sound [k'] is articulated, as velar, ejective, unaspirated, plosive sound,

whose 'hardness' can only be clarified in terms of an opposite 'soft' sound, such as [m], a 'bi-labial', 'nasal continuant'. Kunene does not exploit such knowledge of sound contrast to highlight the significance and effect of certain sounds in oral poetry. This is also missed out by the other critics we have selected. Another instance is poem [100c] (see section 4.3.1.3), where Cope refers to a stanza in which Shaka, the nineteenth century Zulu king, is described in metaphorical terms as "the fountain of the rocks of Nobamba". In the first line the sound [m] is a dominant device. Its significance as a sound device could only be clarified explicitly in Jakobson's terms, where the sound 'flows' like water from a fountain, a 'continuant' sound, to use Jakobson's term. We shall illustrate this point further when we study the analysis of figurative language and poetic devices in chapter four.

Jakobson's distinctive feature theory which paired opposites was to become influential in structuralism when it was adopted and adapted by the structuralist anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss, together with Trubetskoy's ideas of terms as entities in themselves. Lévi-Strauss used Jakobson's idea of opposition in his analysis of kinship terminology and kinship systems. He postulated that the elementary structure on which all kinship systems are constructed is a set of four kinds of relationships which are organically linked: brother/sister, husband/wife, father/son, and mother's brother/sister's son. The influence between Jakobson and Lévi-Strauss was a mutual one, as Sebeok, Jakobson's first American Doctoral candidate, put it, "Lévi-Strauss came to introduce Jakobson to structural anthropology, while Jakobson opened the door to Lévi-Strauss to linguistics" (Sebeok, 1979:225).

Another opportunity was lost in not adopting Lévi-Strauss' binary divisions in the kinship system. Here the underlying meaning of a number of oral praise poems could be defined in terms of what has not been said, for this poetry originates from a patriarchal system, which foregrounds the role of manhood and prowess, at the exclusion of femininity, which stands in binary opposition to the idea of manhood. In animal metaphors, for instance, ferocious or big beasts such as the *nare* ('buffalo'), *kwenalingwenya* ('crocodile'), *tau/ibhubesi* ('lion'), *nkwe/ingwe* ('leopard') and *tlou/indlovu* ('elephant'), are used as metaphors of bravery, in opposition to the gentle herbivores, which are either left out or used as metaphors of passiveness or cowardice. The use of a concept thus puts it in contrast to its opposite. For instance, some poems, [113], [113a] and [113b] refer to these ferocious animals. The bull is another foregrounded metaphor which is used to signify strength and prowess. It stands in stark opposition to all that is female, which never features in heroic poetry, except when it is meant to express negative connotation. The potential for this approach has unfortunately not been recognised.

According to Jakobson, in an essay entitled “The dominant” (1981:751–756), the Formalist concern has been to study the dominating form of poetry, and his bias developed along the following lines as guiding principles progressively:

(1) Analysis of the sound aspect of a literary work; (2) problems of meaning within the framework of poetics; (3) integration of sound and meaning into an inseparable whole (Jakobson, 1981:751).

He observes that in the third stage the concept of the *dominant* was most fruitful, and defines it as “the focusing component of a work of art: it rules, determines, and transforms the remaining components. It is the dominant which guarantees the integrity of the structure” (1981:751).

Following the above approach a synchronic analysis of a work of art was sufficient, for, as Jakobson claims, changes and shifts were not a peculiarly historical phenomenon but also a synchronic one. Therefore present in the capacity of the reader of a work of art is the consciousness of both the traditional and the creative, and “the Formalist studies brought to light that this simultaneous preservation of tradition and breaking away from tradition form the essence of every new work of art” (1981:756).

Oral poetry critics have been at pains to convince Western critics that oral poetry is indeed poetry, as Kunene does in the preface to his thesis, when he states that some white critics laugh and dismiss oral poetry as some form of cheap flattery. No defence of this art as a poetic form can be more explicit than Jakobson’s concept of the ‘dominant’, because it is the rules of oral poetry which define it as poetry, integration of sound and meaning, and its rules (such as its rigid formulaic structure) transform its component parts into a defamiliarised discourse. This is a universal principle which cannot be denied, applicable to any and every work of art which claims to be poetry.

The influence which Jakobson had on Russian Formalism, Prague Structuralism, and beyond, and his main interest, are aptly described by Gräbe in her discussion of Formalism and other theories of literature:

Wherever Jakobson went, he was always one of the most productive members, if not the central figure, of some *linguistic* circle. His preoccupation with linguistics was not coincidental, but related to his belief - which stems from his Formalist period - that poetry is a manifestation of language in its aesthetic function (Gräbe, 1985:41).

2.2.1.1 Language and Poetics

For Jakobson the starting point was the inextricable relationship between language and literature. Literature was a combination for the areas of engagement between linguistics and poetics: “Poetics deals primarily with the question, *What makes a verbal message a work of art?* ... Poetics deals with the problem of poetic structure, just as the analysis of painting is concerned with pictorial structure. Since linguistics is the global science of verbal structure, poetics may be regarded as an integral part of linguistics” (1981:18).

The central concepts here are linguistics and poetics - so that Jakobson clearly sees the study of literature as a synthesis of linguistics and poetics, leaving out any extra-textual elements, what he refers to as “extralinguistic entities”. He extricates the text from its context, and also from the subjectivity of the reader, thus he finds shortcomings in the term “literary criticism”, which, according to him, implies subjectivity. He observes that the term ‘criticism’, instead of ‘literary studies’ tempts the student of literature “to replace the description of the intrinsic values of a literary work of art with a subjective, censorious verdict” (1981:20). It is clear that, for Jakobson, neither ‘extralinguistic entities’ nor the subjective opinion of a literary critic should detract the student of literature from his or her main task: that of “an objective scholarly analysis of verbal art” (1981:20). As has already been argued above (see section 1.2), we believe that the study of African literature generally, and the criticism of African oral poetry particularly, could benefit from a shift of focus away from prescriptive judgmental assessment towards analysis and interpretation of the ‘text itself’.

When Jakobson subsequently touches upon problems concerning synchrony and diachrony, which according to him, are central to both linguistics and poetics, it becomes clear that although the analytic emphasis, in a synchronic approach, should be on the study of the “intrinsic values of a literary work”, that does not amount to an exclusion of ‘extrinsic values’, which would pertain to a diachronic approach, for instance. His insistence on the symbiotic relationship between synchrony and diachrony reminds one of his departure from Saussurean synchronic linguistics noted above (see section 2.2.1). Let us quote again from Jakobson’s frequently reprinted essay on “Linguistics and Poetics”:

The selection of classics and their reinterpretation by a novel trend is a substantial problem of synchronic literary studies. Synchronic poetics, like synchronic linguistics, is not to be confused with statics; any stage

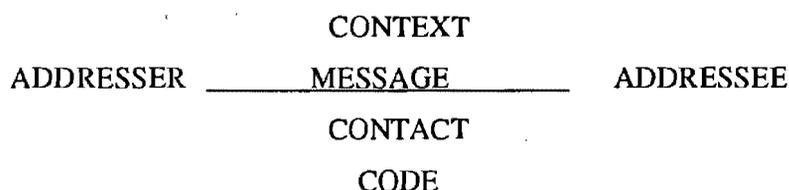
discriminates between more conservative and more innovative forms. Any contemporary stage is experienced in its temporal dynamics, and, on the other hand, the historical approach both in poetics and in linguistics is concerned not only with changes but also with continuous, enduring static factors. A thoroughly comprehensive historical poetics or history of language is a superstructure to be built on a series of successive synchronic descriptions (Jakobson, 1981:20).

Here we agree with Jakobson. Though the understanding of a work of art can be enhanced by contextual knowledge, this does not provide one with skills to analyse its poetic structure. The way in which its parts are structured and relate to each other can provide a clearer critical understanding of a work of art, especially African oral poetry. For instance, reading a 'Shakan' praise poem can be understood without studying the period in which it was written, or even without knowing when the subject described performed the deeds attributed to him in the poem. Reading and understanding the historical background to a text is not the essential domain of literary studies but that of history, anthropology, politics and other disciplines of that nature, though it ought to be admitted that referring to the historical context through secondary material can provide useful information and insight. Nevertheless the knowledge of principles, the study of how devices in a literary work function, and what makes it literature, that is, its literariness, is a matter which a scholar or student of literature has to grapple with and understand. It is only from there that one can apply the principles to any given work of poetry.

According to Jakobson, language, in its functional state, consists basically of six elements, namely, an addresser (first person), the message, addressee (second person), context (which could refer to a 'third person' spoken of as in praise poetry where the subject matter deals with a person), code and contact (1981:21). In poetry or literature these could be translated as the poet [persona/narrator], the narrative or poetic structure or arrangement (poem, novel etc.), the reader [audience/listener], a language common to both the speaker and the listener(s) spoken to, the physical channel [book; radio; microphone; performance] or psychological process [attention, listening, concentration etc.]. Whereas the context is the dominant feature in most communicative situations, Jakobson claims that the message is predominant in poetic language, since: "The set (*Einstellung*) toward the MESSAGE as such, focus on the message for its own sake, is the POETIC function of language" (1981:25).

We shall return to the message and the poetic function in our subsequent discussion of the Jakobsonian communication model. However, before we do so, it is important to note that Jakobson emphasises the intricate and necessary

interdependence of language and poetry, or linguistics and poetics. He insists that language should be studied “in all the variety of its functions” (1981:21), and that the poetic function should therefore be seen in terms of the other functions of language. In order to do so, he firstly distinguishes six factors or elements. Let us first have a look at the diagram in which the six factors of communication are outlined:

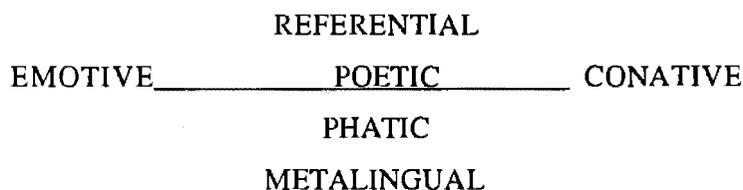


All these six elements are universal, and can be perceived in any act of artistic communication, not least African oral poetry. They can all be functional in a poem but, contrary to ordinary language usage where the context is vital, in poetic language the poetic text itself is predominant and, by drawing attention to itself, becomes more important than the other factors, including the context of the poetic utterance. If we look at the elements present in African oral poetry, we find that Jakobson’s factors do apply to this form of poetry. In the rendition of an oral poem we find the bard (addresser), who directs the praise poem (message) to the listeners (addressees). This oral rendition takes place at a certain time, perhaps indicating a special occasion (context), it is delivered in a language with which both the bard and his listeners are familiar (code) and the bard’s voice and his manner of rendition provide the channel through which the message is relayed (contact). In its transcribed form, some of the factors will be different; the addresser will be the actual composer of the poem (poet or bard as the case may be), the addressees will be the readers instead of listeners and the channel relaying the message will be the written and not the spoken word. These aspects do not in any way distinguish oral poetry from other forms of poetic expression, as a result they do not call for an African poetics. It is at this basic level that African oral poetry cannot claim to be a *genre sui generis*.

If we were to accept Jakobson’s premise, then, this would imply that an analysis of poetry, in our case African oral poetry, should concentrate on the manner in which the language of the poem is structured in such a way that it demands close scrutiny from the reader. Although this does not mean that the other factors should not be taken into account, we shall see that Opland, in his explanation of Xhosa praise poetry in terms of its historical and socio-political context, tends to neglect the poem itself and therefore distorts the hierarchy between the six

communicative factors distinguished by Jakobson. Whether the addresser and addressee are contextually bound or not (as in an oral rendition of a praise poem for a specific occasion, for instance), although it may provide interesting contextual information, will not really disclose anything of importance that will assist the reader in coming to grips with the poetic message. As we shall see (section 5.3.1.2) Opland deems it necessary to specify the addressees when commenting on poem [148]: here the bard is addressing particular groups of people – the British, the Ngwane, the Thembu, and so forth. In our opinion, this historical and therefore extraliterary information can only be peripherally complementary in helping any addressee not included in Opland’s list to understand other matters not directly concerned with the structure of the poem, or its message, for that matter.

Jakobson subsequently explains that each of the factors indicated in the diagram above corresponds to and determines a different function of language. The diagram of the six fundamental factors is therefore complemented with a corresponding scheme of six fundamental functions of verbal communication:



From the reader’s receptive point the elements are constituted at one point or another in the act of communication in which one of them or several may dominate the others. Seen from the addresser’s point of view language is ‘emotive’, or expresses a certain state of mind or attitude towards his subject, while on the other dialectic end, the addressee’s, it is ‘conative’ - trying to produce some effect.

Jakobson borrowed the above model from Bühler (see also section 2.2.3.1), which consisted of only the three elements, the emotive, conative and referential, to which he adds that “certain additional verbal functions can be easily inferred from this triadic model. Thus the magic, incantatory function is chiefly some kind of conversion of an absent or inanimate ‘third person’ into an addressee of a conative message” (1981:24). The emotive aspect of language uses forms peculiar to itself, such as interjections, to produce emotive response, in Jakobson’s words - “an impression of a certain emotion, whether true or feigned” (1981:22). Jakobson’s example is *Tut! Tut!* [expressing pity etc.]. Such is not analysable from a purely cognitive point of view. He argues that: “A man, using expressive features to indicate his angry or ironic attitude, conveys ostensible information, and evidently this verbal behaviour cannot be likened to such non-semiotic, nutritive activities such as ‘eating

grapefruit' ” (1981:22). He draws a distinction between phonemic and emotive information, giving examples of words where the lengthening or shortening of vowel sounds does or does not change the semantic value of a word. In the latter case, he argues, the difference is merely a variation of the same phoneme expressing an emotive aspect. He argues against the surmise, quoting Saporta, its proponent, that the emotive aspect of language is a non-linguistic feature “attributable to the delivery of the message and not to the message” (1981:23). In Jakobson’s view, disregarding the communicative value of emotive utterances amounts to a reduction of the informational capacity of messages. He cites the example of the Russian actor who once succeeded in conveying forty different messages of the same phrase merely by changing the expressive tint of the phrase *Segodnja vecerom* (This evening). The audience had to listen to the changes in the sound shape of the same words in order to recognise a particular ‘emotional situation’ he wished to convey. We see here how careful Jakobson is, despite the insistence that the poetic function is predominant in poetic language, not to overlook the communicative value of other functions that may contribute to the addressee’s understanding of the poetic message.

If we agree with the above, which is a position in which we find ourselves, we find here another analytical tool which could be used in African oral poetry. In his analyses (see section 5.3.1.2) of a praise poem [151] Opland refers to exclamations such as *A-a!* and *Ewe!* (‘Ah!’ and ‘yes’), which open certain stanzas, and *Awu! Ewe!* (“Oh! yes!”) ending closing certain stanzas. He gives no analysis of this device, and here Jakobson’s theory above would have been more appropriate to explain this linguistic phenomenon, for here the bard’s (addresser’s) utterance is an example where, according to Jakobson, it would be reductive “to restrict the notion of information to the cognitive aspect of language” (1981:22). The listeners should have been able to infer, from the expressive tint used by the bard, what non-cognitive information the exclamations were supposed to convey.

While the emotive aspect is oriented towards the addresser, the conative is oriented towards the addressee. It is expressed in the vocative [calling] and the imperative [command], both of which differ syntactically, morphologically, and sometimes phonemically from noun and verbal forms. The imperative sentence differs from the declarative [statement] in that it cannot be put to a truth test (“is it true or not?”, and neither can it be converted into an interrogative [question] sentence: “Did one drink?”, “Will one drink?”, “Would one drink?”) (1981:23).

Besides the three basic factors of verbal communication (addresser, context, and addressee) and their corresponding linguistic functions (emotive, referential, and conative) referred to above, Jakobson also distinguishes three more factors and corresponding functions in his diagrammatic presentation of verbal communication.

The phatic function, which corresponds to the factor of contact, may serve basically three different purposes. Jakobson explains these as follows:

Serving to establish, to prolong or discontinue communication, to check whether the channel works ('Hello, do you hear me?'), to attract the attention of the interlocutor or to confirm his continued attention ('Are you listening?'), or in Shakespearean diction, 'Lend me your ears!' ... 'Well, here we are' ... 'Aren't we?' ... 'Eeyop! here we are' ... The endeavour to start and sustain communication is typical of talking birds; thus the phatic function of language is the only one they share with human beings. It is also the first verbal function acquired by infants; they are prone to communicate before being able to send informative communication (Jakobson, 1981:24).

Further to these different functions of language there are also different types of language, the "object language" and the 'metalinguage'. The latter, in addition to being a tool for logic and linguistics, is also functional in day-to-day language, such as in cases where the addresser or addressee or both try to establish whether they are operating within the ambit of the same register their speech focuses on the 'code', and thus it serves as a 'metalingual' (i.e., 'glossing') tool. An example of the metalingual function are questions like "I don't follow you - what do you mean?" (addressee), "Do you know what I mean?" (addresser), or "any process of language learning, in particular child acquisition of the mother tongue", and "aphasia may often be defined as a loss of ability for metalingual operations" (1981:25).

After having explained the nature of verbal communication generally, Jakobson finally turns to his main focus, the importance of the 'message' as such (the literary text) and the predominance of the poetic function in literary communication. According to him in poetic language attention is focused on the 'message' itself, for its own sake. This is the poetic function of language. However, "the poetic function is not the sole of verbal art but only its dominant, determining factor, whereas in all other verbal activities it acts as a subsidiary, accessory constituent" (1981:25). This function asserts the dichotomy between sign and object, as a result, linguistics, in studying poetry, ought to go beyond the field of poetic function, for:

The particularities of diverse poetic genres imply a differently ranked participation of the other verbal functions along with the dominant poetic function. Epic poetry, focused on the third person, strongly involves the referential function of language; the lyric, oriented

toward the first person, is intimately linked with the emotive function; poetry of the second person is imbued with the conative function and is either supplicatory or exhortative, depending on whether the first person is subordinated to the second one or the second to the first (Jakobson, 1981:26).

In determining what features are inherent to poetry two modes of verbal arrangement have to be called to mind, namely, *selection* and *combination* (Saussure's paradigm and syntagm), for instance, the word 'child' may be chosen as a topic by a speaker from a variety of nouns sharing the same semantic shade like 'kid', 'youngster' and 'tot', and 'to comment on this topic' by selecting from cognate verbs like 'sleeps', 'dozes', 'nods', and 'naps'. Jakobson explains that both chosen words, one from the paradigm denoting 'child' and one from the set of verbs that could be used with it in a sentence, combine in the speech chain. It is important to note that in ordinary language usage the two basic modes of arrangement are characterised by equivalence and contiguity respectively:

The selection is produced on the basis of equivalence, similarity and dissimilarity, synonymy and antonymy, while the combination, the build-up of the sequence, is based on contiguity (Jakobson, 1981:27).

This observation makes it possible for Jakobson to indicate precisely how poetic language differs from ordinary language; or, to put it differently, precisely what the predominance of the poetic function entails. His famous definition is worth quoting verbatim: "The build-up of the sequence", is 'contiguity', and "the poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination" (1981:27).

Using the same principle posited in the theory of binary opposition in distinctive features, Jakobson suggests that:

Equivalence is promoted to the constitutive device of the sequence. In poetry one syllable is equalized with any other syllable of the same sequence; word stress is assumed to equal stress, as unstressed equals unstress; prosodic long with prosodic long, and short with short; word boundary equals word boundary, no boundary equals no boundary, syntactic pause equals syntactic pause, no pause equals no pause. Syllables are converted into units of measure, and so are morae or stress (Jakobson, 1981:27).

Metalanguage, the opposite of poetry, uses sequence to build up an equation (A = A "*Mare is the female of the horse*"), but in poetry the equation is used to build up the sequence. One effect of such a reversal is the 'measurability' of sequences in poetry. Jakobson refers specifically in this regard to the convention of metre in Western poetry, where the "regular reiteration of equivalent units" results in an experience of "the time of speech flow ... as it is with musical time" (1981:28). But the poetic function of language is not limited to poetry, as it is found also in forms of language such as advertising jingles, treatises in verse and so forth, which use verse. The discrepancy between the nature of poetry and that of verse is that the latter uses the poetic function, but at the same time exceeds it, and lacks the determining role found in poetry, that is, the purpose of poetry. The use of the poetic function for other purposes does not deprive poetry of its essence, much as emotive elements used for poetic purposes are not deprived of their "emotive tinge". Since the poetic function of language is used in other forms such as pictorial commercials and music, the study of poetry should therefore not exclude the study of these forms and verse:

To sum up, the study of verse is entirely within the competence of poetics, and the latter may be defined as that part of linguistics which treats the poetic function in its relationship to the other functions of language. Poetics in the wider sense of the word deals with the poetic function not only in poetry, where this function is superimposed upon the other functions of language, but also outside of poetry, when some other function is superimposed upon the poetic function (1981:28-9)

We find it necessary at this point to place the significance of the above poetics in perspective of the analytical framework of the reading and explication of oral poetry. The six elements suggested by Jakobson can be found in African poetry, especially in oral poetry. The addresser is the bard or praise-singer; the addressee his audience or subject (hero). This means that African oral poetry uniquely exploits one of the basic aspects of verbal communication noted above: the relationship between addresser (first person) and addressee (second person). If the bard addresses both the listeners generally (second person), and at the same time addresses the subject of the poem ('third person' properly, someone or something spoken of), it has specific consequences for the factors distinguished in the Jakobsonian diagram. On the one hand the addressee seems to be more complicated in oral poetry, since the bard could address two different categories of listeners - that constituting the

receivers of the message and that constituting the subject matter of the message. On the other hand the factors of the message and listener seem to collapse, in that the praise poem may be both 'about' a person and simultaneously addressed 'to' him. This is explicitly supported by Kunene's analysis of *lithoko/dithoko* (this genre will be defined in chapters four and five), where he shows, with reference to poem [114], how the "eulogue-to-narrative formula" may be used to distinguish between instances where the hero is either addressed directly or talked about. The language of the poem is the code, that is, the medium through which the message is carried, while the message is contained in the praise poem itself. The context is the setting in which the bard renders his praises. The poem cannot be without the 'emotive' aspect, for the poet does not merely give objective description but his attitude and frame of mind are entrenched in the poem, his voice, gestures and histrionics, and the general demeanour of rendition. In turn the audience responds in accordance with the effect, thus we find the 'conative' aspect.

Thus oral poetry fits further into Jakobson's analytical approach in that it invests "focus on the third person", and it is indeed "supplicatory and exhortative". Note in this regard Kunene's analysis (see section 5.2.1.4) of the imagery in praise poetry, when he says that it "arouses emotional response in the reader by the use of concrete terms". He even uses Jakobson's concepts when he says that the praiser addresses the hero "exhortatively or pseudo-exhortatively". We shall discuss this further in the fifth chapter under Kunene's analysis of *dithoko*. The presence of the emotive aspect in oral poetry is also emphasised by Cope (see section 4.2.3.1. and 4.3.1.3).

It is worth pointing out that the aspects referred to as 'contact' and 'phatic' cannot be more clearly reflected than in what Kunene refers to as 'vocative eulogue', which serves to call for the attention of the addressee or audience (see section 5.2.1.4.). Another example which fits into this analysis is the Xhosa hunting song [68] quoted by Jordan (see section 4.2.2.2), which starts with the monosyllabic exclamations, "*Ye ha he! Ye ha he!*". Though Jordan does not analyse their function, they fit into Jakobson's view that "certain emotive aspects of language cannot be analysed cognitively". Yet another is found in the Xhosa oral poem [145] quoted by Opland (see section 5.2.1.2), which starts with the interjective: "*A Daliwonga! A Daliwonga*" (O! Daliwonga! O! Daliwonga). The function of this line is to call for the attention of the addressee and arouse emotional response.

Besides Jakobson's distinction of different factors in verbal communication and different corresponding linguistic functions, his definition of the equivalence principle which is determined by the poetic function is extremely important for a study of African oral poetry. In order to appreciate its relevance, it is perhaps

necessary to make explicit the poetic categories which are affected by the promotion of equivalence to the constitutive device of the sequence noted above. The concepts of 'selection' (a paradigmatic relation) and 'combination' (a syntagmatic relation) require our attention once more. Whereas the syntagmatic element of language has to do with the positioning of a word in a sentence, Scholes (1975:19) notes that the paradigmatic element refers to equivalent sets such as "other words with the same grammatical function, other words with related meaning (synonyms and antonyms) and other words with similar sound patterns". For our purposes this means that Jakobson's notion of the equivalence principle could be used to study various levels of poetic structure: semantic, syntactic and phonic. As will become abundantly clear in chapters four and five, especially Jakobson's notion of syntactic parallelism, which has implications for both the grammatical and semantic paradigmatic sets mentioned by Scholes, could be extremely useful for an analysis of African oral poetry. Since parallelism seems to be a favoured poetic device in this genre, we shall discuss the notion of parallelism in detail (see Chapter 2: section 2.2.1.2).

The concepts of 'selection' and 'combination' may also be useful in an intertextual comparison of more than one poetic text dealing with the same subject or subject matter, which would reveal the principle governing the choice of words, phrases, images and other poetic elements in one as opposed to another; or for that matter, in a comparison of one version of the same praise poem with another across a space of time (diachrony), for this can reveal patterns of changes in poetic style, or evolution of 'devices'. Such an approach would have been fruitfully adopted in what Schapera does with a Setswana praise poem, [47] and [48] (see section 4.2.1.2). Here we see a clear case for the equivalence principle, where an item replaces another on a paradigmatic scale. This principle might have further enlightened an otherwise cursory observation in Schapera's reading of the poem.

In the essay "What is poetry" Jakobson pursued the Formalists' main concern to establish the difference between poetry and ordinary language. Once again the concept of 'device' is brought into focus - after suggesting that in the study of literature a synchronic account of every period has to be taken into account so as to determine which structural features are dominant in a certain period, and how these are used. The device cannot be limited, as it is not stable, and thus every epoch may have its own way of using devices borrowed or recreated from non-poetic language. The 'device' is the peculiar characteristic of poetry, which he regards as a dismemberment of language; the sculptor, he suggests, may achieve artistic ends by dismembering his sculpture, just as the poet dismembers linguistic structures of everyday language.

Jakobson makes a clear distinction between poetic language on the one hand and reality on the other, by using Mácha's diaries as an illustration, which literary historians have tried to understand by studying the Czech poet's life or his published works for biographical elements, or the psychologists by studying the psyche of the writer. He argues that an example of the wrong method of determining a definition of poetry is indicated by the expurgation of Machá's diaries, which was an attempt to reconstruct his life in order to maintain or create an illusion of his respectability in the eyes of young readers by dissociating him from distasteful association. Jakobson dismisses the idea that the life of a writer may be reflected in his writings, even when his own words seek to do that: "Do not believe the poet who, in the name of truth, the real world; or anything else, renounces his past in poetry ... when an actor tears off his mask, make-up is to be forthcoming" (1981:742).

He points out that though there is a difference between diary and poetry, the difference is not a simple one because the former is not just a reconstruction of reality or real life. The difference could be that of semantic levels of the same object or experience but not opposites of *wahrheit*, and *dichtung* for poetry can be more revealing than diary. The interplay between life and poetry is reflected in the intimate manner in which literary motifs intermingle with life. He builds up the argument to the conclusion that "every verbal art stylizes and transforms the event it depicts. How it does that is determined by its slant, its emotional content, the audience it is addressed to, the preliminary 'censorship' it undergoes, the supply of ready-made patterns it draws from". As a result poeticity cannot be determined by extratextual phenomena.

The above argument is pertinent to oral poetry, in the sense that its function is partly to narrate historical events and make commentary upon them. History also derives information from oral poetry (see section 4.2.2.1.), which depicts important historical events (see section 5.2.1.2.) and thus it cannot be divorced from real life. Its freedom is limited by certain predetermined or ready-made and highly stylized rules, structural patterns and formulas such as repetition, parallelism, archetypal metaphors, symbols, and so forth, which are deployed in accordance with the equivalence principle, contrary to some African theorists quoted in the first chapter. However, our contention in this regard, as already stated above, is that the historical information rendered in a poetic text should not be regarded as the major aspect in the study of poetry, for at times it may be irrelevant. The scholar of poetry should concern herself or himself with the text as it stands, in the first instance, and if historical knowledge becomes necessary, then it would be imperative to acquire and use it. This applies to African oral poetry, which should not be seen to be unique in the sense that it gives information about a particular historical experience. It ought

to be viewed as a poetic text which uses universal tropes which are not bound to one culture and language. There can only be a limit to the interpretation of figurative language, across cultures and languages.

Jakobson then concludes that “the poetic function, *poeticity* is, as the ‘formalists’ stressed, an element *sui generis*, one that cannot be mechanically reduced to other elements ... poeticity is present when the word is felt as a word and not a mere representation of the object being named or an outburst of emotion ... ” (1981:750). Constant identification of the sign with the objects leads to “no mobility of concepts, no mobility of signs, and the relationship between concept and sign becomes *automatized*” [italics mine] (1981:750).

2.2.1.2 Poetry as verbal art

This section will be concerned with Jakobson’s methodology of analysing poetry as verbal art. It is best exemplified by a number of studies, including the famous analysis of Baudelaire’s poem, “*Les Chats*” [The Cats] (reprinted in Jakobson 1981:477–464). But for our purpose we shall select his formalistic analysis of a Russian folk song, and a hexastich - poem with six lines or verses, from the *Song of Solomon*, Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 129”, and William Blake’s “Infant Sorrow”, and in the process indicate its implications for the methodology of analysing oral poetry. These texts arguably represent some of Jakobson’s most sophisticated and well developed analytical readings. The Russian folk song, the sonnet, and Blake’s poem are analysed in essays entitled “Grammatical parallelism and its Russian facet” (reprinted in Jakobson, 1981:98–135), “Shakespeare’s verbal art in ‘th’expence of spirit’ ” (reprinted in Jakobson, 1981:285–302), and “On the verbal art of William Blake and other poet-painters” (reprinted in Jakobson, 1981:322–344) respectively.

As already noted above, one of the distinctive features of African oral poetry is the use of parallelism. Though fully aware of this, it seems that Schapera (see section 4.2.1.2), Cope (see section 4.2.3.3), Kunene (see section 5.2.1.5) and Opland (see section 5.2.1.3) were not aware of Jakobson’s sophisticated analysis of this poetic device. If they were, then they merely engaged in referring to some types of parallelism, without attempting any real in-depth analysis of this phenomenon and also without making any fresh observation. Opland uses the term ‘*chiasmus*’ (‘cross-parallelism’), a term which Jakobson also used calling it ‘chiasmic construction’. Their definition of parallelism echoes what Jakobson has already said, coming short of his trenchant focus. When dealing with this aspect in “Grammatical parallelism and its Russian facet” he refers to the concept as it was defined with reference to its biblical use, *parallelismus membrorum*, and quotes Gerard Manley Hopkins’

definition of parallelism, and a 1779 definition by Robert Lowth. The Romantic poet defined it in these terms:

The artificial part of poetry, perhaps we shall be right to say all artifice, reduces itself to the principle of parallelism. The structure of poetry is that of continuous parallelism, ranging from the technical so-called Parallelism of Hebrew poetry and the antiphons of Church music to the intricacy of Greek or Italian or English verse (1981:98).

Lowth's earlier definition is more detailed, and reads thus:

The correspondence of one Verse, or Line, with another, I call Parallelism. When a proposition is delivered, and a second is subjoined to it, or drawn under it, equivalent, or contrasted with it, in Sense; or familiar to it in the form of Grammatical Construction; these I call Parallel lines; and the words or phrases answering one to another in the corresponding Lines, Parallel Terms. Parallel lines may be reduced to Three sort; Parallels Synonymous, Parallel Antithetic, and Parallel Synthetic ... it is to be observed that the several sorts of Parallels are perpetually mixed with one another; and this mixture gives a variety and beauty to the composition (Jakobson, 1981:99).

Jakobson goes on to give further explanation of these three types, using Lowth's words. In the first type of parallelism the sense is entirely or nearly repeated through 'equivalent terms', whereas in the second type the correspondence of lines is established through opposition, "sometimes in expression, sometimes in sense only". Thus these two types may be called semantic where the parallelism is determined by either synonymy or antithesis. In contradistinction to these the third type, the most elaborate of the three, is grammatical rather than semantic: "The verses are bound by a mere 'correspondence between the different propositions, in respect of the shape and turn of the whole sentence, and of the constructive parts; such as noun answering noun, verb to verb, member to member, negative to negative, interrogative to interrogative' " (1981: 99-100).

Jakobson suggests that grammatical parallelism belongs to a number of folk patterns and cites Gonda who had drawn attention to the fact that " 'binary structures' of grammatically and lexically corresponding lines" (1981:103) occurred, in different parts of the world, in forms of oral verse such as traditional prayers, exorcisms, magic songs, etc. Obviously a category such as the African praise poem

could easily be added to this list. Jakobson subsequently analysed an eighteenth century Russian folk song, [1] and a hexastich from the *Song of Solomon* [1a]. He suggests that “the only living oral tradition in the European Indo-European world that uses grammatical parallelism as its basic mode of concatenating successive verses is Russian folk poetry” (1981:106):

[1]

1. And grief - little grieving!
2. And to live in grief - to be unchagrined,
3. To walk naked - to be unashamed.
4. And (if) there is no money - (it is) before money.
5. (If) a coin has appeared - (it is) before penury,
6. No way for a bald one to be curly,
7. No way for an idle one to be rich.
8. No way to grow a dry-topped tree,
9. No way to fatten a withered horse,
10. No way to console a child without a mother,
11. No way to cut satin without a master.
12. And grief, grief - little grieving!
13. And grief girded itself with bark,
14. The feet wound with bast.
15. And (I) ran from grief to the dark forests,
16. And grief came there beforehand;
17. And (I) ran from grief to an honorable feast,
18. And grief came there, - in front (he) sits;
19. And I (ran) from grief to the tsar's drinking house,
20. And grief meets (me) - (he) is drawing beer.
21. When I became naked, he jeered (1981:109).

[1a]

1. With me from Lebanon, bride,
2. with me from Lebanon come!
3. depart from the peak of Amanah,
4. from the peak of Senir and Hermon,
5. from the liars of lions,
6. from the mountains of leopards! (1981:131).

Before continuing to analyse the folk song [1] Jakobson gives us a brief resume of the background to the content of the song, but this does not form part of his analysis, though it is quite informative, as we learn that it was composed in the verse form of oral epics. To us this information is helpful, it shows the affinity of its origin to African oral poetry, and his reading of it calls for comparison with the criticism of African oral poetry. He starts by making intertextual reference, comparing this poem with other poems composed contemporaneously, then proceeds to study its structure.

The structure of the poem [1] has the following features: Lines 1 and 12 open the first and second paragraphs respectively. It is interesting to note that Jakobson uses 'paragraph' instead of 'stanza', a term which Kunene also uses (see section 5.2.1.4). Kunene's definition of the paragraph in oral poetry does not differ from Jakobson's. Using someone else's definition, Jakobson says a paragraph is "a larger structural unit 'which is significant both by marking stages in the development of a theme, and also by determining to some extent the form of the couplets [distich] which go to make it up' " (1981:111). Cope (see section 4.2.3.3) also refers to this concept when he talks about the 'thematic structure' - and saying that in Zulu oral poetry the stanza "commences with the same statement and deals with the same episode". Going back to the first and twelfth line, we find that Jakobson notes the difference in their structure, namely, that though these two differ in grammatical form and 'texture', they are governed by the parallelistic pattern of the whole song.

According to Jakobson, the first line of the first stanza follows the structure of the first line of the second paragraph (line 12) in the poem, though it does not follow the parallelistic pattern of any line in the first paragraph which it opens. One may surmise that the almost identical repetition of these lines would serve as a signal to the reader or listener that a new paragraph, in Jakobson's terms, is announced. That such a signal is indeed functional, is conceded by Jakobson when he says that the second paragraph is "quite different from the first in both theme and grammatical texture" (1981:111). The only other line which does not have an immediate match with a previous or subsequent line is the concluding line of the poem. It is interesting to note that whilst Jakobson immediately comments on the difference of these three

lines, and whilst he shrewdly notices their formal differential function in strategic positions in the structure of the poem, he nevertheless seems to underplay their difference from the rest of the poem where parallelism (based on grammatical and semantic equivalence) creates an effect of lines being paired off in similar units consisting of two lines each. These units are called distichs or couplets by Jakobson and he stresses the fact that they constitute the basic structural unit in the text. Thus, almost immediately after having commented on the difference of lines 1, 12 and 21, Jakobson argues that the opening lines of the two stanzas or paragraphs, lines 1 and 12, “display an internal grammatical parallelism of their hemistichs, a device shared by the intermediate lines, i.e. by all the lines of the first paragraph” (1981:112).

Before continuing with our discussion of Jakobson’s analysis of parallelism in the Russian folk song, a small digression seems to be necessary. In view of the insistence of Russian Formalist poetics on defining literariness in terms of defamiliarisation and foregrounding noted above (see section 2.2), we find it strange that Jakobson did not make more of the defamiliarising effect of having three lines deviating from the “parallelistic pattern of the entire composition” (1981:111). In subsequent studies of poetic syntax theorists have built on two different foregrounding devices distinguished in Russian Formalism, namely deviation (often manifested as a form of deliberate departure from a grammatical norm or rule) and structured repetition (of which parallelism is a prime example). In an article entitled “Internal and external deviation in poetry” Samuel Levin has shown how any variation in a pattern could achieve a foregrounding effect: “any of the devices of sentence construction can be used so as to develop a pattern of expectations which the appearance of a counter instance will disrupt” (Levin, 1965:231). In our opinion, the three lines mentioned by Jakobson as not conforming to the parallelistic pattern of the poem constitutes an internal deviation in the poem and therefore they draw attention to themselves as instances of internal foregrounding. We have to ask ourselves: What possible value could such a realisation have for our understanding of the poem? If we look closely at the three lines, it seems as if the almost identical repetition at the beginning of the two stanzas (lines 1 and 12) emphasises a lamentation of which the content is elaborated upon in the remainder of the poem. Whereas these two lines summarise and stress the main theme of the poem, the last line provides a rather shocking climax to the overwhelming nature of the ‘relationship’ between the speaker in the poem and the suddenly personified ‘grief’: “When I became naked, he/ jeered”. Thus our scrutiny of these structurally foregrounded lines in the poem has helped us to understand better both the main theme of the poem and its climactic twist in the concluding line.

In our opinion, the value of parallelism as a scholarly tool for analysing poetry is illustrated by our example of the exploitation of internal departures from the general parallelistic pattern in the text. The fact that Jakobson uses here an example of an oral Russian text strengthens our underlying supposition that a proper understanding of Jakobson's observations regarding poetic language may be helpful in developing scholarly tools for a better understanding of African oral poetry. But let us return to Jakobson's analysis and see what additional aspects of parallelism are analysed.

Of interest for our purpose is Jakobson's discussion of what he sees as typical of an oral tradition. Much of his discussion is devoted to grammatical detail of the Russian text, which we find interesting if only for the fact that it illustrates how linguistic specificity in a particular language may, to a certain extent, determine the type of parallelism that will be employed. In our scrutiny of the manner in which critics of African oral literature have dealt with parallelism (see chapter four and five) we shall return to the matter of linguistic specificity. For the present, we shall concentrate on Jakobson's explanation of general parallelistic patterns in the poem. By way of introduction he notes that the theme of the text, the ancient motif of everlasting grief, originated in oral literature but that it was subsequently (approximately the seventeenth century) also transposed to written literature. This popular theme is about the "story of an ill-fated lad (or girl) persecuted by a personified mythicized Grief [which] is recounted in numerous Russian lyrico-epic songs, some predominantly epic and others lyric" (1981:109-10). Notable oral features are, for instance, folklore formulas and parallelistic structures, such as coupling of synonyms with antonyms, which he regards to be "a salient device of parallelism" (1981:113). Let us quote from Jakobson's text in order to see how he analyses such a device in the text of the Russian song:

Antonymy connects both hemistichs in lines 2, 3 and 6, 7 and is represented in this pair of distichs by two different kinds of opposition. The hemistichs within 2 and 3 juxtaposed contradictories, whereas antonymy of the hemistichs in 6 and 7 is built on contraries ... Lines 4 and, in reverse order, 5 play with two opposites: absence and presence. The lack of means is treated as a contradictory in the first line of this distich and as a contrary in the second ... thus line 4 joins the preceding verses built on contradictories, while line 5 shares its use of contraries with the next distich. The constant alternation of opposites enunciated in the distich 4-5 is an intermediate link between

2 and 3, with their comforting unity of opposites, and the gloomy, irreconcilable contrariness of hemistichs within 6 and 7 (113–4).

The above analysis provides us with sufficient material to see how extensive the concept of parallelism is, in comparison with how our critics in chapters four and five have treated it. According to the above parallels stand as follows: ‘grief’ in the first line stands in antonymy to ‘unchagrined’ in the second line, the former being “a physical condition” and the latter “the corresponding psychological state”. The hemistich of line 4, “if there is no money” is in opposition to “If a coin appeared”; internal parallelism is based on the repetition of ‘grief’ in lines one and two; lines six and seven reflect contradictions, in ‘bald curly’/ ‘idle rich’; while the end of line four - “before money”, carries over the cheerfulness of the end of lines two and three - ‘unchagrined’ and ‘unashamed’; whereas line five - “before penury” precedes the “pessimistic propositions” which follow it.

Other semantic parallels are noted: “The grief imagery employed by the first line of the distich is matched in the second by the similar and contiguous motif of poverty ... particularly by a synecdochic image of nakedness”. Here we see a type of “Parallelism Synonymous” in ‘grief’ and ‘naked’, that is, in lines two and three. Jakobson also notes what he refers to as ‘double parallelism’, where there is a combination of “the mutual symmetry of lines with the internal symmetry of their hemistichs”. We shall use numerals in subscript to indicate parallelisms which Jakobson has identified:

And | 1 to live | 2 in grief | 3 *to be unchagrined* |
..... | 1 *to walk* | 2 *naked* | 3 to be unashamed |

This parallelism is reinforced by yet another, where the end of the second hemistich is carried over into or corresponds with the first hemistich of the next line of the distich, as in the italicised phrases in the above distich - “the man who appears lighthearted in grief can afford to stroll in rags without any embarrassment”, this parallelism is termed ‘anadiplosis’. Jakobson footnotes the definition of anadiplosis with a figurative one by someone, where it is likened to “a link of a chain which is in contact with both the foregoing and the following ring”. This idea is echoed in Schapera’s dictionary definition of linking (see section 4.2.1.2), and Kunene (see section 5.2.1.5) refers to it as ‘oblique parallelism’ in his definition of what amounts to anadiplosis. In this poem [1] it functions this way: “ ‘And (if one is) to live in *grief* - (he has) to be *unchagrined* -, And (if) *chagrined* in *grief* - (one has) to perish’ ” [italics mine]. This chain link is “constructed on chiasmic antonyms ...” in a

manner which “rationalizes the antecedent line by a causal motivation: ‘because otherwise one would perish’ ” (1981:115). The phrases ‘in grief’ and ‘naked’ also form a parallelism, because ‘both of them are adverbial modifiers in infinitive clauses, “to live” and “to walk”’.

Before we can proceed with Jakobson’s further analysis of the poem let us compare some of his analytical reading, *en passant*, with some of the structures in oral poetry. Here is an excerpt from one of Kunene’s studies (see translation in section 5.2.1.5), which, for the present purpose, will do without the English version:

1 Ngwana lona | 2 o jelwe | 3 *ke koeyoko* |
 2 O jelwe | 3 *ke koeyoko* | 1 | 4 ya Letsie |
 3 *Ke koeyoko* | 2 se ja | 1 bana | 4 ba makgowa |

This shows no deviation from Jakobson’s idea of parallelism. What we have done here is to improvise divisions to indicate some of the subtle forms of parallelism postulated by Jakobson, whereas Kunene misses some of these, for instance, in the above poem he misses the parallelism noted with the numerals (1), (2) and (4). In (2) he recognises only the parallelism in the repetition of *o jelwe* (“has been devoured”) but not its extension in *seja* (‘devourer’). He also fails to recognise the triple parallelism in *ngwana lona* (“your child” - literally “child of you”), *ya Letsie* (of Letsie), and *bana ba makgowa* (“children of the Whites”). The parallelism in the antonymy in “of Letsie” and “of you” - opposition of second- and third-person, is also not noted by Kunene. Number (1) in the first line can also be in parallelism with (1) in the third line (*ngwana [wa] lona*) and (4) - as a continuous phrase, in the third line (*bana ba makgowa*). In *o jelwe* and *se-ja* we have a double-fold parallelism. Firstly it is a parallelism of repetition, in that the root *j-a* (‘devour’) is repeated in *j-elwe* (‘devoured’), secondly, these two stand in opposition in terms of tense, the present as opposed to the past, and also in terms of ‘active’ (‘devour’) and ‘passive’ (‘devoured by’). We shall refer to Kunene’s omissions again when we come to his analysis of oral poetry.

Schapera also commits the same act of omission in his analysis, as in the following poem [56]:

1 Moleti | 2 wa matlotla, |
 1 Molebêlêdi | 2 wa masope | 3 a batho
 1 Modisa | 2 wa [le]sope | 3 la gammaagwê

Schapera hardly makes even a passing comment as to how parallelism is structured here, as a result we do not know whether his analysis would have been as sharp as Jakobson's. The latter would have noted that the words *moleti* ('watchman'), *molebêlêdi*, ('caretaker'), and *modisa* ('guardian') are "parallelism synonymous", in the sense that the semantic value is repeated three times. Jakobson would also have noted the semantic overlap in the words *matlotla* ("derelict homes") *masope* ('ruins') and [*le*]*sope* ('ruins' [singular]); the parallelism also lies in the opposition of singular and plural. Furthermore, there is also parallelism in *a batho* ("of the people") and *la mmaagwe* ("his mother's": literally - "of his mother"). This parallelism is both synecdochic and synonymous - 'mother' being a semantic subset of 'people'. There is also the antonymy of singular and plural.

Jordan (see section 4.2.2.2) also falls short of commenting on what seems to be obvious when studied in terms of Jakobson's keen definition of parallelism. Here is an example from one of the poems [65] he studies. He gives the English version but not the Xhosa one:

1 Shade | 2 wherein | 3 I rest | 4 when I am | 5 weary,
1 Fount | 2 whereof | 3 I drink | 4 when I am | 5 thirsty.

The parallel structures are obvious here, for the internal structure of each line in the distich repeats itself in the two hemistichs of the second line. So as to avoid belabouring an obvious point here, we shall reserve further comments until we come to Jordan's analysis (see section 4.2.2.2), where we will look at lines where the parallelism is less obvious than here. The reason for the degree of obviousness as regards the above example, should be sought in the strict sequential similarity of parts of speech in the two lines. This type of parallelism is called coupling in Samuel Levin's study entitled *Linguistic structures in poetry* (1969). As regards the above example, Levin would have noted that synonyms are arranged in similar syntactic positions, whereas Jakobson would have said, "equivalent entities confront one another by appearing in equivalent positions". The result of such a syntactic arrangement would be that the reader or listener would become conscious of the pairing of 'weary/thirsty', 'I rest/I drink' and 'shade/fount'. Levin distinguishes between natural and unfamiliar synonyms and notes that words that are not normally regarded as either synonymous or antonymous could be so perceived as a result of the syntactic pattern. In the example cited by Schapera, 'fount/shade' would not normally be experienced as synonymous. However, one of the effects of a strict pattern, according to Levin, is precisely that additional, novel or unexpected semantic equivalence may be 'superimposed' on words or phrases that would not

normally be considered synonymous or antonymous. Thus the reader or listener is coerced, as a result of the pervasiveness of the syntactic pattern, to interpret coupled words or phrases as being semantically equivalent.

In accordance with his understanding of the operation of the equivalence principle in poetry, Jakobson also analyses the phonological structure of the poem, paying particular attention to what he calls “oral epic meter with its traditional trochaic tendency and six downbeats interlaid with five upbeats” (1981:125). As we have already noted (see section 2.2.1.1), the metrical structure of a poem constitutes, for Jakobson, an element in his explanation as to what is to be understood by the so-called promotion of equivalence to the constitutive device of the sequence:

In poetry one syllable is equalized with any other syllable of the same sequence; word stress is assumed to equal stress, as unstressed equals unstressed; prosodic long with prosodic long, and short with short; word boundary equals word boundary, no boundary equals no boundary, syntactic pause equals syntactic pause, no pause equals no pause. Syllables are converted into units of measure (Jakobson, 1981:27)

It is interesting to note how Jakobson analyses the correspondence between grammatical and metrical parallelism in the Russian poem, where, according to him: “The variation of the metrical design are closely linked with the composition of the song and its division into parallelistic groups of lines” (1981:125). However, as we shall see, this is one of the language specific aspects of ‘Western’ criticism that is challenged by critics of African oral poetry (see, for instance, Kunene’s rejection of rhyme and syllabic metre in section 5.1). We shall return to the question of linguistic specificity generally, and the appropriateness of metre to African oral poetry particularly, in our discussion of the critical practice of African critics in chapters four and five. Anticipating further discussion of Jakobson’s commentary on the morphological and phonemic parallel structure of the Russian text, we shall note further observations of parallelism in the above poem [1]. He notes that: The two paragraphs of the song differ manifestly in their grammatical composition. The first paragraph (lines 1–11) contains ten infinitives and only one finite verb ... against nine finite forms and no infinitives in the second paragraph ... (12–21). Since there is not much along the lines of comparison in this regard, and also because this kind of analysis will emerge in the analysis of the Shakespeare’s [2] and Blake’s [2a] extracts, we shall leave it at this stage. Let us look briefly at how he approaches the next poem [1a]. Jakobson notes that:

The whole hexastich is cemented by the six occurrences of the preposition 'from' and by a noun as the second unit of every line. Each of the three distichs has its own conspicuous structural properties. The first is the only one which repeats words in identical metrical positions. The first word pair is echoed in 2, and while the third words of the two lines belong to different parts of speech, they still follow the parallelistic pattern, since both the vocative function of the final noun in 1 and the imperative function of the final verb in 2 represent one and the same conative level of address ... In a similar way the Russian folk song treats imperatives as parallels to vocatives (1981:131).

Jakobson's footnote on this definition reminds us that: "Orientation towards the ADDRESSEE, the CONATIVE function, finds its purest grammatical expression in the vocative and the imperative". This could be a useful tool in the analysis of oral poetry, one of whose dominant devices is the vocative. Here an example from Jordan's study (see section 4.2.2.2) will suffice. Parallelism will be indicated with numerals, where parentheses will indicate a double-fold parallelism in one phrase or word:

1 Hear thou, O king, | | 2 tallest among the tall!
 3 Offspring of Madondo Gumede, | 2 most beautiful!
 1 I linger here to beg of thee, | 2 first born:
 1 Let us weave us a rope, | 3 O'Mandi, son of Jama,
 4 And go to heaven | where the evil one | may not climb,
 For should they try, | they break their tiny toes.

Here the vocative-imperative parallelism is obvious, in "Hear thou, O king", "I linger here to beg of thee" and "Let us weave a rope" (1) (indirect imperative or subjunctive). We also note that there is a parallel in the adjectival phrases which describe the person addressed (2). We also note the noun-preposition-noun parallelism in the phrases which describe the lineage of the addressee (3). Lines five and six fall outside the parallelistic structure. The internal parallelism of the passage is dominated by the parallelism synonymous of the repetition of 'king' in 'Offspring', "first-born", and 'son'. This is of course not a parallelism in terms of structure but in terms of meaning. The first two lines form a kind of 'semantic' distich with their similar ending, the first line ending with an epithet in the

superlative, 'tallest', carried over in the phrase "most beautiful" of the second line. There are further instances of semantic parallelism. We note that 'linger' also stands in parallel opposition to 'go', and also in the contrast between the second-person 'thou', 'thee' and 'they' in the first, third and sixth lines respectively, and first-person, 'I' and 'us' in the third and fourth lines. There is also a double contrast in the singularity, 'Thou', 'thee' and 'I', and plurality, 'us' and 'they'.

Such occurrences of parallelism also abound in poems studied by Schapera, Jordan, Cope, Kunene, and Opland, as we shall see in the fourth and fifth chapters. The apposition of the personal names, Madondo Gumede, Mandi and Jama, are a characteristic feature of oral poetry, but Jakobson also notes that apostrophe, a figure of speech where the addresser breaks off and addresses a person or thing in the second-person, as when [1] grief is addressed directly, is also a feature of Russian folk song. He puts it thus: "The repeated apostrophe is similar to the predominant type of monostich observed ... which consists of a noun in the nominative and its apposition. Most frequently such substantives are 'proper names, personal or mythological' " (1981:112), as when 'grief' is addressed directly in the second-person. In the oral poem quoted we find the same parallelism, when 'king', after some intermediaries, is followed by apposition using proper names.

Going back to Jakobson, he observes that anadiplosis is also a feature found in the Hebrew song [1a], and this is how it is structured, according to him: "The first distich is closed by one verb, and the second opens with the other verb; the former verb is preceded, and the latter followed by a prepositional construction. The medial [the peak of] in line 3 is repeated at the beginning of 4". There is a similar parallelism in oral poetry, and we give an example from Cope's study (see section 4.2.3.3) of an oral poem [84]:

Wadl' ubani obezalwa ubani
 Angithandi 2 ukumusho
 Uma 2 ngimusho kungadum' isili;

In the above text anadiplosis is structured in lines two and three. The end of the second line with the infinitive verb *ukumusho* ("mention him") is carried over in the hemistich of the third line *ngimusho* ("I mention him"). There are other parallelisms of other kinds in this short passage, such as the antonymy of the first-person *ngi-* ('I') in the positive and negative *angi-* ("I do not"). We give here another example of a clear case of this parallelism in one of Opland's studies (see section 5.3.1.2) of Xhosa oral poetry [148]:

Zifikil' iimini zokukhunjulwa

kuka 1Hintsisa

1 UHintsisa lo ngoka | Khawuta ka 2 Gcaleka

2 Gcaleka lo ngoka | Phalo ka 3Tshiwo

3 UTshiwo lo ngoka | Ngconde ka Togu

The personal name, Hintsisa, at the end of the first line of this excerpt opens the second line, and the personal name at the end of the second line is carried over at the beginning of the third line. The parallel symmetry is also more akin to what Jakobson described with reference to the Hebrew poem [1a] in terms of the inversion of structure, where in "from Lebanon come" the verb 'come' is preceded by the preposition, whereas in the next line the verb 'depart' is followed by the prepositional phrase, "depart from Lebanon"; the personal name which starts the line is preceded by the qualifier, *ka* ('of') *Gcaleka*, in the next line it is followed by the qualifier, *UGcaleka lo* ('this') *ngoka* ("is of"). Opland's translation of this poem is given where he deals with it (see section 5.2.1.2). This indicates that African oral poetry on the one hand and Hebrew and Russian folk share some universal features, supporting the argument which we made in the first chapter, namely that the former is not a unique genre.

We shall continue to look at Jakobson's study of Shakespeare's and Blake's poems. Here the numerals are used only to indicate the ordinal of a line in a stanza, as Jakobson has done:

[2]

- I 1 The expense of spirit | in a waste of shame
2 Is lust in action, | and till action, lust
3 Is perjured, murderous, | bloody full of blame
4 Savage, extreme, rude, | cruel, not to trust,
- II 1 Enjoyed no sooner | but despised straight,
2 Past reason hunted, | and no sooner had
3 Past reason hated | as a swallowed bayt,
4 On purpose layd | to make | the taker mad.
- III 1 Mad<e> In pursut | and in possession so,
2 Had, having, and in quest, | to have extreme,
3 A blisse in prooffe | and provd | a<nd> very wo,
4 Before a joy proposed | behind a dreame,
- IV 1 All this the world | well knowes | yet none knowes well,
2 To shun the heaven | that leads | men to this hell (1981:285)

[2a]

- 1 My mother groand! my father wept.
- 2 Into the dangerous world I leapt:
- 3 Helpless, naked, piping aloud:
- 4 Like a fiend hid in a cloud.

- 5 Struggling in my father's hands:
- 6 Striving against my swadling bands:
- 7 Bound and weary I thought best
- 8 To sulk upon my mother's breast (1981:323).

The first poem [2] is analysed in terms of its constituents, namely, 1) rhyme, strophes and lines, and then 2) Spelling and punctuation, 3) Interpretation, 4) Pervasive features, 5) odd against even strophes, 6) Outer against inner strophes, 7) Anterior against posterior, 8) Couplet against quatrain and finally, 9) Centre against marginals. This being one of the most elaborate and extensive analyses, we shall only highlight major points of Jakobson's approach in this case.

First to be noted is the division of the poem into three quatrains, each with alternate (*abab*) masculine rhymes, and the final couplet. Jakobson is interested in the grammatical similarities and differences of the words making up the different rhymes of the poem (a rhyme, for Jakobson, consists of at least two words linked by means of the phonological similarity of their rhyming syllables, e.g. 'shame/blame'). He observes that of the seven rhymes only the first is grammatical, since it juxtaposes two nouns with the same preposition ("of shame" ... "of blame"). However, the second rhyme, whilst it again begins with a noun ('lust'), then confronts it with a different part of speech, namely an infinitive ("to trust"). Jakobson continues in this vein, simultaneously commenting upon the repetition and position of the rhyme in the poem:

The third rhyme and the last three rhymes invert this order: a non-noun is followed by a noun, whereas the fourth, the central of the seven rhymes, has no noun at all and consists of the particle *had* and the adjective *mad*. The first rhyming word within the second or only rhyme of each strophe is duplicated elsewhere in the sonnet: I2 *lust* - *lust*; II2 *had* - III2 *Had*; III2 *extreame* - I4 *extreame*; IV1 *well* - *well*. In the second strophe the second rhyme word is also repeated: II4 *mad* - III1 *Mad* (1981:285).

Looking at the above idea of rhyme it may seem that Jakobson's idea of rhyme does not apply to oral poetry, in terms of sound. But a closer study will reveal that there is some kind of 'semantic' rhyme scheme in some oral poems. We shall illustrate this with an example (see section 4.2.2.2) from Jordan, who presents a Zulu oral poem [76] in translation in his study, and we give his version here:

1. He is Shaka the unshakable,
2. Thunder-while-sitting, son of Menzi;
3. He is the bird that preys on other birds,
4. The battle-axe that excels other battle-axes;
5. He is the long-strided-pursuer, son of Ndaba,
6. Who pursued the moon and the sun;
7. He is a great hubbub like the rocks of Nkandla
8. Where the elephants take shelter
9. When the heavens frown.
10. 'Tis he whose spears resound causing wailing,
11. The old women shall stay in abandoned homes,
12. And old men shall drop by the wayside.

Though the semantic rhyme scheme here is not regular, it does take some form when we look at lines 2 to 12, since end words that are related in meaning, thus constituting what we have termed a 'semantic rhyme', almost invariably occur in syntactically symmetrical sequences, thereby exemplifying syntactic equivalence in parallelistic constructions. We shall regard the first line as an opening line, introducing the subject, as Jakobson refers to the first line in the first poem [1] which he analyses. He says it carries "the burden of the entire composition", to put it in his own words. The noun phrase which has a personal name, "son of Menzi" is intercepted by a distich/couplet consisting of nearly symmetrical and parallel relative constructions, "that preys on other birds" and "that excels other battle-axes", then followed by a similar noun phrase, "son of Ndaba", which also has a personal name. After an interception, line 6, the same phrase structure is repeated in "rocks of Nkandla". After this the next distich ends with verb phrases, which are also nearly symmetrical, "elephants take shelter" and "the heavens frown". In the latter distich the nouns are personified, though the verb phrase "take shelter" can also be in opposition, for it can either be figurative or literal. The three final lines follow the same semantic rhyme scheme, for the first line, that is, line 10 ends with a gerund verb/noun, 'wailing', while the last two end with nouns which are both locative,

'home' and 'wayside' but antonymic in terms of their semantic value. The first line ends with an adjectival phrase, at variance with all the lines of the poem, thus the semantic rhyme scheme occurs in the following grammatical pattern, *abc, cbc, bdd*, and *dee*. Let us illustrate this point to make it clearer:

The unshakable	= adjectival phrase	<i>a</i>
Son of Menzi	= phrase with proper noun	<i>b</i>
On other birds	= phrase with general noun	<i>c</i>
Other battle-axes	= phrase with general noun	<i>c</i>
Son of Ndaba	= phrase with proper noun	<i>b</i>
The sun	= phrase with general noun	<i>c</i>
Rocks of Nkandla	= phrase with proper noun	<i>b</i>
Take shelter	= phrase with verb	<i>d</i>
Heavens frown	= phrase with verb	<i>d</i>
Wailing	= phrase with (gerund) verb	<i>d</i>
Home	= phrase with locative noun	<i>e</i>
Wayside	= phrase with locative noun	<i>e</i>

Other patterns of semantic rhyme patterns in these poems will be discussed later, when we come to Jordan's reading of oral poetry. Returning to Jakobson, we find that the 'interpretation' of the poem is paraphrased stanza by stanza as follows:

I In action, lust is the expenditure of vital power (mind and semen) in a wasting of shame (chastity and genitalia), and until action, lust is deliberately treacherous, murderous, bloody, culpable, savage, intemperate, brutal, cruel, perfidious;

II no sooner enjoyed than at once despised, no sooner crazily sought than crazily hated as a swallowed bait has been purposely laid (for fornication and trapping) to make the taker mad.

III Mad, both in pursuit and in possession, intemperate after having had, when having, and in the quest to have a bliss while being tried and a real woe after having been tried, beforehand a proposed joy, afterwards a phantom;

IV all this is well known to the world but nobody knows well enough to shun the heaven that leads men to this hell (1981:288).

The poem has a number of puns, and they have to be studied with reference to the temporal background of the text, for example, words and phrases like *shame*, *lust in action*, *expense*, and *waste*, had connotations associated with chastity and genitalia, negative character, the sperm etc. Their full understanding can therefore be derived from an intertextual (and therefore contextual) study, that is, in comparison with other poetic texts written contemporaneously by the same or different poets. We have here, then, an example where attention to what we have termed 'extratextual' detail seems warranted in the analysis of the poem, as Jakobson observes that devices such as "word play, lexical ambiguities and puns ... must be and have been interpreted against the background of Elizabethan *ars poetica*" (1981:288). We are in full agreement with Jakobson on this point, that a contextualised study should not be shunned where it can enhance our understanding of an African oral text. We only reiterate once more, as we have already argued (see chapter 1), that it should not be our main focus when considering means whereby African oral poetry may be studied more effectively.

The 'pervasive' feature is the grammatical structure of the poem, which is determined by the four strophes in the poem, each with a particular selection of verbal forms, with an infinitive form of the verb in every even line - the fourth lines of the first and second strophes, "to trust" and "to make", and the second lines of the third and fourth strophes, "to have", and "to shun". The major characteristic of this pervasive feature is the absence of certain grammatical structures: This sonnet is "the only one among the 154 sonnets of the 1609 Quarto which contains no personal or corresponding pronoun. In sonnets 5, 68, 94 only third-person pronouns occur, while the rest of the sonnets make wide use of the first- and second-person pronouns". In this sonnet there are no epithets, and where adjectives are used they do not function as modifiers but have a predicative or complementary function, as in the third line of the third strophe ("very wo") and the second line of the fourth strophe ("to make the taker mad") respectively, and there are no finite forms of the verb except for the third-person singular in the present tense.

Another prominent feature is the use of alliteration (sound) or repetition of structural constituents of words (morphemes), such as the repetition of the /sp-sp/ sound in "expense of spirit", /bl/ in 'blouddy' and 'blame', /str-tr.st/ in 'extream' and 'trust', /h/ in 'hunted' and 'had', /eyt -eyt/ in 'hated' and 'bayt' and so forth, and the repetition of morphemes in "lust in action" and "action, lust", "had, having" and

'had', and, "before a" and "behind a". Alliteration is defined in a similar manner by Cope (see section 4.2.3.2), in his analysis of two poems, [98] and [99], where he refers to two kinds of alliteration in Zulu oral poetry, what he refers to as 'natural' as opposed to 'artificial' alliteration. The former is the kind of alliteration determined by concordial agreement in Zulu morphology, while the latter is one which is achieved as a deliberate poetic device. The latter is found in the repetition of the *dl* sound:

UDl~~o~~dlwane luyaluhlezi.

Luya ludlondl~~o~~bele.

Isidlangu~~u~~dlangu esinjengendlebe yendlovu;

We shall come back to Cope when we get to his analysis. Going back to Jakobson, the poem begins with a "contraction of two contiguous vowels in 'Th'expence', and there is an absence of 'hiatus' and a presence of a symmetrical distribution of initial vowel sounds of words with a tense or lax onset sounds like /h/ or /≠/, with one in two parts of a distich (couplet) beginning with such an onset. In the odd strophes (first and third) this opens the inner lines, 'Is' and 'Is' in lines two and three of the first strophe; and 'Had' and 'A' in the second and third lines of the third strophe. In the even strophes there is this onset, 'Injoyd' and 'On' in the first and fourth lines of the second strophe, and 'All' in the first line of the fourth strophe. Jakobson observes that the sound patterns are also arranged as follows:

In its downbeats each quatrain includes three, and terminal couplets two, vocalic onsets; in eight instances the vowel is /æ/; and in all four strophes the second downbeat appears to be endowed with such onset: I2 *in action, and till action* (/æ/ - /æ/ - /æ/); II2 *hunted, and no sooner had* /h / - /æ/ - /æ/); III2 *having and in quest t have* (/hæ/ - /æ/ - /hæ/); IV2 *heaven*** hell* /h / - /h /). The semantic leitmotif of each strophe is one of tragic predestination: *lust *** is perjurd* (I2,3), viz., deliberately treacherous. It is a murderous bait laid on purpose (II) and proposing seemingly joyful and heavenly bliss, only to change it into a very woe. The terminology of this plot is closely linked with the vocabulary of Shakespeare's drama ... The phonic affinity of *perjurd* with *purpose* is supplemented by the confrontation of the latter word with *proposed* in the final lines of II and III, and the etymological kinship of these two words is revived by the poet. If the first

centrifugal line of the sonnet introduces the hero, *the taker*, however, still not as an agent but as victim, the final centrifugal line brings the exposure of the malevolent culprit, *the heaven that leads men to hell*, and thus discloses by what perjurer the joy was proposed and the lure laid (1981:290–1).

Following the division of the sonnet into odd and even strophes Jakobson suggests that the correspondence between the two forms a balance of contrasts, revealing “the most elaborate symmetries in the sonnet, and it is precisely the hierarchy of the three interstrophic correlations that individualizes and diversifies the four-strophe poems of any verbal artist” (1981:291). The theme is presented in the odd strophes indicating the different stages of lust, “*before, in action, behind*”, while the even strophes focus on the change, the “metamorphosis itself”, expressed in the second line of the second strophe by “*hunted, and no sooner had*”, and in the third line by “*Past reason hated*”, and in the second line of the fourth strophe by “*heaven to hell*”. Comparing this pattern with a motion picture, Jakobson suggests that it develops in a straightforward manner in the even strophes, but the odd “introduces a retrospective and generalizing approach”, as “*In action, and till action*” in the second line of the first strophe, and “*Had, having, and in quest, to have extreme*” in the second line of the third strophe.

The contrast between the odd and even strophes also lies in the distribution of parts of speech. The former has more substantives (nouns) and adjectives, seventeen and ten respectively, as opposed to the latter, which have only six substantives and one adjective. In the first strophe eight of the seventeen substantives are concentrated in the first distich, and all of the eight adjectives are in the second distich, but in the third strophe the adjectives are concentrated in the first distich and most of the substantives in the second. The seventeen substantives in the odd strophes are abstract, and the six in the even are concrete. The grammatical analysis further atomises substantives and adjectives as follows:

The abstracts fall into two categories: A) verbal nexus words: five substantives in I and four in III (I: *expence, waste, action, action, blame*; III: *pursuit, possession, quest, prooffe*); B) feelings, states, faculties: four in I and equally in III (I: *Spirit, shame, lust, lust*; III: *blisse, wo, joy, dreame*). The symmetry between I and III appears to be total if we confront III only with the first, substantival distich of the first strophe. This distich contains precisely four verbal nexus words while the only substantive of the second distich, endowed with

eight adjectives, functions as a mere modifier of its last adjective: *full of blame* = blameful (1981:292)

The next poem [2a] referred to above, is William Blake's "Infant Sorrow", from his *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. Firstly, there is the four rhyming couplets noted in the two quatrains, with a marked difference between the odd and even couplets in their rhyme:

Both rhyming words of any odd couplet belong to the same morphological category, end with the identical consonantal inflectional suffix, and are devoid of agreement in their prevocalic phonemes: *wep-t: leap-t, hand-s: band-s*. The similar formal makeup of the two odd rhymes underscores the divergent semantic orientation of the two quatrains, viz. the conceptual contrast between the inaugural preterits and the inanimates looming over the second quatrain which are, *nota bene*, the sole plurals of the poem. The grammatical rhyme is combined with the deep parallelism of the rhyming lines (Jakobson, 1981:323).

The two lines which form the third couplet are said to form symmetrical clauses, "Struggling in my father's hands" and "Striving against my swadling bands", while the phrases "My mother groaned! my father wept", find their response in the third coordinate clause, "I leaped". The difference between the odd and even couplets is underlined by a non-grammatical combination of adjectival adjuncts ('loud' and 'best') rhyming with inanimate nouns ('cloud' and 'breast') in the even, which makes them "patently grammatical in their juxtaposition". This, according to Jakobson, asserts a kinship between the two grammatical categories of words, or images at the end of lines - "*a cloud* as a metaphor of placenta and *breast* - two successive links between the infant and his mother".

The two quatrains form grammatically corresponding units, with the four couplets dividing into two pairs in three varying kinds of rhyme schemes: The first consists of two 'anterior' couplets in the first quatrain, 'wept' and 'leapt'; 'loud' and 'cloud', and then two 'posterior' couplets in the second quatrain, 'hands' and 'bands'; 'best' and 'breast' similar to the *aabb* rhyme scheme. The second is determined by the relationship between the odd and even couplets, implying an alternate rhyme scheme - 'wept' and 'leapt' = *a*; 'loud' and 'cloud' = *b*; 'hands' and 'bands' = *a*; 'best' and 'breast' = *b*, summing up to an *abab* pattern. The third is the relationship between the 'inner' and 'outer' couplets. By this Jakobson refers to the first couplet

of the first quatrain and the last of the second quatrain as outer, while the part from the second couplet of the first quatrain to the first couplet of the second quatrain forms what he calls the inner couplets. This forms an *abba* rhyme scheme.

The analysis continues to a grammatical reading of the octet, indicating that each of the quatrains has five nouns ('mother', 'father', 'world', 'fiend', 'cloud'; and 'fathers', 'hands', 'bands', 'mothers', 'breast') and five verbal forms ('groand', 'wept', 'leapt', 'piping', 'hid'; and 'struggling', 'striving', 'swadling', 'thought', 'sulk'). These are distributed equally among the four lines of each stanza. The distribution is illustrated as follows:

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|----|
| 1. mother, father | = 2 = fathers hands | 5. |
| 2. world | = 1 = bands | 6. |
| 3. | = ≠ = | 7. |
| 4. fiend cloud | = 2 = mothers breast | 8. |

The number after the first equation sign refers to the number of words or nouns preceding it, and then follows another equation sign, followed by the line in which these words are found. In other words the two nouns or images 'mother' and 'fathers' in the first line form a symmetry with the two words 'fathers hands' in the fifth line, and 'world' in the second line forms a symmetry with 'bands' in the sixth line, while in the fourth line 'fiend' and 'cloud' form a symmetrical relation with 'mothers' and 'breast' in the eighth line.

The five inanimate nouns in the marginal lines form an asymmetrical pattern, illustrated as follows:

Anterior couplets	: 3 animates,	2 inanimates
Outer couplets	: 3 "	2 "
Posterior couplets	: 2 "	3 "
Inner couplets	: 2 "	3 "

The inanimate nouns are bound with locative prepositions (into, in, against and upon), but with the inanimate nouns only one of the four is used with an 'equational' preposition [simile - like]. Another symmetrical pattern noted is the use of epithets (dangerous and swadling) in the second and sixth lines; and nouns and pronouns in the possessive form, and articles (definite and indefinite) used in two lines in each of the two quatrains: "1 My, my; 2 the dangerous; 3 ≠; 4a, a; 6my swadling; 7≠; 8my mothers", with an opposition of four (2 + 2) prepositional attributes and two (≠ + 2) in the even ones.

The distribution of the ten nouns and ten verbal forms is said to have similarities and differences in the four couplets of the octet, and illustrated as:

I.	3	2	III
II.	2	3	IV

There is an oppositional symmetry in the outer/inner and odd/even sets of nouns and verbs. The outer couplets, lines 1 and 2, and lines 7 and 8, consist of two verbal forms, 'leapt' and 'to sulk' in the first outer and 'bound' and 'thought' in the second outer couplets, and the second lines of the same couplets consist of one verb each, 'leapt' and 'to sulk', and the inner couplets, lines 5, 6, 7 and 8, consist of one verb form each, 'piping', 'hid', 'struggling', and 'striving.'

In terms of sense there is a marked difference between the inner/outer and the odd/even couplets. The inner/outer "suggest a closed configuration, and the latter, an open-ended chain. Blake's poem associates the former with nouns and the latter with verbs, and one ought to recall Sapir's semantic definition of nouns as 'existents' and verbs as 'occurents' " (1981:326). In each even couplet there is one passive particle form of the verb, 'hid' in line 4 and 'bound' in line seven. In the active voice there are three finite verbs, 'groaned', 'wept' and 'leapt', and one non-finite verb, 'piping', in the first quatrain, and there is no transitive form. The second quatrain has the opposite arrangement ('antisymmetrical'), with one finite, 'thought' and three nonfinite, 'struggling', 'striving' and 'swadling'. All the four are in the past form, making a contrast between the inner and outer couplets. In the former the three verbs are in the gerund, while in the latter there are no gerunds out of all the five verbs, 'groaned', 'wept', 'leapt', 'thought' and 'to sulk'. In the two quatrains the inner couplets lines, 3 and 4, 5 and 6, are subordinate to line 2 of the outer couplet, from the phrase 'I leapt'.

The prepositions are distributed evenly between the anterior and the posterior couplets, each with three, 'into' (line 2), 'like' and 'in' (line 4), in the former and 'in' (line 5), 'against' (line 6) and 'upon' (line 8) in the latter, and three in the odd (lines 2, 5 and 6) and three to the even (lines 4 and 8), and in terms of the inner and outer couplets each of the former has one preposition and each of the latter two.

The above reading of both the Shakespearean [2] and the Blake [2a] poems can hardly be applicable to oral poetry. In regard to the first poem, it seems as if the sonnet, in terms of its content and structural features, is far removed from oral poetry. The regular fourteen number of lines which divides into quatrains and a couplet is one distinctive feature which underlines the difference. Another is the structured, and almost 'rigid', occurrence of rhyme. In regard to the second poem,

although the Blake text would at first seem to be far less rigidly structured than the Shakespearean sonnet, Jakobson's entire analysis hinges upon the rigid patterning of strophes which, in turn, relies heavily upon the device of rhyme. However, structured strophes characterised by a rigid rhyme scheme are definitely not a feature of the oral poem, though of course some modern poetry and dramatic verse, for instance, Khaketla's *Dipjamathe*, (1954) Lesoro's *Mmitsa* (1961) and Masiea's *Mmualle* (1981) has attempted to adopt the *abab* or *abba* rhyme scheme. This practice of adopting European rhyme schemes has raised serious objections from some critics, and it is obvious that it is a mere imitation rather than an inherent part of African poetry. This is evident in some words which look like rhyme in written form (the so-called "eye rhyme"), where in their pronunciation they sound different. Jakobson's model in this respect is inapplicable to African poetry, and this is made clear by Kunene (see section 5.2.1.4). This can be attributed not to the weakness of Jakobson's method in general, but to the specific nature of especially the sonnet which he is analysing, whose structure requires a unique approach.

The universality of certain parts of language renders some of Jakobson's analytical methods applicable to African oral poetry, and such is alliteration, repetition of certain sounds or morphemes, as discussed above. This feature is found in some oral poems, as Cope illustrates in his reading of poems [94], [95] and [101] (see section 4.2.3.3). However, this universality does not necessarily lead to automatic applicability of Jakobson's analytical model *in toto*. This is the case with regard to his analysis of symmetrical odd and even strophes in terms of parts of speech such as substantives (nouns), verbs, adjectives, and pronouns and articles. Besides parallelism and alliteration the rest of his analysis of poems [1] and [2] (see section 2.2.1.2) are largely inapplicable to oral poetry in particular, and African poetry in general. The analysis of the two poems, though rigorous and meticulous, presents a strong case for opposition to the application of Western standards, or poetics in this case, to African poetry and prose literature.

It is reasonable here to conclude that the first practical application, on parallelism is relevant, though the critics of oral poetry, as indicated, were not aware of it, while the second, on Blake and Shakespeare, is not suitable to oral poetry because Jakobson was looking specifically at a written form, which has become stylised to suit foregrounding of a particular age and place. His theory of sound patterns has the potential to be more pertinent in a genre such as oral poetry, which in its unwritten form is essentially a system based on sound patterns for its structure.

2.2.2 Viktor B. Shlovsky (1893–1984)

Shlovsky was educated at the University of St Petersburg (Leningrad). He helped found the *Opojaz*. He also had connections with the Serapian Brothers, a group of writers who began meeting at Petrograd in 1921. In his articles, “On the theory of prose” (1925) and “The technique of the writer’s craft” (1928) he argued that literature is a collection of stylistic and formal devices that makes the reader view the world in an unusual manner by presenting old ideas or ordinary experiences in new, unusual ways. His concept of *ostranenija*, or “making it strange”, was his chief contribution to Russian Formalist theory. He was also the *Opojaz* major theorist on prose.

Shlovsky also wrote autobiographical novels, *A Sentimental Journey: Memoirs 1917–1922* (1923) about his life during the Bolshevik period, and *Letters Not About Love* (1923), both published in Berlin. He went to Berlin and lived there between 1922 and 1923, and returned to the Soviet Union, by that time the *Opojaz* had been dissolved by the authorities. He joined literary circles sanctioned by the state and surrendered to Stalinist displeasure against Formalism, and tried to please the post-revolutionary authoritarian regime, and wrote “Monuments of a Scholarly Error”. Later he tried to adapt the theory of Socialist realism. He continued to write historical novels, film criticism and studies of Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy and Mujarotsky. Shlovsky also wrote extensively on prose narrative, including an anthology of essays entitled *On the Theory of Prose* (1929).

2.2.2.1 Poeticity of poetry

Shlovsky’s contribution to poetics, like Mukařovský’s, is mainly in general theoretical issues, therefore this section does not present a case study but a general overview and comparative commentary rather than an in-depth interpretation. His major contribution was in the argument on the poeticity of poetry or literariness of literature. He argued against the aesthetics which held the view that images were a characteristic of poetry or literature. He insisted that poetic diction and imagery were not interchangeable or one a sine qua non of the other, and argued that images did not serve to simplify an idea. To the contrary, it made strange what was familiar by constructing it according to its own principles. Shlovsky argued that ‘Density’ (*faktura*) is the principal characteristic of this peculiar world of deliberately constructed objects, the totality of which we call art” (Erlich, 1981:177). Thus poetry was a rediscovery of the world. He used Tolstoy’s work, *War and Peace* and

others to illustrate how the writer used fresh images in a manner which made the ordinary scenes and the familiar milieu of the Russian cultural setting unfamiliar.

Shlovsky argued that metaphor could be used as one way of creating a 'density' and effecting a "semantic shift", in addition to rhythm. 'Density' referred to the convergence of all poetic devices such as imagery, euphony, and rhythm upon the word. He defined verse writing as a "dance of the articulatory organs", a kind of acrobatic performance which transformed discourse and called for the reader to view the world in a strange manner, thus bringing into the analytical framework his concepts of 'automisation' and 'perceptibility', together with 'defamiliarisation' or "making strange". Creative art, according to Shlovsky, had a freshening effect on the mind that it prevented the tendency of enervated and stock responses or perception - 'automation'.

2.2.3 Jan Mukařovský

Mukařovský was one of the founding group which formed the Prague Linguistic Circle, whose first meeting was held on 6 October 1926. The president was the Czech linguist and scholar of English language and literature, Vilém Mathesius, who had a strong influence on the Prague School in particular and structural linguistics and phonology in general. Mathesius' essay, "On the Potentiality of Language Phenomenon" (1911) laid the foundation for the synchronic study of language, also pre-dating and pre-empting Saussure's concepts of *langue* and *parole*. His wide ranging scholarship embraced Shakespeare's works, study of phonemes, phonology, semantics, and syntax. Mukařovský was fundamentally a literary theorist and aesthetician with a strong interest in linguistics. Present in the initial seminars were Jakobson, other main Formalists Pětr Bogatyřev, B. Havránek, and others (Erlich, 1981:156). When the Circle's manifesto was published Mukařovský was one of the signatories.

Mukařovský, together with his colleagues in the Circle, propounded a new approach to the study of literature, which was actually a transition from Formalism to Structuralism. The first shift was the acceptance, by Mukařovský and others, of poetics as a part of semiotics rather than linguistics. The transition from classic Formalism to Structuralism is explained thus by Erlich:

If the Prague Formalists managed to avoid the methodological error of reducing a literary work to its verbal substratum, they also eschewed another fallacy of the *Opajaz*, the tendency to equate literature with 'literariness' ... Pure Formalism gave way to

Structuralism, revolving around the notion of a dynamically integrated whole, which was referred to as either 'structure' or as a 'system' ... Structuralism was the battle cry of the spokesmen of the Circle ... As Mukařovský pointed out, the notion of 'structure' received equally wide currency in the modern psychology of perception, indeed in many other branches of contemporary scholarship ... The anchoring of literary research in a concept with such a wide range of applicability indicated the Prague Circle's tendency toward a broader framework than one sought by the Russian Formalists (Erich, 1981:159–60).

This new Structuralism held ground until it found itself in a defensive decline at the beginning of World war II, which scattered some of the major Prague Circle theorists from Czechoslovakia. Mukařovský remained in Prague but renounced his former position on Structuralism, and, like Viktor Shlovsky in Russia, surrendered to the Marxist ideological demands of the regime.

It can be said that the end of the war 1945/6 marks the end of Formalism, in so far as its members operated as a group, and the beginning of Structuralism. The renunciation of Formalism by its main proponents coincided with a number of other events, among which were the tragic death of Trubetskoy, the return of Bogatyrev to the Soviet Union, and the migration of Jakobson and René Wellek to the United States. But this also marks the beginning of the spread of the Formalist-Structuralism theories to the West.

2.2.3.1 Poetic Language

In his essays entitled "Standard language and poetic language" and "Poetic reference" Mukařovský set out to define the nature of poetic language as opposed to non-poetic language, or the aesthetic function of language and the informational language, as he refers to the two respectively. His first assertion is that poetic language violates standard language. This is "the very essence of poetry, and it is therefore improper to ask poetic language to abide by its norms" (Mukařovský, 1964:27). Another important assumption is that it is not essentially figurative, for even in informational utterances there are images used: "a poetic utterance does not necessarily need to aim at vivid image".

There are three basic assumptions which he makes: Firstly, that poetic language differs from other forms of language by deviation from the standard, though both are mutually complementary in a number of ways; secondly, there is a

counterbalancing between the aesthetic and the informational function of poetic language in relation to scientific or other forms of informational discourse; and thirdly, that the fundamental difference is determined by poetry's 'foregrounding' of its structural devices at the expense of its expressive, representational and the appealing objectives.

The underlying principle seems to be relevant to the definition of oral poetry. Many an argument has been put forward, especially in the colonial days, which put to question the poeticity of oral poetry, and even up to the present students of African literature in South African universities have no strong theoretical basis upon which they could argue for the nature of this genre as poetry per se, except for reliance on what has become accepted consensus that it is poetry.

For a start, we find Mukařovský's definition of the nature of poetic language relevant. The distinctive feature of oral poetry, though it has some informational characteristics, such as historical events, as Jordan (see section 4.2.2.1) and Kunene (see section 5.2.1.2) explain, is its aesthetic function, and it foregrounds certain structural devices such as imagery, symbolism, alliteration, repetition, and parallelism, the latter being the most foregrounded element in it, as it will become obvious in chapters four and five of this thesis. Furthermore, there is a counterbalancing between its aesthetic and informational function, for the historical references which it makes should not be considered paramount over its aesthetic function.

According to Mukařovský the perception of the objective of poetic language depends on context. Every utterance which purports to be poetic depends on its context for interpretation as such, and the prerequisite characteristic is that it is not basically informational. For instance, an utterance like "It's turning dark", if taken as information, will attract attention to the reference and the reality which it indicates. It can be put to a false/true test (see Jakobson's "truth test" in section 2.2.1.1): "Is it really dark? Could this assertion be mistaken or false? Or is it a grammatical usage with no relationship at all to any actual concrete situation?" (Matejka and Titunik, 1986:156). An answer to these questions will determine the type of function which is dominant in the utterance.

Once again we find the above pertinent to oral poetry, in the sense that its interpretation as poetry depends on context, and also on the community's consciousness of its function as a historical mode, though of course the historical content is not seen to have a one-to-one relationship to real history, its referent, thus its informational aspect is not paramount. The history in the oral poem may be exaggerated, modified and embellished through hyperbole, irony, sarcasm and other

poetic devices. This artistic presentation is not accountable to the question of falsity or truthfulness, as Mukařovský suggests.

If the utterance is taken as a "poetic citation", a certain attitude towards it is established, and attention focuses on the context of the utterance. On the other hand, if a whole section of a poem was quoted, certain relationships which would determine its nature would be deduced from the relationship among different elements of the whole work, and each would be related to its place in the text. This, therefore, implies that "poetic reference is primarily determined, then, not by its relationship to the reality indicated, but by the way it is set in the verbal context", giving validity to the presumption that "a word, or a group of words, characteristic of a certain prominent poetic work, if transferred from its own context to another one, a discursive context, for instance, carries with it the semantic atmosphere of the work in which it participated and with which it is associated in the linguistic consciousness of the community" (Matejka and Titunik, 1986:156).

The assertion in the above quotation is more true to African oral poetry than any other genre. The tradition of 'praising' is diffused into day to day utterances of the community, so that when a clan name is uttered, it carries the context of the family or genealogical praises. As a result it is interpreted as an antecedent of a longer poetic text, and not as an isolated reference in the immediate context in which it is uttered. The concept of "linguistic consciousness" would be a valuable tool in asserting the poeticity of any utterance derived from oral poetry or praises.

Also relevant is Mukařovský's assertion that one of the major elements which play a significant role in this relationship between a poetic utterance and its context is figurative reference, "especially for new, nonautomatized images". The context provides the facility for an image to be interpreted in a manner in which it does not normally signify, and the context suggests to the reader the significance which he or she has invested in the word in his or her own unique way. All the stylistic devices used in poetry contribute to the tendency of poetry to rely on context for interpretation of its reference. As a result poetry differs from informational language in that attention is not focused on how it relates to reality, that is, its practical function, but between the reference and the context - there is a "shift in the centre of gravity", because informational language can depend on the context, much as poetry can have some relation with reality. It is poetry's artistic devices which weaken this relation with reality in poetic language.

Mukařovský's idea of context is akin to Jurij Tynjanov's concept of the role of context in the semantic shift of a word. Tynjanov suggests that a word standing in isolation has no basic meaning, or rather, has an illusive one. For instance, the Russian word *Zemlja* may mean one of the following, 'earth', 'soil', 'land', or

'ground'. It will be noted that the meanings are somehow related, but the meaning comes sharply into focus, and may even take other shades of meaning which are not included in the basic meaning attributed ("basic semantic feature") to the word, when it is used in a syntactic context. It is this basic semantic feature, consisting of the primary and the secondary feature, which enables us to start from a particular identification of the meaning of a word even when it is used in a context where it is meant to have a radically different meaning. The secondary feature is ever present in a word, but the secondary feature is determined by the context. One can then say that this idea is similar to Mukařovský, and we can talk of it as a syntactic context, while Mukařovský's could be referred to as a textual context (Tynjanov, 1971:136-7).

Indeed, the analysis of stylistic features of oral poetry depends upon the secondary meaning of a lexical item, that is, the meaning derived from the context in which it is used, more than the primary one. It is thus that the foregrounding of devices such as parallelism, repetition and alliteration (we shall see how these are employed in oral poetry in chapters four and five), function only in terms of the context of a word rather than its intrinsic phonetic, morphological, or even semantic qualities. For instance, we can only find parallelism when a word is read in relation to other words, the same applies with alliteration and repetition. An image also evokes a certain response when read in the context of the whole poetic text. The poeticity of the poetic text can also be determined by its context in relation to other genres.

With regard to the idea of context Jakobson's idea of the paradigmatic (selection) and syntagmatic (combination) relationship (see section 2.2.1.1) between words in a text becomes pertinent, in that a word forming a relationship of alliteration with others in a text is derived from a choice of synonymous words (paradigmatic relation), and its semantic significance in the combination with the semantic value of other words (syntagmatic relation). The rule of selection and combination plays a major role in oral poetry, governed by archetypal formulas (intertextual) and images.

Using a model of characteristics of informational language borrowed from Karl Bühler, Mukařovský asserts that poetry shares the following functions with informational language: representation, expression, and appeal. Each of these functions has relations with extralinguistic factors such as "the reality indicated by the sign, the person who sends the message, and the person who receives it". In Jakobson's terms this would be called context, addresser and addressee respectively. However, over and above these common characteristics between non-poetic or informational language and poetic language the latter has an extra and foregrounded function, and that is the fact that the linguistic sign is the centre of focus but not the

reference, or reality. "The first three functions thus make language enter into a practical order the fourth detaches language from such connections; the fourth is the aesthetic function", whereas the other three are practical functions. From this point we are led to the assumption that the aesthetic nature of poetic language determines its autonomy, shifting focus from the object signified to the sign itself: "Then this displacement of semantic value is something the language of poetry owes to aesthetic function".

If this suggests that poetry removes language from its practical function by 'abuse', then the following is Mukařovský's answer:

(1) Abuse is a necessary, often times even salutary, opposition to normal usage with respect to anything; indeed, it is thanks to abuse that the world of functions is able to evolve - abuse is only a means of trying out, whether consciously or unconsciously, a new, previously unknown way of using something. (2) The boundary separating the aesthetic function from practical functions is not always apparent, and, in particular, it does not coincide with the dividing line between art and other human activities. Even in a fully autonomous expression, practical functions - in our case the three previously mentioned linguistic functions - are not entirely suppressed, so that every poetic work is at least potentially also a representation, an expression, and an appeal (Matejka and Titunik, 1986:158).

Mukařovský suggests that the three informational functions may dominate in terms of genre, for instance, the expressive in lyric poetry and the representative in the novel. So there is a common area of similarity between ordinary and artistic language, in the sense that even the former has potential aesthetic qualities, just as poetry has the potential functions of information. Aesthetic pleasure may be sparked off by a change of syntactic order in ordinary language. This seems to imply that this is how poetic language achieves its aesthetic effect by 'abusing' syntax. Intellectual or scientific discourse often strives to remove those characteristics which may attract attention to themselves in a way which would arouse aesthetic pleasure. Thus scientific language is closer to informational than to poetic language, but there is a common area of aesthetics, "the aesthetic function, thus, is omnipresent". However, poetry leans towards 'foregrounding' its deviation from other forms of language, as a device:

The function of poetic language consists in the maximum foregrounding of the utterance. Foregrounding is the opposite of automatization, that is, the less it is consciously executed; the more it is foregrounded, the more conscious does it become. Objectively speaking: automatization schematizes an event; foregrounding means the violation of the scheme. The standard language in its purest form, as the language of science with formulation as its objective, avoids foregrounding (*aktualisace*): thus a new expression, foregrounded because of its newness, is immediately automatized in a scientific treatise by an exact definition of its meaning (Mukařovský, 1964:19).

We draw another definition of 'automatization' from Mukařovský's fellow Formalist, Bohuslav Havránek. In his discussion of "The functional differentiation of the standard language":

By *automatization* we thus mean such a use of the devices of language, in isolation or in combination with each other, as is usual for a certain expressive purpose, that is, such a use that the expression itself does not attract any attention; the communication occurs, and is received, as unconventional in linguistic form and is "understood" by virtue of the linguistic system without first being supplemented, in the concrete utterance, by additional understanding derived from the situation and the context (Havránek, 1964:9-10).

Havránek's definition continues to draw contrast between 'automatization' and 'foregrounding':

By *foregrounding*, on the other hand, we mean the use of the devices of the language in such a way that this use itself attracts attention and is perceived as uncommon, as deprived of automatization, as deautomatized, such as a live poetic metaphor (Havránek, 1964:10).

According to Mukařovský the difference between scientific and poetic language is not underlined by the device of foregrounding only, but how it is structured to function in poetry. Foregrounding may involve a variety of ways, lexical selection, phonological variation from the standard, syntactic disorder or semantic shift of words and expressions, intonational deviance and so forth, and it may be employed at different places and times in a poetic work, because it is not

possible to foreground all the aspects of one work. Foregrounding and ordinary use have to be placed in a dialectical structural pattern in a manner which will determine the hierarchy of dominance of certain structures. It is this foregrounding which dominates the communicative function of a poetic work and pushes it into the background: "It is not used in the service of communication".

Since there are other forms of practical function existent in non-linguistic phenomena it must not be supposed that the dialectical negation of poetic language to practical language is not a negation of linguistic function. To the contrary, "by virtue of its being the dialectical negation of any practical function, it always and everywhere takes on a character of the function to which it is opposed in any given case; as the negation of linguistic functions, it becomes linguistic itself. Moreover, the role which the aesthetic function plays in the evolution of language and of culture is a very considerable one... for example, lexical innovation, in order to enter into common use, quite often assumes an aesthetic aspect" (Matejka and Titunik, 1986:159). The idea of foregrounding and automatization will be discussed in chapter four, where we would like to argue that classic oral poetry, studied diachronically, tends to automatize the use of images.

Mukařovský goes on to point out that there is a similarity between emotional and poetic language, which is another quality of character which makes it different from intellectual language. In scientific language there is a tendency to focus attention on the author or addresser, as opposed to focusing on the referential dominance of the work on the author, with an inclination towards divorcing the author and the context and establish a relation between the reference and the reality represented. But poetic language stands between emotional language and informational language, because its difference is that in poetic language the focus is not directed to the addresser's state of mind, but primarily on the sign itself, so that the addresser's state of mind becomes secondary or insignificant, and the expression of the state of mind becomes merely a device, which makes the aesthetic function dominant over the representative, the expressive and the appeal.

The most prominent device of shifting attention in poetry from the representative and the expressive functions is the 'dominant' device. A number of devices may be used in foregrounding, but there is a definite hierarchy which determines which one is dominant: "The dominant is that component of the work itself which sets in motion and gives direction to the relationship of all other components. The material of a work of poetry which is intertwined with the relationships of the components even if it is in a completely foregrounded state" (Mukařovský, 1964:20). This means that in every work of poetry there is a mixture of the foregrounded and unforegrounded devices, whose relationship in terms of

subordination and domination determines how and how far the standard norm has been violated, and thus the poeticity of the work: The foregrounding can be a device pertaining to language or the subject matter.

Thus a clear distinction has been drawn between poetic reference and reality, and between it and emotional language. But this does not mean that poetic language excludes reality. Reality is also included in the sense that every work of art, or poetry, has a certain influence on the reader through its theme, or what it says. An example which Mukařovský draws is from Dostoyevsky's work, *Crime and Punishment*. The reader of this work may not be in a similar position of committing murder, but it may arouse a reaction coincident with the reader's experience: "The life experiences with which an individual will react to a poetic work that touches him deeply will only be partial symptoms of his personal reaction to the poet's attitude towards reality. The stronger the reaction is, the larger the set of experiences set in motion will be, and the stronger will be the influence exerted by the work on the reader's conception of the world" (Matejka and Titunik, 1986:161). As a result "poetry exerts influence on the way the whole society conceives of the world", since the individual is a member of society, and his view of the world is affected by the influences of society. This then means that there is a relationship between poetry and reality, more so because poetry "does not have to do only with concrete reality but with the entire world". Poetry being part of every linguistic performance, this means that its relation with reality is even more permanent, or 'omnipresent', to use Mukařovský's word. He thus sums up and concludes that:

There is mutual counterbalancing between it [poetry] and the immediate relationship of any particular reference to the reality it denotes; the strengthening of the one weakens the other. The informational function in all its aspects tends towards the pole of immediate relationship, the poetic function, contrariwise, towards the pole of global relationship ... poetic relationship to reality is weakened in favour of its semantic linkage with context. In poetry the practical functions of language, are subordinated to the aesthetic function, which makes the sign itself the centre of attention. The predominance of the latter function accounts for the importance of the verbal context to a reference in poetry. The aesthetic function, as one of the four basic functions of language, is potentially present in every verbal performance (Matejka and Titunik, 1986:162).

From this argument it is clear that although Mukařovský, like other Formalists, accepts that there is a kind of relationship between the world and the text, his acceptance is different from the 'Realist' one, in the sense that it does not seek to find a representation or mimesis of the extra-textual world in a work of art or poetry, but find the sign still self-reflective.

2.2.3.2 Poetry as art

In his discussion of art entitled "Art as a semiotic fact" (Matejka and Titunik: 1986: 3-9) Mukařovský examines the way in which art is perceived, and looks at how it can be studied from a semiotic point of view. Firstly, he asserts that art should not be identified with its creator, or anything that has to do with his state of mind, or that of its perceiver or reader for that matter. Art is meant to serve as an intermediary between its creator and the community. Whereas the state of subjective consciousness of an individual is so momentary that it cannot be communicated, a work of art is always represented by something or some object ('artifact') in the world, which can be perceived by all members of a community. Though of course the work of art cannot be reduced to that particular object which represents it.

The work of art has some evanescence, in that its internal structure changes according to how it is shifted in society. An illustration of such a shift intended by Mukařovský could be found in the translation of, say, a poem. These shifts would be perceivable in different translations of the same poem. This means that a work of art only serves as an external signifier, which corresponds with a signification outside itself, which resides in the collective consciousness of the community or society. This signification is often called an "aesthetic object".

The collective consciousness plays an important role in the perception of a work of art. It is basically subjective, though it can be objectified to a certain extent. It is thus that this consciousness evokes certain psychological responses in a particular individual with a certain quality and quantity of this consciousness, which would be different from one imbued with certain different subjectivities in his consciousness: "So, for instance, the subjective state of mind and spirit aroused in any viewer of an Impressionistic painting will be of an entirely different kind than those evoked by a Cubist painting" (Matejka and Titunik, 1986:4). This also counts with reference to quality.

As far as quality is concerned, it is inherent not in the work of art perceived but in the receiver's state of mind:

The number of subjective notions and feelings aroused will be considerably greater with respect to a poetic work of the Surrealist type than one of the Classicist type: the surrealist poem makes it incumbent upon the reader to imagine virtually the entire contexture of theme, whereas the classicist poem all but precludes the free-play of subjective associations due to its exactness of expression. It is only in this way that, indirectly at least - via the intermediary of the core belonging to the collective consciousness, the subjective constituents of the perceiver's mental state acquire an objective semiotic character similar to that possessed by "secondary meaning" (Matejka and Titunik, 1986:4).

Since the work of art is dissociated from any individual state of mind, it cannot be attributed with any intrinsic qualities of character which makes it evoke aesthetic pleasure. There is no association between the work itself and the feelings which it evokes. What the work of art is capable of doing is to induce a certain degree of objectivisation in its nature as a sign. Mukařovský goes on to define a sign as "a reality perceivable by sense perception that has a relationship with another reality which the first is meant to evoke". This gives rise to the question of the relationship between reality - another reality, and the work of art as a sign - the perceivable reality.

The significance of a work of art as a sign is determined by the same understanding existent between the sender and the receiver. In order for a sign to have a relationship with something outside itself, that is, to have a significant referential meaning in its context, it has to have an object to which it refers. But that object is not distinct because the sign is autonomous, and this may encompass a wide spectrum of social phenomena, "for example, philosophy, politics, religion, economics, and so on", and "it is for this reason that art, more than any other social phenomenon, has the power to characterise and represent the 'age' " (Matejka and Titunik, 1986:5). But for a work of art which does not fit into the pattern of its particular period, a certain period of time may lapse before it can become part of a new social system which has evolved to accommodate it.

But the relationship between a work of art and its context must not be seen as a 'passive' reflection of that context, therefore it must never be taken as historical or sociological documentary evidence. Its relationship must first be established by proper objective interpretation. In short, the work of art must be approached with the following objective view, that it is constituted of "(1) a perceivable signifier, created by the artist, (2) a 'signification' /=aesthetic object/registered in the collective

consciousness and (3) a relationship with that which is signified, a relationship which refers to the total context of social phenomena. In the second of these constituents lies the structure of the work" (Matejka and Titunik, 1986:6).

Another aspect of the sign is its informational function. In this function it carries expression of ideas, emotions and state of mind. This is more overt in artistic works such as poetry, painting and sculpture. In certain works the informational function seems to be prominent. But it must be borne in mind that "every component of a work of art, not excluding even the most 'formal' ones, possesses an informational value of its own independent of the 'subject' ", that is, what the work is intended to communicate. The signification of the work of art is diffused through its whole structural parts but not in a specifically given aspect of it - "the subject of a work simply plays the role of an axis of crystallisation with respect to that signification which, otherwise, would remain vague". The work of art consists of dialectically placed functions, the autonomous and the informational. Poetry is not concerned with the statement of truth: "The question of truthfulness does not apply in regard to the subject matter of a work of poetry, nor does it even make sense ... the question has no bearing on the artistic value of the work; it can only serve to determine the extent to which the work has documentary value" (Mukařovský, 1964:22-3).

In its purely informational function a work of art refers to something real and distinct, which may be any phenomenon such as a person or an event, but this relationship is not an existential one. If a work of art has a 'subject' or statement to make, this statement cannot be held as documentary evidence of any phenomenon in society, even the one which it asserts to be its subject. Its structure determines how far its subject may be modified to serve as something other than a work of art:

For the structure of any given work it is very important to know whether it treats its subject as a 'real' (perhaps even documentary) one or a 'fictitious' one or whether it oscillates between these two poles. Indeed, works may be found which are based on a parallelism and counterbalance of a two-fold relationship to a distinct reality, in one instance without existential value and in the other purely informational ... in literature, the same duality characterizes the historical novel and fictionalised biography. Modifications of the relationship to reality do, therefore, play an important role in the structure of any art working with a subject, but the theoretical investigation of these arts must never lose sight of the true essence of the subject which is to be a unity of

meaning and not a passive copy of reality even in the case of a 'realistic' or 'naturalistic' work (Matejka and Titunik, 1986:7).

In the study of work of art it is therefore necessary to take cognisance of both its semiotic structure as an autonomous sign and its informational value, for a bias towards one at the expense of the other may lead to the study of a work of art as merely a formal structure on the one hand, or on the other consideration of art as a direct reflection of its creator's state of mind or an authentic representation of certain realities. According to Mukařovský a semiotic approach to a work of art would illustrate the dialectical relationship between the humanities and the sciences, firstly, and secondly emphasise the importance of semiotics for aesthetics and history of art.

Some of the aesthetic principles underlying the above approach to art can also be applicable to oral poetry, especially in an attempt to define it as a form which distinguishes itself from other poetic forms of African literature. Its poeticity lies in the interplay and counter-balancing between its informational and aesthetic nature, where the latter dominates the former aspects in most cases, while its devices always subordinate representation, expression and appeal. Its foregrounding of devices is the most apparent structural feature, as already mentioned earlier. Oral poetry also carries an emotional aspect which is meant to arouse response in the reader or audience, thus it serves as an intermediary between the addresser and addressee.

2.3 Conclusion

From the above it has become clear that there are certain Western theoretical tools which can be used in the analysis of African oral poetry, while others are not applicable. We have seen that in the Formalist-Structuralist view, the autonomy of the aesthetic function is considered to be predominant: this despite the fact that the aesthetic function is either situated within an inclusive communication structure (Jakobson) or else considered in a dialectical relationship with the informational function of the work of art (Mukařovský). Whilst the critics of African oral poetry emphasise the uniqueness of this genre, they tend to explain and defend such uniqueness in terms of contextualised factors that would unequivocally testify to the 'Africanness' of the work of art. As we have already noted above (see chapter one), in our view the different emphases in these so-called Western and African views can, and in fact should, be reconciled in a syncretic approach: whilst contextual factors should not be ignored or neglected, it is our contention that a meticulous study of textual structure should be seriously considered in the study of African oral poetry.

We find that there are a number of ways in which the criticism of African oral poetry may benefit from the methodology underlying the critical practice which is advocated in the writings of Formalists and Structuralists. For instance, their comparison of poetic language and ordinary language, resulting in the assumption that imagery is not peculiar to poetry, but poetry defamiliarises it as a device, is also pertinent to the analysis or definition of oral poetry, more so because the critics of oral poetry do not define this genre in explicitly analytical terms, but study its structure without a general frame of reference, and fall short of explaining how it differs essentially from other forms of poetry. The idea of foregrounding and defamiliarisation (*priém ostraneniija*) has not been replaced by any concept, even by the opponents of Formalist-Structuralism. This concept can be useful in establishing a general definition of the structure of oral poetry, for in this genre we find certain dominant poetic devices which are peculiar to itself, especially those which the Formalist-Structuralists define succinctly, such as parallelism, and the use of imagery by de-automatising it.

There is a concurrence in the description and analysis of parallelism and how it is structured in poetry between the Formalist-Structuralists and the critics of African oral poetry, as we indicated in our discussion, but the latter would have done even better if they had been aware of Jakobson's three types of parallelism, the synonymous, the antithetic and the synthetic, instead of the only one which they use, parallelism synonymous, and pure repetition. Alliteration is yet another common, if not universal feature. However, as regards the use of rhyme and metre, we have noted that these do not apply to African oral poetry, though we should like to suggest that our idea of semantic rhyme could be useful in adapting Jakobson's definition of rhyme. It would appear then, that the equivalence principle is only partially relevant to an analysis of African oral poetry. This is borne out by the different Jakobsonian analyses we have discussed (see section 2.2.1.1). Most of the theoretical analysis employed by Jakobson in the reading of the first [1] and second [1a] poems can be applied to African oral poetry, as we illustrated by drawing comparison with some of the poems analysed by Cope, Jordan and Kunene. However, the analysis of the third [2] and fourth [2a] poems presents a different case. In our opinion, the analytical tools which Jakobson used are largely inapplicable to African oral poetry. This is perhaps to a great extent determined by the unique nature of the sonnet, which is not found in African poetry, especially the poetic structure which this particular one has used. This also arises, to a certain extent, out of the difference of certain phonological, morphological and syntactic structures between Western and African languages, over and above the similarities. Finally, we may note in passing, in regard to Jakobson's analysis of the last poem [2a], that this

particular analysis itself appears rather artificial, perhaps because he has tried to superimpose onto a relatively straightforward poem too rigid a method of analysis? Be that as it may, we may conclude that although the Jakobsonian equivalence principle may prove to be extremely valuable for a more informed assessment of African oral poetry, certainly not all of the analytical tools used by Jakobson in his examples of critical practice discussed above, will be of relevance in the study of African literature in general and African oral poetry in particular.

Mukařovský's and Shlovsky's theoretical and general definition of artistic forms serves as a general principle within which Jakobson's analytical reading works, and this principle could serve well as a backdrop in the reading of oral poetry, for in its entirety it delineates poetic language from ordinary language, and it can apply universally. We ought to conclude with a note that we do not mean to suggest that where the analytical approach of the Formalist-Structuralists and the critics of African oral poetry coincide the latter is derivative from the former, but only point it out as a coincidence, especially because these critics are contemporary, and seemingly they must have been unaware of the others' approach. But our argument is that an awareness of some aspects of the more sophisticated and finer definitions and analyses of Jakobson and Mukařovský would have benefited the African oral critics. Some of them would of course have to be applied *mutatis mutandi*, so that where they do not fit a new analysis would be used as a complement, towards building up a syncretic approach, whose principles we will suggest in the final chapter of this thesis.

CHAPTER 3

3.1 Introduction

As we have already stated above, in this chapter we shall follow the same approach as we did in the previous chapter, starting by giving an overview of the three critics that we are going to study, I. A. Richards, W. Empson, and C. Brooks, and then following with case studies, coupled with making references to the previous and coming chapters. Since our focus will be on the actual practice of these representatives from New Criticism, we shall refer mainly to studies in which they either explain or illustrate their methodology of reading poetic texts: Richards' *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) and *Practical Criticism* (1929); Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930) and Brooks and Warren's widely influential *Understanding Poetry* (1935). Where relevant, we shall also refer to essays by other representatives from the New Criticism or to different studies undertaken by the three representatives mentioned above. In order to situate these studies historically the dates provided above refer to the date of original publication; most of these works have since been reprinted several times and we shall be quoting from later editions in our subsequent analysis. A note in regard to the choice of Brooks and Warren's *Understanding Poetry* is perhaps in order. Although some of the most ingenious and convincing illustrations of New Criticism practices may arguably be found in Brooks' essays published in *The Well Wrought Urn* (1947), we have decided to focus on the work written in collaboration with Robert Penn Warren, since it is commonly acknowledged that these collaborative efforts dealing with *Understanding Poetry/Prose/Drama*, and particularly the one on poetry, more than anything else, were responsible for popularising the ideas of the New Criticism, and especially, for getting their methodology 'applied' in educational institutions, not only in the United States of America, but also in most of the Anglo-American world, including South Africa.

A comparison with the Formalist-Structuralists dealt with in the second chapter is justifiable in a number of respects, besides what we have already stated, namely that these two schools of thought are the most remarkable in this century. Jakobson, Shlovsky and Richards are almost exact contemporaries, born in 1896–1982, 1893–1984, and 1889–1979 respectively, while Empson and Brooks are within the same generation, though born at the beginning of this century. Therefore, Formalist-Structuralism and New Criticism ran contemporaneously, running parallel, one without being aware of the other. If there are coincidences in their

analysis of poetic language, this may be a proof of one of our secondary hypotheses, that poetic language and structure has certain universal features irrespective of temporal and spatial boundaries, therefore there ought to be a convergence of approaches to it. This, by implication, will also apply to the critics dealt with in the fourth and fifth chapters, where two of the earlier ones, Schapera and Jordan, were born in the decade following the birth of the above trio, 1905 and 1906 respectively. The former are exact contemporaries of Empson and Brooks, who were born at the same time, in 1906.

3.2 New Criticism:

The rise, predominance and decline of New Criticism in the practice of reading literature is summed up very succinctly in the following observation:

The New Criticism almost certainly constitutes the English-speaking world's major contribution to literary theory, and as such it has exercised until recently a dominant influence on the teaching of literature in the United States and, to a lesser extent, in Britain. In the last few years, however, with the entry of European literary theory into British and American literary life, it has definitely been on the wane. Yet there are good reasons for continuing to read the New Critics' work. At the very least they are interesting because they formulated a number of assumptions about literature and literary study that still play a significant part in the academic world today (Jefferson and Robey, 1982:65).

In agreement to the above assertion about the influence of New Criticism, we wish to add, that New Criticism has had the most influential and lasting impression on the practice of the reading of African literature in South African universities. Its influence came via Departments of English, which, up to the present, seem to be still far from being weaned from the methods of New Criticism. In fact, even scholars who have since distanced themselves from New Criticism and who look at it critically in terms of more recent developments in literary theory and criticism, still acknowledge its huge influence. In the words of Ivan Rabinowitz, currently professor of English literature and literary theory in the University of South Africa's English department, "before the advent of structuralism in the early 1960s, the New Critical method was so deeply entrenched in the minds of critics as to be almost indistinguishable from the promptings of the critical imagination. And the

legacy of the New Critical vision lives on in our minds, however much we would like to emphasise its fallibility” (Ryan and Van Zyl, 1982:39).

New Criticism emerged after World War I in England, and thrived in the United States during the 1930s and the 1940s, initially as a reaction to the then prevalent trends in American criticism. Among these we may mention impressionism and naturalism: the former was a type of aesthetic impressionistic criticism, where ‘appreciation’ of literature and literary authors relied heavily on the subjective evaluation of the critic without any attempt at a reasoned assessment; whilst the latter concerned a movement reacting against the ‘genteel’ tradition of American business civilisation resulting in a propagation of the so-called naturalistic novel. As we shall see, the New Critics’ reaction against the positivistic trend in the literary criticism of the time was even more important - they strongly argued against practices which were “more interested in the causes of literature and in the place it occupies amongst other activities of man than in pointing out the architectonics of literary ambiguities” (Thompson, 1971:34). New Criticism’s roots can be traced back to the Victorian Matthew Arnold, through F. R. Leavis and T. S. Eliot in Cambridge, and to the group of Southerners in America who formed a literary movement which was known as Fugitives in the 1930s. Some members of this group later called themselves Agrarians. Critics associated with J. C. Ransom and the *Kenyon Review* form the nucleus of the New Criticism in the United States. The major vehicle for disseminating and expounding ideas of New Criticism at Cambridge was a literary journal, *Scrutiny*, which was started by Leavis and his wife, Q. D. Leavis, in 1932, and was published up to 1953. New Criticism gained ascendancy and became the centre of controversy in the 1940s and 1950s.

Scrutiny opened in May 1932, with an editorial entitled “A manifesto - by The Editors” (1932:2-7), which lay down the general principles of the New Critical approach of the school, in the same spirit as Jakobson’s and Shlovsky’s principles which summed up the general scope of Formalism. The editors, who included the founder, Leavis, expressed concern with the state of civilisation and “the general dissolution of standards”, and in order to remedy this situation they felt that “a review is necessary that combines criticism of literature with criticism of extra-literary activities. We take it as axiomatic that concern for standards of living implies concern for standards in the arts”. The manifesto went on to stipulate its objectives as follows:

Scrutiny, then, will be seriously occupied with the movement of modern civilization. And if we say it will direct itself especially upon educational matters the reader will realize that there may, after all, be

a fairly close approach to practice. Where literary criticism is concerned we can be immediately practical and political. The first duty is to publish good criticism judiciously directed. And inseparable from this is a conscious critical policy, if anything to be effected in the present state of culture. For today there are anti-highbrow publics and 'modernist' publics, but there is no public of Common Readers with whom the critic can rejoice to concur. He cannot leave his standards to look after themselves ... And when criticism defaults the loss is not merely the reader's ... It goes without saying that for the majority neither the present drift of civilization nor the plight of the arts is a matter for much concern. It is true that there are many who are concerned with one or the other without seeing any connexion between them; but it is only a small minority for whom the arts are something more than a luxury product, who believe, in fact, that they are the 'store-house of recorded values', and, in consequence, that there is a necessary relationship between the quality of the individual's response to art and his general fitness for a humane existence. The trouble is not that such persons are in the minority, but that they are scattered and unorganised ... *Scrutiny* has been founded on the assumption that a magazine in which such men and women can exchange and refine their ideas, and which provides a focus of intellectual interests, will perform a service provided by no other paper (*Scrutiny*, Vol.1, No.1, 1932:4-5).

This manifesto shows that the New Critics, like the Russian Formalists, had clearly laid out principles which encompassed the arts in general, but also literature in particular. As we have already noted above, both schools were initially inspired by existing practices in the aesthetics of art: New Criticism was a reaction to Impressionism and Naturalism, while Formalism criticised the Symbolic movement in literary scholarship. In addition, both movements also reacted against positivistic trends and therefore they were highly critical of attempts at causal explanations of literature. In a sustained comparative study of the two movements Ewa Thompson notes that: "A casual acquaintance with the two movements may produce the impression that they are nearly redundant: both of them stress the dependence of thought on language and recommend a close reading of the literary text rather than historical or biographical investigations" (1971:7). Such affinities that the New Critics share with Formalist-Structuralist principles are outlined in more detail in the following assessment:

Although it developed quite independently of the Russian Formalist/Prague School structuralist theory ... there are some fundamental affinities between the two movements. Both rejected positivistic literary scholarship and called for a renewed attention to literature as literature; both insisted on the differences between literature and other kinds of writing, and tried to define these differences in theoretical terms; both gave a central role in their definitions to ideas of structure and interrelatedness, and treated the literary text as an object essentially independent of its author and its historical context. Considering that the New Critics seem to have known nothing about the work of the Formalists, these affinities are really very striking (Jefferson and Robey, 1982:65).

It should be clear from the above that both movements, in their insistence on the differentiation of literature from other kinds of writing, recommended a close reading of the literary text rather than historical, sociological or biographical investigations. In other words the New Critics' approach, like that of the Formalists, is essentially intrinsic, rather than extrinsic. However, there are also notable differences between the two movements, as is noted by Thompson when she maintains that "the attitudes of the Russian Formalists and the New Critics sometimes represent a basic polarity within the contemporary language-oriented criticism" (1971:7). These differences will become clear in our discussion of the critical practice of some representatives from New Criticism. Suffice it to mention here that the New Critics, in their close readings of poems, went beyond the meticulous description exemplified in typically Jakobsonian analyses (see section 2.2.1.1) and tried instead to arrive at an exhaustive interpretation of the poem's meaning and significance. Though they also closely scrutinised the language of the poem, they did not undertake detailed grammatical analysis, but focused on aspects such as irony, paradox and ambiguity without any apparent reliance on sophisticated linguistic theory. There was no Roman Jakobson among them, but they succeeded, nevertheless, in their close scrutiny of the language of the literary text, to come up with brilliant and lasting readings of especially poems, as may be seen, for instance, in Cleanth Brooks' collection of essays entitled *The Well Wrought Urn* (first published in 1947).

There is also another difference between the two movements that transcends linguistic questions. Despite their insistence that literature be studied in its own right, the New Critics nevertheless simultaneously argued that, in particular poetry, could

disclose essential humanistic values. Their critical practice therefore differs from that of the Formalists in that they did not only investigate, for instance, the ambiguities of language, but also tried to relate them "to what is permanent and essential about man" (Thompson, 1971:38). In a sense, then, the manifesto of the New Critics and the principles of the Formalists situate analysis within and outside political issues, respectively. However, this discrepancy goes so far as the outline of general principles, but in practice the distinction is not as sharp as it seems, as the case studies of individual pioneers and practitioners of New Criticism will illustrate.

The manifesto then went on to state the programme of implementation as follows:

[1] *Scrutiny* will print critical articles on literature and the arts and various significant aspects of contemporary life. In both these departments of criticism, analysis and interpretation will be undertaken with a view to judgement - from a stand-point which will have been made clear when one or two numbers have been published. [2] Besides essays in literary criticism, a few carefully selected books will be reviewed each quarter, of the sort that is so frequently passed over by the newspaper supplements and the monthly magazines, or inadequately treated ... in each case consistent standards of criticism will be applied. [3] A pervasive interest of the magazine will find expression in disinterested surveys of some departments of modern life in an attempt to increase understanding of the way in which civilization is developing. In the collection of material it is hoped to secure the co-operation of readers who are in a favourable position for observation. [4] Related to this kind of analysis are the articles which we have planned on various aspects of education - the teaching of English in schools and universities, the training of teachers, and similar subjects. Traditional methods are subjected at present to fairly rigorous criticism and a certain amount of overhauling; criticism which sees educational problems as part of the larger problem of general culture is, however, still necessary. To say that the life of a country is determined by its educational ideals is commonplace; but it is a commonplace which is passively accepted more often than it is acted upon (*Scrutiny*, Vol.1 No.1, 1932:5-6).

Though the New Critics of *Scrutiny*, without at that time having gained the epithet to define their approach, had a multifaceted concern, they were to make their

mark on the criticism of art in general, literature in particular and poetry specifically. Though their criticism involved social and historical criticism, Leavis made it clear that literary criticism held a place of its own, explicitly distinct from philosophy. This idea he expounded clearly in his essay, "Literary criticism and philosophy: A reply". He asserted that: "By the critic of poetry I understand the complete reader: the ideal critic is the ideal reader. The reading demanded by poetry is of a different kind from that demanded by philosophy ... Philosophy, we say, is 'abstract', and poetry 'concrete'. Words in poetry invite us, not to 'think about' and judge but to 'feel into' or 'become' - to realize a complex experience that is given in words" (Leavis, 1937:60-1).

The common bond which ties the two movements across the Atlantic is not only their method, but also the context of their genesis. In England the Cambridge clique, including the two Leavises, T. S. Eliot, I. A. Richards and other Cambridge dons, were concerned with creating a space for the reading of English in Oxbridge, as a reaction to, among other things, a decline of spirituality which was brought about by World War I. Coupled with the need to address social and political problems, Leavis saw the need to develop a new way of addressing literary works, which, according to him, threw light upon questions pertaining to fundamental social values.

In a way the beginning of New Criticism was radical, in that it sought to suggest or give new answers to hitherto unanswered questions with regard to problems of post-World War I England, questions concerning industrial capitalism, the state of civilization, and the decline of standards of life. The latter concern was also a preoccupation of the Agrarians and Fugitives in America. This was a group operating at Vanderbilt University at one time, which consisted of conservative Southerners who were concerned with the expansion of Northern industrialism upon Southern agrarian life. They thought that the Northern modes of industry were not an answer to the problems of the South. Their movement started in the 1920s. To them poetry "was the new religion, a nostalgic haven from the alienation of industrial capitalism" (Eagleton, 1987:47).

Similar concerns were at the heart of English New Criticism. To Leavis, though poetry could not provide the world which was desired, it at least provided answers to the questions of the time, and appealed to feelings in a manner which satisfied - a kind of Aristotelian catharsis or psychic therapy, and thus provided a channel which would prevent standards from deteriorating further. He suggested that poetry "is capable of saving us; it is a perfectly possible means of overcoming chaos" (quoted by Eagleton, 1987:45). This was later corroborated by Brooks, who asserted that:

Poetry enables us to know what it 'feels like' to be alive in the world. What does it 'feel like', for instance, to be in love, to hate somebody, to be conscience-stricken, to watch a sunset or stand by a death-bed, to be willing to die for a cause or live in a passionate devotion to some chosen ideal? Only poetry - in the broadest sense of the word - can help us to answer such questions, and help us, thus, to an understanding of ourselves and of our values" (Brooks and Warren, 1976:9).

It was Leavis who brought about the terms 'practical criticism' and 'close reading', which were taken over by Richards, and subsequently became the hallmark of their critical method.

Basically practical criticism and close reading involved the reading of the text, particularly poetry, by extricating it from its political, cultural and historical context, and analysing its intrinsic structure autonomously. Underlying its principle was the suggestion that every literary text was autonomous from the author, and every extrinsic factor which contributed to its origin, an object in its own right. The New Critics were opposed to the critical practice of bringing historical or biographical data to bear on the interpretation of a literary work. It is worth pointing out here that this is a very important similarity with the Formalists' position, who were also concerned with establishing literary scholarship as a discipline in its own right, with scientific methods of its own (see section 2.2).

As mentioned above, the roots of New Criticism can be traced to Matthew Arnold, who asserted that: "... the method of historical criticism, that great and famous power in the present day ... The advice to study the character of an author and the circumstance in which he has lived, in order to account to oneself for his work, is excellent. But it is a perilous doctrine that from such a study the right understanding of his work will 'spontaneously issue' " (quoted by Watson, 1973:135). This is reminiscent of Jakobson's renunciation of the use of diary (history) in the interpretation of poetry (see section 2.2.1.1). Beginning like the New Critics, Matthew Arnold was a lone voice amidst the prevalent historiographical methods which philosophy, social and political theory and political economy, adopted with an unadulterated influence from Germany and France. This was also upheld even by Utilitarian philosophers, among them J. S. Mill, most of whom were contemporaries of Matthew Arnold.

The common thread between Arnold and the New Critics is that his ideas were developed when the study of English had to defend its *raison d'être*. Arnold was the

first person to be appointed to the Chair of Poetry at Oxford in 1857, the 'first incumbent to lecture in English' in a field of scholarship dominated by Classicism. The same was the case with Leavis and Richards. They found themselves in an environment where the study of English letters was in its infant, if not defensive stage at Cambridge in the decade preceding and immediately following World War I. It is by ancestry rather than coincidence that the *Scrutiny* manifesto traverses areas of Arnold's concerns, and borrows some of his terms: culture, civilisation, and education.

From the beginning, especially in America, New Criticism operated from the periphery, but later made its way into and infiltrated the universities and critical circles to occupy centre stage. In England its ascendancy went hand in hand with the rise of English literature in Oxford and Cambridge, and the influence of Leavis and other disciples of New Criticism, under the influential aegis of *Scrutiny*. But by the 1960s it was exhausted, and had nothing new to offer. Nevertheless, despite the school's lack of new ideas, it continued to be in general use long after this decade.

The primary technique employed in the new critical approach is close, analytic reading, a technique as old as Aristotle's *Poetics*. Some of the New Critics, however, introduced refinements to the method, and among their contributions beyond Formalism was Richards' introduction of the reader in the analysis and interpretation of the text and in the evaluation of the literary experience. This was later to be strongly refuted by Wimsatt in his essay, "The Affective Fallacy", reprinted in *The Verbal Icon* (1954:21-39). Returning to Richards, we may note that in his *Principles of Literary Criticism* (first published in 1924), he emphasises the reader's response to the distinctive properties of literature, rather than concentrating on these properties per se. This is echoed in his former student William Empson's major critical contribution, entitled *Seven Types of Ambiguities* (first published in 1930), where he says: "What I would suppose is that, whenever a receiver of poetry is seriously moved by an apparently simple line, what are moving in him are the traces of a great part of his past experience and of the structure of his past judgement" (Empson, 1953:xv) The text was said to have a multiplicity of meanings, none of which could be correct or incorrect. This view coincides with Mukařovský's view, already quoted earlier (see section 2.2.3.1), that "the life experience with which an individual will react to a poetic work that touches him deeply will only be partial symptoms of his personal reaction to the poet's attitude towards reality" (Matejka and Titunik, 1986:161).

In America there was a core of New Critics similar to the Formalist *Opojaz* and the Linguistic Circle, which consisted of Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, Edmund Ransom, and Cleanth Brooks, who were called the Southern critics because

of their defence of the conservative South and main concern for its agrarian life, and worries with Northern industrialism, which they thought were responsible for the exacerbation of some major social problems of the time. This small circle was very close, with personal relationship forming a coherent centre of New Criticism. They concerned themselves mainly with the study of poetic texts, and their approach was a kind of apologia for poetry, trying to wean it from the subordination to science. Although some of them were concerned with cultural matters outside literature, they divorced the text from its context and claimed its autonomy from it. In this regard their approach was similar, at least in principle.

The major works of American New Criticism were influenced mainly by the works of English critic, I. A. Richards (1924), and later also that of his pupil William Empson (1930). The movement did not have a name until the appearance of John Crowe Ransom's study entitled *The New Criticism* (1941), whose work loosely organised the principles of the approach which was later to gain the name New Criticism. Another major figure to emerge was the above quoted Cleanth Brooks. Brooks put the position of the New Critics in its proper contextual perspective in his essay entitled, "Poetry since *The Wasteland*", which was published in the journal of the movement, *The Southern Review*:

The First World War had brought America into a shocking cultural collision with Europe. For the South, the shock was even greater than for the North. The South, of course, did not participate equally in the new order, but in some ways the effects were even more dramatic; there were profound tensions, deep inner divisions of loyalties, new ambitions, new opportunities, new despairs, and new problems, or rather, old problems which had never been articulated and confronted - all the things that stir a man to utterance (Vol.1, No.3, 1965:504).

To the New Critics, like the Russian Formalists, poetry was the centre of discursive analysis. Poetry was a means of communicating feeling and thought that could not be expressed in any other kind of language. It differed qualitatively from the language of science or philosophy, but it conveyed equally valid meanings (see section 2.2.3.1). These critics set out to define and find a formal method of approaching poetic thought and language, utilising the technique of close reading with special emphasis on the connotative and associative values of words and on multiple functions of figurative language - symbol, metaphor, irony, paradox, antithesis etc.

The New Critics followed very closely on the Formalist dissociation of the text from the author. Though they insisted that a work of art or poem could not be judged merely by the feeling it evokes from the reader, giving rise to the concept of "affective fallacy", which as we have noted not only took issue with Richards, but also constituted a direct attack on impressionistic criticism, which argued that the reader's response to a poem is the ultimate indication of its value. They argued in favour of the study of given literary aspects in a text over concern with response to it. The seeds of New Criticism can be traced back to the nineteenth century Romantic theory in England, specifically Coleridge's ideas of organic form (1817), and through Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot and T. E. Hulme in the early twentieth century to Richards, Empson, Ransom and Brooks.

Ransom, whose work (1941) gave the school its name, is worth mention at this point, even though his approach is not going to be discussed. He was the leading critic in the renaissance which started after World War I in the United States, and was very influential in the 1950s. He, like the other American New Critics, Brooks, Warren and Tate, was also educated at Vanderbilt University, and a leading member of the Fugitives, which published a journal with that name as a title for three years from 1922.

Within the group of Fugitives there was a faction called Agrarians, to which Ransom belonged. This clique took a strong stand against the proposition that industrialisation was the solution to the problems of the South. From 1937 until his retirement in 1958 he taught at Kenyon College, Gambier, in Ohio. While at Kenyon he founded and edited a literary journal called *The Kenyon Review*, for twenty years from 1939. After *The New Criticism* he published more critical works (1938) and an anthology of poems and essays (1945; 1955; 1972).

In *The New Criticism* he critically discussed Richards' and Yvor Winger's methods, and concluded by suggesting that in view of the shortcomings of these critics' works there should be an 'ontological' critic who would treat an order of existence not created in scientific discourse. This was an attempt to defend poetry against science. He borrowed the term 'icon' from the logical positivist, Charles W. Morris (b.1901), to suggest the symbolic in art, and later in *Poems and Essays* (1955) he used the term "concrete universal" in an attempt to find the universalising power of art while preserving the emphasis on the concrete metaphor, and its reference to nature.

Having done a historical overview, and drawing comparisons with the Formalist-Structuralists' method and theories, it is now proper to continue to case studies in order to focus sharply on some individuality of analysis.

3.2.1 Ivor A. Richards (1893–1979)

Richards was educated at Magdalene College, Cambridge, and was a lecturer in Moral Science and English from 1922 to 1929. At Cambridge Richards was part of a group of scholars who developed rigorous methods of analysing poetry, among whom were F. R. Leavis, Q. D. Leavis, C. K. Ogden, and Richards' pupil William Empson. In that period he wrote three of his most influential works: *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923), a pioneer work on semantics which he co-authored with O. K. Ogden and J. Wood, and *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924). They improvised new terms in their distinction between the 'symbol' use of language and how it is used in poetry. In his third work, *Practical Criticism* (1929), he developed his critical method. Most of his works were written for the Cambridge audience. In them he took a sample audience and asked to write down their feelings about a set of thirteen poems, and from this he tried to diagnose the cause of the mistakes which they made.

During the 1930s he spent much of his time developing Basic English, a system originated by Ogden, who co-authored *The Meaning of Meaning* with Richards. He believed that a universally understood language would help to bring about international understanding. He took Basic English to China as a visiting professor at Tsing Hau University (1929–30) and as director of the Orthological Institute of China (1936–38). He went to America in 1939, and in 1942 he published a version of Plato's *Republic* in Basic English. He became professor of English at Harvard University in 1944, working mainly in primary education, and emeritus professor there in 1963. His verse has been collected in *Internal Colloquies* (1971) and new selected Poems (1978). His essays include *Science and Poetry* (1926; revised as *Poetries and Sciences* [1970]), *Speculative Instruments* (1955), *Beyond* (1974) and *Poetries* (1974). *Complementarities* (1976) includes uncollected essays from 1919 to 1975.

Richards developed his primordial ideas in *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924), also taking the cue from Coleridge and developed a closely reasoned theory of the mind's response to rhythm and metre, and other 'emotive' elements of poetry. This theory is organic and contextual; the sound effects of prosody have little psychological effect by themselves. It is prosody in conjunction with "its contemporaneous other effects" - chiefly meaning or propositional sense - that produces its characteristic impact on our neural structures. He argued that everything which happens in a poem depends on the organic environment. Later his ideas were expounded in *Practical Criticism* (1929), as this discussion will illustrate in detail later, in which he constructed a celebrated "metrical dummy" (see section

3.2.1.1) to support [an] argument against anyone who affirms that the mere sound of verse has independently any considerable aesthetic virtue". For Richards the most important function of metre is to provide aesthetic framing and control; metre makes possible, by its stimulation and release of tension, "the most difficult and delicate utterances".

There is general consensus that Richards was one of the most influential people whose works led to the development of New Criticism. Ransom (1941), one of the pioneers of New Criticism, asserted that "discussion of the New Criticism must start with Mr Richards"; and this assertion is corroborated by Stanley Hyman's declaration (1948) that Richards "created modern criticism in the most literal sense (R. Wellek, 1967: 3:534). As a student of psychology, Richards relied heavily on the discipline in his approach to literature, especially poetry. He concluded that poetry performed some therapeutic function by co-ordinating a variety of human impulses into an aesthetic whole, helping both the writer and the reader maintain their psychological well being: "If there be any means by which we may artificially strengthen our minds' capacity to order themselves, we must avail ourselves of them. And of all possible means, Poetry, the unique, linguistic instrument by which our minds have ordered their thoughts, emotions, desires ... seems to be the most serviceable" (Richards, 1964:321).

The introduction of the importance of the reader's role in the reading of the text is, as we have already noted, an innovation of Richards' in the New Critical thought. As far as he was concerned the reader and the critic had a similar role to play. He underplayed the difference between the author, the text and the reader. "It is certain", he said, "that no mere careful study of communicative possibilities, together with any desire to communicate, however intense, is ever sufficient without close natural correspondence between the poet's impulses and possible impulses in his reader ... Thus the artist is entirely justified in his apparent neglect of the main purpose of his work" (1967:20).

Richards' Psychological model informs his *Principles of Literary Criticism*. He postulated that when a poem is read the following stimulus chain is put into motion:

- I The visual sensation of the printed words.
- II Images closely associated with these sensations.
- III Images relatively free.
- IV Reference to, or 'thinking of', various things.
- V Emotions
- VI Affective-volitional attitudes.

According to this theory the visual perception of words is a stimulus which sets in motion other sensations of association of images which spark off a recall of their meaning. This is more so with auditory images. This suggestion seems to be useful in the reading of African oral poetry. This can be illustrated with an example from Jordan's (see section (4.2.2.2), for instance. His reading of a praise poem [74] is very thin, especially on the reading of images. A dominant feature of this poem, in addition to parallelism, is the sustenance of metaphor through the adjective, 'beautiful', which is repeated directly, and then through synonyms, 'fresh', 'smooth', 'bright' and 'round'. The images suggested by these adjectives are bound to set in motion certain emotional responses or "thinking of various of things" that are associated with them in the hearer or reader of the poem, perhaps the smell, touch, or feel of something beautiful, smooth, or round. In this case one would suggest that the emotions evoked would be positive, as opposed to those which could be evoked by the imagery of the nouns and verbs in the next poem [75], which are "clearing-and-frowning", 'thunderer', 'smiting', 'thudding', 'quaked', and 'gores'. Jordan's reading of these images is only symptomatic, as we shall see later (see section 4.2.2.2).

3.2.1.1 Functions of Meaning in Poetry

According to Richards there are four kinds of meaning in any kind of communication which uses language, especially "language as used in poetry", which function simultaneously. These functions are *Sense*, *Feeling*, *Tone* and *Intention*. These kinds of meaning do not necessarily have to be dominant simultaneously, but may exchange prominence in terms of mutual domination and subjugation.

'Sense' implies "saying something", or presentation of an item for consideration, and therefore a speaker, listener, and the hearer or audience. The item may be a fact or "object of thought". According to Richards this aspect seems to be the most essential in poetry:

In most poetry the sense is as important as anything else; it is quite as subtle, and as dependent on the syntax, as in prose; it is the poet's chief instrument to other aims when it is not itself his aim. His control of our thoughts is ordinarily his chief means to the control of our feelings, and in the immense majority of instances we miss nearly everything of value if we misread his sense (Richards, 1964:191).

'Feeling' refers to the attitude of the speaker towards his audience. It encompasses "all connative-affective aspects of life - emotions, emotional attitudes, the will, desire, pleasure-unpleasure, and the rest. 'Feeling' is shorthand for any or all of this" (1964:181). Feeling is an important aspect, which distinguishes poetic or literary language from scientific prose, as Richards postulates in *Principles of Literary Criticism*. In poetry language is used with an emotive function to evoke subjective feelings, while in science prose it is used with a symbolic or referential function, and talks about the world objectively.

'Tone' refers to the establishment of relationship or rapport between the speaker and his audience - "an attitude to his listener", reflecting "his sense of how he stands towards those he is addressing". An example given is the establishment of favourable relations between a speaker and his audience in a general Election speech.

'Intention' has to do with the speaker's aim, be it conscious or unconscious. Its influence on his expression is different from that of sense, feeling and tone, although in certain instances these may coincide: "Sometimes all four fail together; a reader garbles the sense, distorts the feeling, mistakes the tone and disregards the intention; and often a partial collapse of one function entails aberration in the others" (1964:183). There is sometimes an inextricable relationship between some of these elements as "Feeling (and sometimes Tone) may take charge of and operate through sense in another fashion, and more constantly more relevant in poetry" (1964:186). The 'statements', Richards observes, "which appear in the poetry are there for the sake of their effects upon feeling, not for their own sake". The inextricable relationship between 'intention' and 'feeling' is further emphasised:

Hence to challenge their truth or to question whether they deserve serious attention *as statements claiming truth*, is to mistake their function. The point is that many, if not most, of the statements in poetry are there *as a means* to manipulation and expression of feeling and attitudes, not as contributions to any body of doctrine of any type whatever (Richards, 1964:186).

If we compare the above statement with the hierarchy distinguished by Jakobson (see section 2.2.1.1) in regard to the different functions prevalent in linguistic communication, it would at first seem as if Richards and Jakobson are in agreement here about the less important role of the referential function in poetry, since Jakobson stressed the effect of the poetic function in focusing attention on the message (i.e. the poetic text), 'for its own sake'. However, where they differ markedly, is in Richards' collapsing of the emotive and poetic functions; where

Jakobson clearly distinguished between them. Jefferson and Robey observe in this regard:

From this identification of the poetic and the emotive it follows that Richards is far less inclined than the Formalists to stress the difference between poetry and ordinary discourse. Or more exactly, while he does stress the difference between poetry and referential language, he also stresses that the experience which poetry produces differs only in degree, not in kind, from other types of emotive experience (1982:62).

There are various ways in which a poet may subjugate statements to emotive intentions:

A poet may distort his statement; he may make statements which have logically nothing to do with the subject under treatment; he may, by metaphor and otherwise, present objects for thought which are logically quite irrelevant; he may perpetrate logical nonsense, be as trivial or as silly, logically, as it is possible to be; all in the interests of other functions of his language - to express feeling or adjust tone or further his intention (Richards, 1964:187-8).

The correspondence with Formalist-Structuralist thought is again noticeable, in that the above ideas coincide with Mukařovský's (see section 2.2.3.1), where he says that foregrounding the linguistic sign is the centre of focus, which calls attention to itself but not the reality or reference outside the sign. The sign has an aesthetic function. According to Richards this aesthetic function has an effect on feelings and emotions. It should be clear that although Richards seems to approximate the Formalist principle of the "making strange" effect of poetry, his emphasis is on experience rather than form - we may interpret Richards as saying that the emotive function is geared towards eliciting some kind of 'uniquely poetic' response from the reader.

As far as Intention is concerned the writer uses conjecture or "the weight of what is left *unsaid*" as a device. He may omit to say something or express feelings, but give certain parts of the poem some prominence, so that its significance cannot be reduced to any of the other functions, sense, feeling and tone - "this significance is then the author's intention" (1964:356). Intention can intervene constantly among the other three functions.

Sense and feeling are regarded as the most closely related aspects of poetry, with three definite ways in which they are interconnected. The first is where sense generates feeling; the second is the opposite, where sense is conveyed by feeling, and the third is when the interaction is relaxed, when feeling arises from the sense of the word through the context of the whole poem. In the latter the feeling of the word does not derive from the word considered in isolation from the context. This third type of relationship is the general condition applicable in poetry, though of course a distinction ought to be made between words which derive feeling by dominating their context and those "of a more malleable nature" (1964:212). The influence of the whole poem on a word or phrase comes about in two ways, between feelings and through sense, so says Richards: "The feeling already occupying the mind limits the possibilities of new words", in other words, both feeling and sense of words or phrases are dependent upon the feeling and sense already established in the preceding phrases. Thus part cannot be interpreted without consideration of the whole.

Somehow similar to the above idea is Jakobson's idea of *selection* and *combination* (see section 2.2.1.1), whereby the meaning of a word is determined by its choice and combination with other words in a poem. This is also implied in Richards' view, in the sense that when a certain feeling is already evoked in the mind, the meaning of a word is conceived within the context of the feelings evoked.

Richards also argues that Feeling and Tone are the most primitive of the functions, in that language was originally almost emotive in its purpose: "that is to say a means of expressing feelings about situations (the danger cry) a means of expressing interpersonal attitudes (cooing, growling) ..." (1964:358). The use of language for making neutral statements (Sense) developed later. But the latter development and the primitive forms have become so familiar that it is now difficult to distinguish them from each other.

It is in poetry where language tends to lapse into primitive denotations. He gives an example with the word 'iron', and explains that in poetry it excites "a set of feelings rather than thoughts of the physical properties of that material". Words in poetry do not evoke a sense of their scientific and objective properties, but are defined as objects towards which there are certain attitudes and feeling which are associated, resulting in a certain effect. In poetry it has to be understood that emotive classifications (effects produced by objects or external properties) replace scientific classifications (properties inherent in the object or internal properties).

However, the sense may still be dominant in thought which is governed by feeling, by way of subordination or abrogation. A case of abrogation is the ritualised courtesies like "how do you do?", "Dear Sir", and "Yours sincerely", where the sense would be rendered nonsensical by the feeling if the utterances were in poetry.

An ever present factor in poetry is that of subordination of sense by the emotive. As Richards puts it: "The poet makes a statement about something, not in order that the statement may be examined and reflected upon, but in order to evoke certain feelings, and when these are evoked the use of the statement is exhausted. It is idle and irrelevant to consider the statement further" (Richards, 1964:354). Doing otherwise "frequently leads to a profanation of poetry". Poetry, thus, is independent from what it says (Sense).

Having said that, Richards observes that there are occasions when Feeling is subordinated to Sense. The poet's expression of emotions or sentiments does not necessarily elevate the stature of his poetry, for it is easier to describe feelings than to present them, or to state them than to express them. Poetry does not state feelings, nor seek to analyse them: "There is a great difference between controlling and conveying feelings and talking about them". Perhaps this is the fundamental difference which Richards draws between poetic and other forms of language. Another major difference between poetry and prose is the anticipation of preceding words and patterns (rhythm and metre) on what follows:

In prose, the influence of past words extends only a little way ahead.

In verse, especially when stanza-form and rime co-operate to give a larger unit than the line, it may extend far ahead. It is this knitting together of the parts of the poem which explains the mnemonic power of verse (1967:108).

The ideas of sense, intention, feeling and tone do filter through indirectly in the analysis of oral poetry, though not as explicitly as Richards has elaborated them. Obviously nearly all these aspects can be found in any expression of oral poetry, for the praiser or bard, in composing, does not express objective statements, but also reveals his attitude and feelings towards the subject of his composition, and also strives to assert rapport with his audience. This seems to be so obvious that it needs no reiteration.

3.2.1.2 Rhythm and metre

Sense and feeling are also important concepts in Richards' definition of rhythm. The thrust of his argument is that rhythm is not made up by physical qualities inherent in the sound, but is also inextricably associated with the meaning and feeling which is attributed to them by the reader. He dismisses two widely held

views about rhythm, namely, that it has to conform to a strict metrical pattern, and that good rhythm is dependent upon sequences of sound.

Though the sounds in rhythm are important, they do not determine rhythm, but at the best they can only function as a skeleton, a kind of outline upon which the reader ascribes the rhythm according to his psychological inclination. He puts it as follows:

Rhythm which we admire, which we seem to detect actually *in* the sounds, and which we seem to respond to, is something which we only *ascribe* to them and is, actually, a rhythm of the mental activity through which we apprehend not only the sound of the words but their sense and feeling ... is a projection of the thought and emotion they evoke, and the peculiar satisfaction they seem to give to *the ear* is the reflection of the adjustment of *our feelings* which had been momentarily achieved (1964:229).

In this sense then rhythm and metre converge with both content and form. To prove that “the way in which the rhythm is received is not independent of the emotional response which their sense excites”, Richards presented a poem without its real title to a number of readers, in order to find out their responses to its rhythm. The poem was given the title “Poem IV”:

[3]

There was rapture of spring in the morning
When we told our love in the wood.
For you were the spring in my heart, dear lad,
And I vowed that my life was good.

But there's winter now in the evening,
And lowering clouds overhead,
There's wailing of wind in the chimney-nook
And I vow that my life lies dead.

For the sun may shine on the meadow land
And the dog-rose bloom in the lanes,
But I've only weeds in my garden, lad,
Wild weeds that are rank with the rains.

One solace there is for me, sweet but faint,
As it floats on the wind of the years,
A whisper that spring is the last true thing
And that triumph is born of tears (1964:52)

The responses to the rhythm, rhyme and metre in this poem go as follows, as Richards quotes them: "The ending is very good and strong which always is a great point. It has a *lilt* in it which is *very pleasant when reading provided it is not overdone*"; the second response suggests that:

The technique in particular is *very good*. One notices particularly the alliteration, e.g. 'Wild weeds that are rank with the rains'. Again, the double rhyme in the last line but one is very effective: it suddenly makes the thing more cheerful ... *it is by the emotion that one must judge a poem*. The emotion in this poem is strong and sincere (1964:55-6)

Another one says:

Here is a *pleasant, melodious lyric*, with *love interest* and *philosophy*. The *antithetical effects* are well achieved; the repetition of 'weeds' in the third verse is an excellent touch, as is the internal riming in the third line of the fourth verse. The poem has a swing and lilt to it which make it delightful reading. It is *altogether well constructed* and successful (1964:56).

And we close with this example, out of a number of others:

No.4 [stanza] merits nothing but contempt. *If the writer were actuated by intense feeling* surely he was *deplorably misguided* to choose as his medium of expression *a regular fluent metre, cant phrases and obvious rhymes*. The rhymes seem to have a great influence over the sense: in line 15 "thing" means exactly nothing but it rhymes with spring so there it is. Finally the *easy antithesis* - spring and winter, roses and weeds etc. is fatal to any hope of real feeling behind the verses, and without sincerity poetry is an impossibility (1964:56-7).

Though the responses are different in essence they do support Richards' case for the compatibility of rhythm and emotions, as clearly expressed by the adjectives 'pleasant', "very good" (though vague) 'cheerful', 'melodious', 'delightful', and "deplorably misguided".

This argument then leads to Richards' idea of the 'dummy'. He takes Milton's poem, "On the morning of Christ's nativity" [4], and substitutes nonsense words for the original, but retaining the rhythm [5], and by this argues that an infinity of rhythmic poetry could be composed if the effect of rhythm was not dependent upon sense and feeling:

[4]

This is the Morning, and the happy morn
Where is the Son of Heav'n eternal King,
Of wedded Maid, and Virgin Mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring,
For so the holy sages once did say,
That our deadly forfeit should release,
And with his Father work us a perpetual peace (Beechling, 1913:1).

[5]

J. Drootan-Sussting benn
Mill-down Leduren N.
Telamba-taras oderwainto weiring
Awersey zet bidreen
Ownd istellester sween
Lithabian tweet ablissood owdswown stiering
Apleven aswetsen sestinal
Yintomen I adaits afurf I gallas Ball (Beechling, 1913:232).

There is mutual modification between form and meaning. Rhythm may be grasped by a loud reading of a poem, though Richards warns that before the reader renders a poem aloud, he must first grasp its rhythm by familiarising himself with the poem or its sense.

Further discussion of rhythm and metre is expounded in *Principles of Literary Criticism*. Metre is regarded as a specialised form of rhythm, both depend upon expectancy. When a poem is read, the mind gets unconsciously prepared to expect certain patterns, and poetry excites this expectancy more than prose. Thus whatever follows in the form of rhythm or metre, depends on the effect that it has on the

feeling already evoked, but not the sound itself. Rhythm is therefore “this texture of expectations, satisfactions, disappointments, surprisals, which the sequence of syllables brings about ... Evidently there can be no surprise and disappointments unless there is no expectation and most rhythms are made up as much of disappointments and postponements ...” (1967:105–6).

Metre, as part of rhythm, has to do with the rhythmic sequence and the manner in which words influence one another. As a specialised form of rhythm, it is capable of “an increased interconnection between words through an increased control of anticipation” (Richards, 1967:110). Sometimes it is used with rhyme. Richards dismisses the idea of studying metre in terms of feet and stresses (see Brooks in 3.2.3.3). Metre, like rhythm, is not in the words (stimulation) but in the reader’s response to them:

With every beat of the metre a tide of anticipation in us turns and swings, setting up as it does so extraordinarily extensive sympathetic reverberations ... The notion that there is any virtue in regularity or in variety, or in any other formal feature, apart from its effect upon us, must be discarded before any metrical problem can be understood. The regularity to which metre tends acts through the definiteness of anticipations which are thereby aroused. It is through these that it gets such a hold upon the mind (1967:107).

These anticipations have got nothing to do with aspects of poetry such as stress, length, foot structure, syllables etc. One important aspect of metre is the relationship between pitch and syllabic structure. The rise and fall of pitch is an important concern with the poet’s technique, and is part of metre. The reader’s impulse is modified by the stress or pitch (high or low) of certain syllables. Thus, this emphasises the fact that rhythm and metre cannot be separated from the emotional effect that it has on the reader, over and above the sensory. Metre can also have a hypnotic (“lulling effect”) effect on the mind when there is an absence of surprise, which if present, would have an awakening effect. It may also be bound up with the sense of the poem as soon as it begins to “catch on” in the structure of the poem.

Rhythm and metre are important features, for we shall see in the next chapter how different views are expressed as to their presence in oral poetry, in the views expressed by Cope (see section 4.2.3.3) on the one hand and Jordan (see section 4.2.2.2) and Kunene (see section 5.2.1.4) on the other. Jordan and Kunene argue that these are features which are not found in oral poetry, while Cope argues to the

contrary, and finds them present. This divergence of opinion, taken *a priori*, seems to suggest that Richards' view is tenable, when he attributes rhythm to emotional response. If some readers assert that it is there, while others say that it is not, this means that each reader brings their emotional baggage into the text, and find or do not find rhythm. It is tempting to suggest that Jordan and Kunene, being 'native' speakers of Xhosa and Sotho respectively, are attuned to the absence of rhythm, while Cope, non native speaker of the language of the texts he deals with, Zulu, is tuned to the presence of rhythm. Here Richards' view is comparable to Jakobson's distinction of different factors and functions in verbal communication, though they would situate rhythm and metre at different places in the communication model. Whereas Jakobson deals with metre and rhythm, as one of the manifestations of equivalence being promoted to the constitutive device of the sequence (see section 2.2.1.1), in terms of the poetic function, Richards, as we have seen, is adamant that it is a combined effect of poetic structure and the experience by the reader of this structure. The question remains as to whether, how and by whom rhythm and metre could possibly be perceived in African oral poetry. We suppose that it is through a thorough knowledge of the language of the text, without imposing features of another language. From the case studies of oral poetry in the fourth and fifth chapters, Cope is not convincing in his reading of rhythm in oral poetry. Thus we find this aspect of Richards' analysis, despite its less rigid appropriation to poetry by situating it firmly within the experience of the reader, not applicable to oral poetry. We shall return to the question of language specificity in regard to this particular aspect of poetic structure in the fourth and fifth chapters of this study. At this point we shall move on to a discussion of his approach to figurative language.

3.2.1.3 Figurative language

Coming to figurative language, Richards refers mainly to hyperbole, metaphor and personification as the main images which poetry employs. Figurative language in poetry is a means to an end. Even nonsense "is admissible in poetry if the effect justifies it". Thus there can be no rules which limit the use of figurative language. He defines the above figures of speech by examples.

Before proceeding to study Richards' approach in detail, it is worth mentioning at this point that figurative language is a universal feature of human language, if not particularly of poetry. As a result the analysis of images in poetry can also apply to the analysis of oral poetry, and this is one of its dominant features, as we already mentioned earlier. It is also important because it seems to be another point of convergence between the Formalist-Structuralists' and New Critics' view of

poetic language. Perhaps the most sensitive analysis of how images function in poetry is that presented by Mukařovský in his discussion of the relationship between foregrounding (*aktualisace*) and automatization of devices (see section 2.2.3.1). Let us now look at how Richards analyses the figures of speech mentioned above.

Richards' example of the function of hyperbole is illustrated with the following poem, "For the eighteenth birthday of George Meredith":

[6]

A health, ringing health, unto the king
Of all our hearts to-day! But what proud song
Should follow on the thought, nor do him wrong?
Unless the sea were harp, each mirthful string
Woven of the lightning of the nights of Spring,
And dawn the lonely listener, glad and grave
With colours of the sea-shell and the wave
In brightening eye and cheek, there is none to sing!

Drink to him, as men upon an Alpine peak,
Brim one immortal cup of crimson wine,
And into it drop one pure cold crust of snow,
Then hold it up, too rapturously to speak
And drink - to the mountains, line on glittering line,
Surging away into the sunset-glow (1964:118).

Richards' suggestion here is that if the hyperbole of "sea-harp" is subjected to "logical analysis" glaring flaws of "internal inconsistencies" will be discovered, as raised by some readers of the poem:

- (1) The only concrete simile in the octet is the likening of the sea to a harp - surely a little extravagant.
- (2) The imagery is bad. *The sea may sound like an organ but it never had the sound of a harp.*
- (3) One wonders if the poet has correctly grasped the idea conveyed in the description of the harp", each mirthful string/ Woven of the lightning of the nights of Spring".
- (4) A far-fetched metaphor in which the sea is pictured as a harp *and each string*, besides being mirthful, *is made up of the lightning of*

Spring nights. For unknown reason Dawn listens to the music of this incredible instrument (1964:127).

But according to Richards the above interpretations are ‘*emotive*’ rather than ‘*elucidatory*’, and the hyperbole is justified by its internal structure, in that a “very slight similarity might be sufficient as a means of transition to something valuable. We ought never to forget, though we constantly do, that in poetry means *are* justified by the end” (1964:194). Therefore, according to Richards there is nothing wrong with hyperbole, no matter how illogical it may seem at an emotional level. Among the critics of oral poetry in our case studies in the fourth and fifth chapters it is only Jordan (see section 4.2.2.2) who refers to hyperbole as a feature of oral poetry. Nonetheless he does not define it sufficiently, but takes it for granted that it is understood. He also does not explain how it functions and operates. In this case Richards’ explanation of its function would have been helpful, as we shall indicate when we come to Jordan’s study.

Personification is defined as “the projection of human activity into inanimate objects of thought”, and is one of the most commonly used devices in poetry. He justifies the use of this figure of speech by suggesting that:

The structure of language and the pronouns, verbs, adjectives that come most naturally to us, constantly invite us to personify. And to go deeper, our attitudes, feelings, and ways of thought about inanimate things are moulded upon and grow out of our ways of thinking and feeling about one another. Our minds have developed with other human beings always in the foreground of our consciousness; we are shaped, mentally, by and through our dealings with other people. It is so in the history of race and in the individual biography (Richards, 1964:199).

It is noted that personification is not necessarily concerned with Sense, but mainly with expression of Feeling, though it also facilitates clarity of expressing what may be otherwise not possible to state. Thus in the use of personification there is a convergence of both Sense and Feeling. Richards illustrates this argument with an example from these poetic lines:

[7]

On wall and window *slant* your hand
And *sidle* up the garden stair (1964:200)

The first stanza of this poem, which Richards quotes somewhere else, indicates that the pronoun 'your' is an anaphoric reference to 'Cloud' in the first stanza:

[8]

Climb, cloud, and pencil all the blue
With your miraculous stockade;
The earth will have her joy of you
And limn your beauty till it fade (1964:130)

It is pointed out that personification in the above passage adds a particularity and a vividness which could not have been achieved without the use of borrowing personal attributes as a means, whose effect indicates that 'hand' should be read as a reference to "the extremity of a limb of the cloud's shadow", and 'sidle' as "giving the accidental, oblique quality of the movement of the shadow, and gives it a single word by means of a single particularising scene". Thus personification is one of the often necessary means of "condensation and economy ... *in order that emotional impulses shall not dissipate themselves*".

But there are occasions when a poet may over-indulge in projecting human attributes in a manner which cannot be justified, as in the following poem:

[9]

Solemn and gray, the immense clouds of even
Pass on their towering unperturbed way
Through the vast whiteness of the rain-swept heaven,
The moving pageant of the waning day;
Heavy with dreams, desires, prognostications,
Brooding with sullen and Titanic crests
They surge, whose sullen mantle's wise imaginations
Trail where Earth's mute and languorous body rests (1964:154)

The 'dreams', 'desires', 'prognostications', 'brooding', and "wise imaginations" seem to be defective. But this is qualified by the remark that "to decide whether a personification is or is not 'overdone' is a matter of very delicate reading".

In studying figurative language in a poem the reader ought not to use standards which are external to it, and must use its literal sense to a certain point in his own discretion, but must desist from fitting images to a literal reading, expecting its

images to fit into certain factual knowledge: "The chemist must not require that the poet write like a chemist, nor the moralist, nor the man of affairs, nor the logician, nor the professor, that he write as they would" (1964:203–4).

Richards regards metaphor as a device by which the poet conveys feeling: "A metaphor is a shift, a carrying over of a word from its normal use to a new use" (see Brooks 3.2.3.2), and then draws a distinction between a sense and emotive metaphor. In the former "the shift of the word is occasioned and justified by a similarity or analogy *between the object* it is usually applied to and the new object", while in the latter "the shift occurs through some similarity *between the feelings* the new situation and the normal situation arouse" (1964:221). Usually the two types of metaphor are combined in the description of feeling, at times with both the reader and the writer failing to explain how this process works. It is the poet's task to control feeling by the use of metaphor. Richards shies away from giving concrete examples from poetry on this score.

Metaphor then, is not merely a rendering of the abstract in concrete terms, but it is also an expression of the speaker's attitude to his subject and audience, connecting things which are not related, as Richards put it:

It is the supreme agent by which disparate and hitherto unconnected things are brought together in poetry for the sake of the effects upon attitude and impulse which springs from their collocation and from the combination which the mind then establishes between them ... There are few metaphors whose effect, if carefully examined, can be traced to the logical relations involved. Metaphor is a semi-surreptitious method by which a greater variety of elements can be wrought into the fabric of the experience (1967:189).

The use of images in poetry should serve to make *representation* (see Mukařovský, section 2.2.3.1) but not resemblance, because words represent things: "In order that *a* may represent *A* it is not necessary for *a* to represent *A* or be a copy of *A* in any respect whatever. It is enough if *a* has the same effect upon us, in some respect, as *A*. Obviously *a* and *A* here have both the effect of making us utter the same sound if we read them out - and they have other effects in common" (Richards, 1964:363). Representation is not required to evoke an image of the thing represented as it actually is, but it is sufficient that it evokes feeling, notions, attitudes and tendencies which the actual object represented may excite. But it is admitted that certain representations such as onomatopoeic ones and certain gestures may bear a

certain degree of resemblance, but this should not be overworked, because the evocative power of a word comes out "*through not resembling*".

A distinction is drawn between the ability of a word and an image in representation. A word, we are told, can represent things which have no similarity, and thereby effect combinations of feelings, but an image can only represent things which are similar. Certain words have power over people's minds, and it is the object of criticism to study and analyse these powers but not to poeticise.

Perhaps Richards' most lasting contribution concerns precisely his ideas about the manner in which words or phrases may 'interact' with one another, thereby inevitably coercing the reader into considering the semantic density of verbal expression. This particularly applies to his theory of metaphor, where he formulated the now famous definition of the effect of an interaction between words:

In the simplest formulation, when we use a metaphor we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction (Richards, 1936:98).

In order to facilitate this presumed interaction between words or thoughts, Richards coined the still widely accepted term 'tenor' and vehicle to distinguish between "the principal subject, what is really being said" (tenor) and "what it resembles or what it is compared to" (vehicle) respectively (1936:96). Since then, the so-called interaction theory of metaphor has been refined and developed by a number of theorists on metaphor, including philosophers (Black, 1962), linguists (Reinhart, 1976) and literary theorists (Gräbe, 1984b), to mention but a few. Despite the degree of sophistication present in most recent contributions on the so-called interaction theory of metaphor, Richards' terminology of tenor and vehicle is still widely used.

In general Richards' analytical method, as far as figurative language is concerned, is the most adaptable and perhaps most adopted in the reading of oral poetry, and African poetry in general. His theory of figurative language, especially metaphor, is still prevalent, and presents a strong case for synthesis of Western standards in the reading of African poetry, as we shall illustrate in the fourth and fifth chapters of this thesis. But it must also be mentioned that because of the universal nature of metaphor, the study of this figure of speech is also a dominant feature of the method of the critics of oral poetry. Therefore one cannot call it Western, or suggest that it is a derivative approach. At best one could say that it is the most apparent of universal tropes.

As we have noted above, another interesting feature of Richards' critical methodology concerns his deliberate inclusion of the reader in his version of the close reading of poetic texts. As we have seen, this method is systematically illustrated in *Practical Criticism*, where he meticulously records and analyses the reactions (expressed as impressions, feelings and thoughts) of a number of actual readers to different poems. Such emphasis on both the emotive and conative functions of linguistic communication is, of course, contrary to Formalist-Structuralist and New Critical thought, since both these movements, whatever their differences, focused on the subject of "literariness as literature" and therefore they emphasised both the autonomy of the literary work and the predominance of the poetic function. It is not surprising then, that Richards' focus on the reader was challenged by a prominent New Critic, William K. Wimsatt, in an essay appropriately called "The Affective Fallacy" (reprinted in *The Verbal Icon*, 1954:21-39). A preoccupation with the experience of readers rather than an 'objective' close reading of the text, is rejected in no uncertain terms:

The Affective Fallacy is a confusion between the poem and its results (What it is and what it does), a special case of epistemological skepticism, though usually advanced as if it had far stronger claims than the overall forms of skepticism. It begins by trying to derive the standard of criticism from the psychological effects of the poem and ends in impressionism and relativism (1954:21).

With hindsight it is, of course, easy to see that Richards' focus on the experience of the reader anticipated not only the shift from text to reader, which became prevalent in literary theory since the sixties, but also the so-called empirical study of literature, prevalent since the seventies. Be that as it may, the major work of his student William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930), focuses, to a far greater extent, on a close scrutiny of the language of the poem and hence it exemplifies what we may call a "special case" of the type of close reading favoured by the New Critics.

3.2.2 William Empson (1906-1984)

Empson was educated at Winchester College and Magdalene College, Cambridge University. He took a degree in mathematics and English literature. The latter was studied under I. A. Richards. His first collection of poems was published

during his college years in an anthology entitled *Poems* (1935). His poetry was influenced strongly by John Donne. They were mainly apolitical.

Between 1931 and 1934 he taught English literature at the University of Tokyo in Japan and later went to teach at the national University of Peking in China. During World War II he was editor for China services at the British Broadcasting Corporation. After that he returned to the University of Peking from 1947 to 1952. In 1953 he went to the University of Sheffield as professor of English literature, and became emeritus professor in 1971. He was knighted in 1979.

Empson's first most influential critical work, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (first published in 1930), was a verbal analysis of language through the study of English poetry, drawing illustrative examples from Shakespeare, Milton, Donne, the Metaphysical poets, and Pope. His main contribution, and perhaps most controversial, to the study of poetry was the postulation that the overlap or ambiguity of meaning in a word enhanced the richness of a poem rather than weakened it; put forcefully in the rhetorical statement in the preface: "Is all good poetry supposed to be ambiguous? I think that it is" (Preface, xv). This book was one of the corner stones of New Criticism. He applied his critical methods on longer texts (1935) and expanded his critical aesthetics (1951). His verbal analysis was based on the view that poetry's emotive effects derived primarily from ambiguities and complexities of its tonal and cognitive meaning.

Later he wrote a number of essays and a book on Milton's works (1961). His poetry (1935, 1940 and 1951) had a strong influence on the younger poets of the nineteen fifties. It is characterised by conceits drawn from astrophysics ("The science dealing with the physical and chemical constitution of the heavenly bodies"), Mathematics and other sciences.

In *Seven Types of Ambiguity* he makes a distinction between analytic and appreciative criticism. He makes the assumption that analysis of poetry has to go hand in hand with its enjoyment, or appreciation: "In so far as poetry can be regarded altogether dispassionately, so far as it is an external object for examination it is dead poetry and not worth examining ... Unless you enjoy the poetry you cannot create it as poetry in your mind" (*Scrutiny*, 1933:254). In addition to a sympathetic reading the critic ought to make a judgement also. Here the role of the active reader is given a prominence which is even more pronounced than Richards' insistence on recording the experience of the reader when the latter is called upon to evaluate not only the words on the page, but also the quality of their effect on his or her emotions. Empson asserts that "No poet, no artist of any art has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists" (*Scrutiny*, 1933:254).

This could be useful in the analysis of oral poetry: Firstly, when the praiser's or bard's audience listens to the rendition of oral poetry, they respond immediately and make a judgement with regard to the skill of performance and the poetic skill of the composition. The composition is also dependent upon the style of the poetry which came before, hence the use of certain standing formulaic structures, which are a dominant (foregrounded) feature of oral poetry. Of course this has been recognised by the critics of oral poetry, and can be regarded as one other area of coincidence in the reading of both Western and African poetry.

3.2.2.1 Verbal analysis of poetry

Empson suggests that ambiguity arises from a situation where "a word or a grammatical structure is effective in several ways at once", and that: " 'Ambiguity' itself can mean an indecision as to what you mean, an intention to mean several things, a probability that one or other or both of two things has been meant, and the fact that a statement has several meanings" (1953:5-6). And from this definition he works out seven types of ambiguities, with elaborate examples. Here we shall deal with the fundamental and essential aspects of these ambiguities, with reference to the examples he gives. At times some of these types of ambiguity overlap and the examples are repetitive. We shall therefore deal with those basic forms and use his examples sparingly to illustrate the main features of his theoretical assumptions.

Before we go on to presenting Empson's case studies of ambiguity we would like to point out an affinity between his definition of ambiguity in relation to Tynjanov's and Mukařovský's (see section 2.2.3.1) idea of secondary meaning derived from the syntactic context of a word, as opposed to the ever present basic or intrinsic meaning of a word, which only offers a starting point but not the ultimate meaning of a word. Ambiguity can only be read in context and relation of choice of words but not in the basic meaning.

The first type of ambiguity works mainly through figures of speech, images, symbols, metaphor, irony, pun, antithesis, paradox, onomatopoeia, rhythm, and so forth. Here we shall discuss a few examples. Once again, these are major aspects which the New Critics are concerned with and which suggest that, for them, reconstructing the meaning of poetic utterances would be the main object of the close reading of the poetic texts. What Empson is trying to argue, by means of his method of verbal analysis, is to show how ambiguity would complicate any attempt at arriving at an exhaustive or definitive assessment of a poem's meaning. Let us try to illustrate this by looking at a few of Empson's examples:

[10]

The light is braying like an ass (1953:12)

[11]

Thy voice is an odour that fades in a flame (1953:13)

[12]

Beauty is but a flower

Which wrinkles will devour.

Brightness falls from the air.

Queens have died young and fair.

Dust hath closed Helen's eye.

I am sick, I must die.

Lord, have mercy upon us (1953:25)

In discussing Empson's analysis of these examples, we may use Richards' distinction between tenor and vehicle to explain Empson's reasoning in arriving at his observations regarding ambiguity. The following lines from the excerpts provided above, are clear examples of the interaction between tenor ("the principal subject, what is being really said") and vehicle ("what it resembles or what it is compared to"):

[10a]

The *light* is braying like an *ass* (1953:12)

Tenor

Vehicle

[11a]

Thy *voice* is an *odour* that fades in a flame (1953:13)

Tenor Vehicle

[12a]

Beauty is but a *flower*

Tenor

Vehicle

In the first excerpt [10] the metaphor combines two senses, sight and sound, and this is referred to as synaesthesia (we shall refer to this in chapter five). In this case the comparison that is made cannot be declared true or false, but the image arouses a number of associations which cannot be restricted to one particular meaning; it is "thrown back into a series of possible associations, as to the social setting in which these sensations would be expected, or the mood in which they

would be sought out" (1953:13). In the next excerpt [11] there is a similar combination of images which appeal to different senses, smell ('odour') and sight ('flames'), or even 'sensation' ('flame').

It should be clear that the ambiguity of the first excerpt arises from the drawing together, in a comparison, of two nouns that refer to different senses - thus it is a question of the seeming discrepancy between the main parts of the comparison, the tenor and vehicle in Richards' terminology. However, in the second excerpt, which also exemplifies synaesthesia, the ambiguity is compounded in that the qualification that is added to the second noun (the vehicle) results in the reader being expected to consider the interaction of three senses. Incidentally, we may note here that Jakobson would surely have commented on the shift from grammatical similarity to grammatical differentiation regarding the interaction between the components of a metaphorical construction: in the first instance the ambiguity involves two nouns, but in the second the ambiguity is extended in that it is determined also by a combination of a noun and a verb.

In the third excerpt [12] Empson discusses the latent ambiguity present in so-called 'dead' metaphors, "which are not dead but sleeping, and, while making a direct statement, colour it with an implied comparison" (Empson, 1953:25). In this case the ambiguity again depends on grammatical difference: it does not arise from the hackneyed comparison of the noun 'beauty' (tenor) and 'flower' (vehicle), but rather it depends on the use of the verb 'devour', which refers to an action that could destroy the beauty. This illustration of ambiguity by use of metaphor [12] is from Nash's poem, "Summer's as will and testament". Empson argues that there are metaphors which have become 'dead', and their meanings are now literal, or "should be treated with respect". In this excerpt the verb 'devour' is supposed to mean either 'remove' or 'replace', "with no more than an overtone of cruelty and the unnatural". According to this interpretation this seems then that 'devour' is not to be interpreted metaphorically, but as a "subdued metaphor". In the third line the ambiguity is by vagueness. The line may mean: "The sun and moon pass under the earth after a period of shining, and there are stars falling at odd times; Icarus and the prey of hawks, having soared upwards towards heaven, *fall* exhausted or dead; the glittering turning things the sixteenth century put on the top of a building may have *fallen* too often ...", (Empson, 1953:26) and a myriad of other meanings, depending on either the abstract or the metaphorical interpretation of 'light'. In the fourth line 'Dust' may be interpreted literally, referring to the dust which has settled upon the 'shut eyelids of Helen's "undecaying corpse", or it may also mean, metaphorically, that "the *dust* is generated from her own corruption", and thus "the line imposes on *brightness* a further and more terrible comparison; on the one hand, it is the *bright*

motes dancing in sunbeams, which *fall* and become dust which is dirty and infectious; on the other, the lightness, gaiety, and activity of humanity, which shall come to *dust* in the grave” (Empson, 1953:27).

Empson follows up these examples with a number of others to illustrate the ambiguity of the first type, but for our purpose the above will suffice. Of paramount significance so far, as far as we are concerned, is Empson’s idea of “dead metaphor”, especially the verb as metaphor. Generally in the reading of oral poetry the verb as metaphor is ignored, and only the noun is considered as capable of carrying figurative meaning. In one of Jordan’s poetic studies [78], the reading of certain verbs as dead metaphor, in keeping with Empson’s explanation, could be helpful, for they will tell us more than the merely identifying personification:

He is the light feather arching and vanishing
Only to feast on men below Nqadu mountain; (Jordan, 1973:26).

We find three verbs in this poem, “arching and vanishing”, ‘feasting’. It is difficult to explain how these verbs function as metaphor without accepting Empson’s idea of the ambiguity of the first type. The verbs may mean to ‘bend’, ‘disappear’ and ‘revel in eating’ respectively, as the subject may be doing, or they can be read metaphorically to mean that its movement waves and is so quick as to seem (simile) to disappear, and its amount of food (transferring noun to the verb metaphor) is so much that it eats as if it is feasting. The latter can further still be interpreted as a euphemism which means ‘killing’. The noun ‘feather’ is easier to analyse, for it is a ‘living’ synecdoche, where part stands for the whole. The latter is defined by Jakobson (see section 2.2.1.1).

It is interesting that Empson uses the verb ‘devour’ as an example of dead metaphor, and in Kunene’s readings (see section 5.2.1.5) of oral poetry we find the same metaphor used in one of the texts. Kunene does not comment on it, and Empson’s idea would have been helpful in this regard.

We have already referred to Kunene’s text earlier, under Jakobson (see section 2.2.1.2):

Ngwana lona o jelwe ke koeyoko,
O jelwe ke koeyoko ya Letsie
Ke koeyoko seja-bana-ba-makhowa (Kunene, 1971:70).

Kunene leaves the metaphor in the verb *jelwe* (‘devoured’) unexplained, and it is clear that it is a dead metaphor. Though obviously understood as such, it would

have helped if it had been highlighted explicitly. More so because the word 'devour' has become an automatized device (therefore 'dead' as a metaphor) in oral poetry. See how it is used in the following lines, of poems [84], [85] and [92]:

Wadl' ubani obezalwa ubani

He devoured (destroyed) So-and-so and So-and-so.

Othe esadl' ezinye wadl' ezinye

Wath' esadl' ezinye wadl' ezinye.

He who while devouring some he devoured others,
And as he devoured others he devoured some more.

Odl' izinkomo engantuli mazembe.

He who raids (eats) cattle not needing hoes.

Perhaps the analysis of oral poetry takes it for granted that the use of the verb as a metaphor (or euphemism) can be easily understood without the need to explain it. However, a meticulous analysis such as, for instance, Jakobson's, leaves nothing to chance. It is such an approach which would take on board and exploit Empson's above type of ambiguity. At this point we shall pass on to the next type of ambiguity, that of the second type.

It is defined by Empson as follows: "An example of the second type of ambiguity, in word or syntax, and occurs when two or more meanings are resolved into one" (Empson, 1953:48), consisting of a logical and psychological ambiguity. This ambiguity may proliferate into a number of other meanings depending on where emphasis is placed. The first example is taken from an anonymous poem:

[13]

Cupid is winged and doth range;
Her country so my love doth change.
But change the earth, or change the sky,
Yet I will love her till I die (1953:48).

To illustrate the presumption of the presence of an ambiguity of the second type a paraphrase of the above lines is given, with an emphasis on the key words, 'change' and 'earth'. Here we shall cut down the paraphrase so as to place focus on the two lexical items which are meant to underline the ambiguity under consideration: "I will love her though she moves from this part of the earth to one

out of my reach ... under different skies ... she changes my earth ... from this earth and sky to another planet ... alters the earth and sky ... destroys ... changes my earth ... upset ... alter the earth ... abandoning ... change *my* earth ...” The paraphrase illustrates a number of emphases, with the ambiguity revealed in ‘change’ and ‘earth’ read as metaphors. The first may mean either “move to another” or “alter the one you have got”, and the second may refer either to the lady’s or the poet’s private world.

In the next example the ambiguity is taken from an excerpt of Macbeth’s speech when he contemplates the assassination of Duncan. Ambiguity here does not lie in the single metaphor but in the syntax:

[14]

If it were done, when ’tis done, then ’twere well
It were done quickly; (1953:49).

[15]

That tongue that tells the story of thy days
(Making lascivious comments on thy sport)
Cannot dispraise, but in a kind of praise,
naming thy name, blesses in all report (1953:50).

The ambiguity is brought about by a difference of reading. The lines may have one meaning when read without treating the first line as an enjambment, and another when it is not treated as such. In [15] we have an example of the ambiguity of grammar, where the full-stop pause may be put before the third line, or after it. Depending on where the stop is put, the subject of the verb ‘blesses’ can be either ‘tongue’ or ‘naming’, and the phrase “but in a kind of praise” may qualify either the verb ‘blesses’ or ‘dispraises’. The importance of the awareness of these devices is particularly useful in managing the sonnet form because they help it to combine variety of argumentation and the close-knit rhythmical unity of a single thought”.

Following that is the ambiguity where the meaning comes out of the context. A line or sentence may have a certain meaning when read in relation to the preceding one, and a different one when read in conjunction with the antecedent one, as in this excerpt:

[16]

Who lets so fair a house fall to decay,
Which husbandry in honour must uphold
Against the stormy gusts of winter’s day

And barren rage of death's eternal cold?

Or none but unthrifths, *dear my love you know*,

You had a father, let your son say so (1953:52).

The phrase "dear my love you know", read with in connection with "O none but unthrifths" would mean "you know unthrift". In other words it would stand like an extraposition in that line. Puns and shifts of feeling also give rise to other forms of ambiguity in the above passage. Since this type of ambiguity proliferates into a number of others, relativisation of clauses, change of objectivisation by elision of punctuational pauses, extrication of sentences from the context, ellipsis of lines, parallelism, paradox, emendation of words in a text because of the rhyming of words, and many others, it will suffice for our purpose to leave it at the examples given above, so that we can proceed to the next type of ambiguity. However, we wish to observe that this type of reading can be adopted in the transcription of 'oral' poetry to the written form, which relies heavily on punctuation and the division of lines rather than vocal pauses, rise and fall of pitch, tone and so forth. The marking of the end of lines is purely a subjective matter, and can only be guided by certain syntactic and semantic rules.

Empson continues to explain that: "An ambiguity of the third type, considered as a verbal matter, occurs when two ideas, which are connected only by being both relevant in the context, can be given in one word simultaneously. This is often done by reference to derivation" (1953:102). An example is given from Milton's "Samson Agonistes", in Samson's words, referring to Delilah, and another is taken from Satan's words to his legions in Milton's "Paradise Lost":

[17]

That specious monster, my accomplished snare (1953:102).

[18]

Ye, who appointed stand,

Do as you have in charge, and briefly touch

What we propound, and loud that all may hear (1953:103).

In [17] the word 'specious' means both 'beautiful' and 'deceitful' simultaneously, and 'monster' means "something unnatural" and "something striking shown as a sign of disaster", functioning as puns, while in [18] the three lines have a

pun with a twist of irony. The irony lies in the way the words could be interpreted by Satan's legions and the angels [God's]. Apropos of this Empson explains that:

I want to insist that the question here is not of 'consciousness' of a device as a whole, but of consciousness of a particular part of it ... A pun may be justified to the reader, so long as its two parts have not strong associations of their own and do not suggest different modes of judgement, by saying two things, both of which were relevant and expected, or by saying what is expected in two ways, which, though different, are seen at once to come to the same thing (Empson, 1953:103-4).

Another type of pun arises out of the evocation of two meanings by using the actual meaning to bring out other associations, or deriving two meanings from the derivation of a word [it is not clear whether Empson means etymological or grammatical derivation here]. At times ambiguity may come about through other figures of speech, paradox hyperbole, alliteration, 'idiom', symbolism, and allegory. Of the above the latter type needs some attention.

Empson explains that allegory is "a matter concerning whole states of mind, and occurs when what is said is valid in, refers to, several different topics, several universes of discourses, several modes of judgement of feeling" (Empson, 1953:111). By this he means that an allegorical narrative is normally used to convey a particular meaning, it may be used to have different meanings, or as an illustration of different moral points or didactic purposes. This would of course be a deviation from the general norm of using allegory, and Empson does emphasise that: "It is not, of course, the normal use of allegory to make a statement which is intended to have several interpretations. The normal use is to tell a homely story and make clear that it means something else, something, for instance, religious or political, but not both; so that there is only one meaning, which the first meaning is frankly a device to convey" (Empson, 1953:128).

The above reading of ambiguity, that is, of the third type, can be effectively used in a poem [71] analysed by Jordan (see section 4.2.2.2). On the surface, the persona in the poem is talking about three towns (Rhini, Qonce and Tinarha) where he saw and heard (two senses implied - synaesthesia) a big bell chiming the sixth hour, and men starting to work at its prompting. Jordan explains the second level of meaning, but it is not as explicit as Empson's idea of the ambiguity defined above:

A mighty bell is six o'clock!

I went to Rhini and found the men
Driven by six o'clock;
I went to Qonce and found the men
Toiling at six o'clock;
Back at Tinarha, I found the men
Bullied by six o'clock (Jordan, 1973:22).

Jordan merely explains that the boy is mocking the men when he realises that they are also vulnerable, and bend under the tyranny of the bell. He does not explain explicitly how the irony works. The poem does not say exactly what it means, but this comes out through the ambiguity of irony. It is only when one considers that the direct meaning and the ironic ones are relevant and reconciled in the context of the statement that the ambiguity becomes clear, as Empson explains. We shall refer to this and other types of ambiguity later when we deal with Jordan's analysis.

The relevance of this approach to ambiguity can also be pertinent to oral poetry if the maxim that while the purpose of praise poetry is not only to praise but to criticise its subject is accepted. It must be admitted that it can only do so through such figures of speech as pun, irony and paradox. In cases where these figures are used as devices, the student or reader of praise poetry should be well informed in the way in which they function, and Empson's three types of ambiguity so far discussed can be helpful.

The next ambiguity is slightly more complicated than the third type. Empson says that "an ambiguity of the fourth type occurs when two or more meanings of a statement do not agree among themselves, but combine to make clear a more complicated state of mind in the author" (1953:133). Examples are drawn from Shakespeare's "Sonnet lxxxiii":

[19]

I never saw that you did painting need,
And therefore to your fair no painting set,
I found (or thought I found) you did exceed,
The barren tender of a Poet's debt:
And therefore have I slept in your report,
That you yourself being extant well might show,
How far a modern quill doth come too short,
Speaking of worth, what worth in you doth grow,
This silence for my sin you did impute,
Which shall be most my glory being dumb,

For I impair not beauty being mute,
When others would give life, and bring a tomb.
There lives more life in one of your fair eyes,
Than both your Poets can in praise devise (1953:133).

The lines in the above poem may be read in different ways. Line 2 may be read so that it goes with lines 1 and 3, and in this case it reveals the poet's concern with the addressee (third-person 'you'), who is said to be a young man: "I did not praise you in verse because I did not see that your reputation could be set any higher by my praise". The two implications here, in connection with the phrases, "being fond of praise" and the word 'never', are: "*never* 'until you told me to praise you' ", and "never 'until I found you out' ". But when line 1 stands alone the meaning could be: " 'And so, when no painting had been set to your fairness' (paint to your cheeks or to a portrait, praise to your beauty or to your virtue, apology to your vice), 'I found that you exceeded' " (1953:134). This would cause a comma to be put after the connective 'therefore', and make lines 2 and 3 stand together.

When coming to line 4 the word 'tender' may mean both "offered payment of what is due", and "person who looks after", and the whole line suggests that: "I found you were worth more than the normal compliments due from a hired poet to write eulogies of you" (poet's debt), and "I found you gave me more than you need to have done" (debt owed by a poet), resulting in the two meanings: "You were treating me as a friend, not as a poet", and "you were more than I could describe".

The fifth line is said to refer back to all the first four lines, and starts off a new quatrain. As a result 'therefore' should be read as parallel to the same word in the second line, and also as referring forwards to the following line. The words "I have slept in your report" in that line may mean any or all of the following: "I have stopped writing about you", "I have stopped contradicting rumours about you", and "I have bolstered up my faith in you by accepting the public's good opinion about you". The word 'extant' may mean "visible, or successful and respected", or "the subject of scandal". The last line of the second quatrain may be referring backwards and forwards, and would respectively mean: "A modern quill comes too short when attempting to write of as much worth as in you", and "talking of worth, are you worth of anything, now, frankly".

The twelfth line, which closes the third quatrain, can be read as an antithesis: "When others would bring life, I, if I wrote about you, would bring a tomb", and "when others would try to write about you, I would try to give you life, and thereby bring you a tomb". Empson introduces "Sonnet xvii" to give a further clarity on the meaning of the word 'tomb' as Shakespeare used it:

[20]

Who will beleeve my verse in time to come
If it were filled with your most high deserts?
Though yet Heaven knowes it is but as a tombe
Which hides your life, and shows not halfe your parts (1953:137).

The initial use of the word has connotations of praise, “when the metaphor is repeated, this time without being explained, it has grown dark with an incipient double meaning”, and this double meaning is: “I should fail you, now that you have behaved so badly to me, if I tried to express you in poetry; I should give you myself, and draw from my readers, a cold and limited judgement, or blame you without thinking of the living man”. However, we are reminded that these meanings can be ‘detached’ if only they are “dissolved into the single mood of the poem” (1953:138).

According to Empson, “an ambiguity of the fifth type occurs when the author is discovering his idea in the act of writing, or not holding it all in his mind at once, so that, for instance, there is a simile which applies to nothing exactly, but lies half-way between two things when the author is moving from one another” (1953:155). Examples are drawn from *Measure for Measure*, and *'Tis Pity*:

[21]

Our Nature do pursue
Like Rats that ravyn downe their proper Bane
A thirsty evil, and when we drinke we die (1953:155)

[22]

GIOVANNI. Now, now, work serious thoughts on baneful plots;
Be all a man, my soul; let not the curse
Of old prescription rend from me the gall
Of courage, which enrols a glorious death:
If I must totter like a well-grown oak,
Some undershrubs shall in my weighty fall
Be crushed to splits; with me they shall all perish (1953:155)

In [21] the word ‘proper’ may mean “suitable for rats” (poison) and “right and natural” (water). In the latter sense there may be allusion to drinking water, which in the above context may refer to drinking water, “a healthful and natural human

function, which it is intolerable to avoid, and which brings death". Thus "proper bane" means both 'water' and 'poison'.

In [22] the ambiguity is focused on the word 'gall': *Gall* is first used as "spirit to resent insults", the bitterness of which is a proper part of the complete man ... by the next line *galls* have suggested oak-galls (the reactions of an *oak* to irritation), and the idea of proper retaliation is transferred to its power of *falling* on people, whether they are guilty of wrongs against it or not". An ambiguity which is more clearly defined is that which issues forth from the expression "which enrolls a glorious death" - "a glorious death may be enrolled on the scroll of fame", when the word is read as it stands on its own, but if it is taken to be referring backwards, then the meaning is that "one may gain strength for a *glorious death* by being bathed in, sustained, by a spurt of bitterness, so that *gall* has been *rent* ... by being *rolled* in, or round about, by *gall*", and it "may be the *oak* itself which *rolls* down, both to death and upon its victims".

The ambiguity of the fifth type seems to have the potential to be useful in the criticism of oral poetry, especially because the praiser, being an oral composer, cannot have a prepared script, but renders his composition as it is being composed, thus he is bound to discover new ideas in the act of composition, and some words uttered may not necessarily mean or have one particular meaning. This seems to be in keeping with what Opland (see section 5.3.1.2) suggests, that some repetitions may serve as a technique to help the composer, and are in most cases unnecessary. This is also close to the next ambiguity, of the sixth type.

Empson says that this ambiguity "occurs when a statement says nothing, by tautology, by contradiction, or by irrelevant statement; so that the reader is forced to invent statements of his own and they are liable to conflict with one another" (1953:176).

[23]

No apple-tree, no wall of peaches, had not been robbed, nor any Tyrian rose-garden, for the glory of Miss Dobson's cheeks. Her neck was imitation-marble, her hands and feet were of very mean proportions. She had no waist to speak of (1953:177).

[24]

Ah moon of my delight that knowest no wane,
The moon of heaven is rising once again;
How oft hereafter rising shall she look
Through this same garden after me, in vain (1953:182).

[25]

But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott? (1953:182).

In [23] the negative in the first sentence suggests the meaning: “no, the tree had not”, and gives it the opposite meaning. In the second sentence “her neck” can mean that it “could only imitate marble”, but it is not certain whether it was “imitating *imitation-marble*?”. The adjective ‘mean’ may mean ‘medium’, ‘small’ or “without quality”, since “waist is at once flesh and absence of flesh”. Thus the last two sentences leave the reader with doubt as to whether they mean that “her beauty was unique and did not depend on the conventional details”, or that “these parts of her body were, in fact, not good enough to be worth mentioning”, or that “they were intensely and fashionably small”. This is an example of ambiguity by tautology.

In [24] and [25] we have the examples of ambiguity by contradiction. In this case the poet makes a point and includes a statement which denies it [24] or ask a question whose answer can be both negative and affirmative at the same time [25]. In [24] the theme of the poem is “the inevitability of death [mutability]”, but in the first line the poet contradicts this point by saying that “one or other of the persons concerned is not changing”. The Lady of Shalott is “not *known* personally to anybody *in all the land*, but everybody *knows* of her as a legend”.

The next example is of ambiguity by tautology, in which the use of a pun twice is an essential characteristic:

[26]

Whereas my birth and spirit rather took
The way that takes the town,
Thou didst betray me to a lingering book,
And wrap me in a gown.
I was entangled in the world of strife
Before I had the power to change my life (1953:183).

[26b]

Yet though thou troublest me, I must be meek;
In weakness must be stout.
Well, I will change the service, and go seek
Some other master out.

Ah, my dear God, though I am clean forgot,
Let me not love thee, if I love thee not (1953:183).

In these lines 'betrayed' and 'entangled' bring forth the ambiguity. The first meaning is that the speaker was "*betrayed* into the life of contemplation", and the second meaning that he was "entangled in the life of action". As a result he is unable to know how to change his life, although he knows that he has the ability to do so.

In the first line 'meek' may mean that "he *must* endure what God puts upon him", and 'stout' may mean that "he *must* endure it bravely". But the third line introduces a turn of face, "some hint of revolt", leading to expression of doubt in the closing couplet, with 'forgot' referring to either 'God' or the 'world', 'now' or 'later', in "consequence of *seeking* or not *seeking another master*, of loving or not of *loving God*". The ambiguity by tautology is in the ultimate line, which comes out by a play of tenses of the word 'love', so that its first instance is in the future, and the second in the present, giving forth a possibility of several meanings (I have added numerals to highlight them):

[1] "If I have stopped loving you, let me go; do not make me love you again in the future, so that I shall regret it if I return to the world. Allow me to be consistent, even though it means an entire loss of your favour" ... [2] "Do not let me spend my future trying to love you, loving you in will and in deed but not in the calm of which so few are worthy. Do not make me hanker after you if I would be better under some other master elsewhere; even though this would mean you must forget me altogether" ... [3] And yet, though you have already clean forgotten me, let me not love you in achievement if I do not love you in desire" (Empson, 1953:183-4).

The final kind we would like to deal with under this category of the sixth type is ambiguity by irrelevant statements. In this ambiguity there is a presence of various implications with meanings which are at conflict with each other. But the contradiction is not a central one, and can be resolved. An example is taken from *Othello*, Act five scene two:

[27]

It is not the Cause, it is the Cause (my soul),
Let me not name it to you, you chaste starres,
It is the Cause. Yet Ile not shed her blood,

No scarre that whiter skin of hers, then Snow,
And smooth as Monumental Alabaster (1953:185).

The stress may either be on 'It' or on 'Cause'. If on 'Cause', then the meaning would be: "It is not the act of murder that horrifies me here; it is the cause of it". But if the stress is on 'It', there is cause to wonder what that 'it' was which is causing the torment, and the passage gives us "only the 'irrelevant' statement that it was the *cause*". The 'cause' then lacks any primary meaning because there is no other information given except the irrelevant, thus it opens itself to a number of interpretations and assumptions: "his [Othello's] blackness" or "the universality of human lust". The phrase "will not shed her blood" may mean: "If she [Desdemona] is chaste, it would be to stain her with the blood hidden in her", or "if she is guilty, it would be to stain Othello himself with the blood of Desdemona". The contradictions in this type of ambiguity are resolvable in so far as there is an underlying assumption that the reader understands more than what the text has given, and has to "guess by sympathy the way the contradiction must be resolved".

The final type of ambiguity comes about when "the two meanings of the word, the two values of the ambiguity, are the two opposite meanings defined by the context, so that the total effect is to show a fundamental division in the writer's mind" (1953:192):

[28]

No, no: go not to Lethe, neither twist
Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine:
Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kissed
By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine;
Make not your rosary of yewberries,
Nor let the beetle nor the death-moth be
Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl
A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;
For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
And dull the wakeful anguish of the soul.

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,

Or on the rainbow of the salt sand wave,

Or on the wealth of globed peonies (1953:215-6).

In [28] the opposition of ideas includes death and the sexual act, uniting in an antithesis of Melancholy and Joy: The woman is at the same time “mistress ... to whom one must yield” and “mother ... soothing and exciting”; there is a desire for “eternity of fame” and “irresponsibility of oblivion”; ideal beauty is ‘sensual’ and at the same time ‘fleeting’; “weeping produces the flowers of joy which are themselves sorrowful”; the ‘green’ of the hill is significant of “young, fresh and springing”, and at the same time “age, mould and geology”; “April is both rainy and part of springtime”; “shroud, an anticipation of death that has its own energy and beauty”, suggesting that the hill is either hidden or “under green”, meaning either “give in to sorrow, at the mortality of beauty”, or “defeat sorrow by sudden excess and turn it to joy, at the intensity of sensation”; and “Morning is paralleled to April and pun with mourning”; and the flower represents “available forms of beauty” and “the mistress who is unkind”; ‘She’ refers to “thy mistress”, representing fleeting joy, and then “she becomes *Veiled Melancholy*” when the poem is taken as a whole unit; and so on.

These examples will suffice for our purpose, for this poem teems with an abundance of examples which Empson draws. And thus we conclude our discussion of the types of ambiguity. Though we have not given sufficient examples of application, the ambiguities from the fourth to the seventh types have the potential to be applied in the analysis of oral poetry. This is more so when we consider that an impromptu composition is bound to have irrelevant statements, and that new ideas which come later may render some statements or devices irrelevant, and also when we consider that in the praise which the oral poet or bard bestows upon the subject the praise may imply condemnation, thus here too we may find two opposite meanings reconciled. Empson’s analysis of figures of speech, images, symbols, metaphor, irony pun, antithesis, paradox, and onomatopoeia, as constituting some of the first type of ambiguity are the most obviously relevant to African oral poetry.

Not all of the types of ambiguity distinguished by Empson may prove to be useful in the study of oral poetry. Moreover, some of his explanations tend to slant into free association, as may be seen in the following assessment of his method, where it is maintained that in *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930) Empson “pursues to the furthest ends the implication, poetic and social, of difficult, witty, metaphorical poetry by a method of verbal analysis which often loses all contact with the text and indulges in private associations” (Wellek, 1963:345). However, in our opinion, his method of verbal analysis remains valuable because it draws attention to the richness

and semantic density of poetic language. We would like to argue, then, that any reader of poetry should at least be conscious of the possibility of multiple meanings in poetic language - what Empson would call the inherent ambiguity of poetic expression.

More important than the credibility of his so-called "private association" is his consideration of the 'objective structure' of a poem in the recognition of ambiguity. In this regard we may consider two poetic devices which feature prominently in Empson's discussion of different types of ambiguity: the awareness that lines may function independently as well as in conjunction with syntax; and his exploitation of forms of repetition. In our discussion of poem [14] above we have already seen how Empson exploits the device of enjambment to argue that 'well' could be assigned two different meanings, depending on whether it was considered as part of the first line only or whether it was understood as part of the sentence continuing in the next line. He also refers to examples where entire lines may be read in the different ways, because they could refer 'backwards' to a previous line or 'forwards' to a subsequent line. The recognition of enjambment or a double reference of poetic lines, could be a valuable tool in the analysis of poetry.

In some of the examples discussed by him, Empson also refers to instances where forms of syntactic or phonological repetition, or even the metre or rhythm of a poem, may enhance an awareness of some or other type of semantic ambiguity. This reminds one of Jakobson's explanation of the role of the equivalence principle in poetic language, where, according to him, the arrangement of words in parallel syntactic structures, or their drawing together by means of sound repetition, or even their appearance in similar metrical positions, may result in semantic equivalence. This principle is illustrated in Empson's discussion of ambiguity in the following lines:

[14a]

We there, in strife bewildring,
 Spilt blood enough to swim in;
We orphaned many children
 And widowed many women.
The eagles and the ravens
 We glutted with our foemen;
The heroes and the cravens,
 The spearmen and the bowmen.

(Empson, 1953:22).

In the last four lines of [14a] we find that nouns are arranged in equivalent positions, so that the reader is coerced into comparing, for instance, 'eagles' and 'heroes' and 'ravens' and 'cravens'. This is reminiscent of the manner in which the names of places, namely 'Rhini', 'Qonce' and 'Tinarha' are arranged in similar syntactic positions in the poem quoted earlier in this section and which is analysed by Jordan (section 4.2.2.2). What is additional in the poem quoted by Empson, is the fact that 'ravens' and 'cravens', due to the exploitation of sound repetition, are also arranged in equivalent rhyming positions at the end of the line. Jakobson would have described both the syntactic and phonological equivalence which associate the nouns with one another. Empson, in an analysis of what he terms 'false antithesis' and without even referring to parallelism or rhyme, notes that "... some reflection has been implied on the difference between heroes and cravens, on their equal deaths, and on the relations between eagles and heroes, ravens and cravens ..." (1953:22). We have already commented on the useful, though limited, functionality of Jakobson's equivalence principle for an analysis of African oral poetry (section 2.2.1.1). What concerns us here is the manner in which Empson's method of verbal analysis could be seen to be complementary to a typically Jakobsonian analysis of grammatical similarity and difference in poetry. Whereas Jakobson meticulously describes syntactic and phonological equivalence, Empson tries to lay bare the 'meaning(s)' of such similarity and difference. The advantage of combining these approaches in a study of African oral poetry should be obvious: on the one hand, recognition and description should result in explanation and interpretation; on the other hand, interpretation ought to be based on a careful analysis of 'objective' structural features such as various forms of parallelism or a poetic convention such as enjambment.

It is precisely this type of a reasoned interpretation based on careful analysis of various types of poetic structure that characterises the method of reading and appreciating poetry which is demonstrated in a textbook such as *Understanding Poetry* (1938). We continue then, with a discussion of Cleanth Brooks' contribution to New Critical analytical practice.

3.2.3 Cleanth Brooks (1906-)

Brooks was educated at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, and Tulane in New Orleans University where he took an M.A. degree in 1928. He was a Rhodes scholar at Oxford, Exeter College where he graduated with a B.A. (honours) and BLitt in 1931 and 1932. Then he went to teach at Louisiana State University in

1932, but only to move on to Yale where in 1960 he became Gray Professor of Rhetoric. Between 1935 and 1942 he co-edited *The Southern Review*, with critic Robert Penn Warren. The *Review* played a major role in the Southern literary renaissance and development of New Criticism. It was in the *Review* that Brooks advanced New Criticism, and also in his critical works (1938; 1939; 1943; 1945; 1947; 1957; 1963; and 1978). He was also Library of Congress fellow from 1951 to 1962. Between 1964 and 1966 he was cultural attaché at the United States embassy in London.

The two major influences on Brooks were the works of T. S. Eliot and I. A. Richards, and the group of Southern Agrarians at Vanderbilt. He is regarded as the “systematiser and technician” of New Criticism. His *Understanding Poetry* (1938) became popular in American colleges and universities, and provided techniques for poetry studies. *Understanding Poetry* (1938, 1950, 1960 and 1976), being one of the his most extensive studies of poetry, will be used as a major reference in the case study.

Brooks’ terminology was borrowed mainly from Richards. He used the terms paradox and irony, applying them in his analysis of poetry which ranged from Shakespeare’s works to Eliot’s. His major theoretical contribution to New Criticism is summarised in the concluding essay in *The Well Wrought Urn*, entitled “The Heresy of Paraphrase” (Brooks, [1947] (1971:157–175): the idea that the meaning of a work of art cannot be paraphrased; the meaning of a poem is embedded in what is not translatable, its words, their sound, rhythm and arrangement, its “sensory embodiment”. Altering that embodiment is tantamount to producing another poem or something which is not a work of art at all. The critic can at best point to the objective features of a poem that seem to him to be worthy of attention. He confined himself to the analysis of concealed meanings in relationships and metaphors and key words, but also allowed himself to make value judgements. His main theoretical thrust was that irony is the characteristic of poetry, distinguishing itself by ironic structure and paradoxical language but not other characteristics. The meaning of a poem could not be changed, and a poem was not paraphrasable because in a good poem meaning and form were inextricable, changing one word would result in changing the meaning of a poem. He suggested that lyrical poetry should be read as a play, and the reader should recite as a character in a play but not try to emulate the poet. He asserted that every individual poem was autonomous, thus devaluing historical and biographical investigation.

Brooks collaborated with Robert Penn Warren in his methodology of the study of poetry. Warren was a novelist and poet, the first person to be made poet laureate of the United States, on February 26, 1986. He was celebrated for his

intervention in the discourse of moral dilemmas of the South, when its traditional values were threatened and encroached upon by Northern industrialism.

Like Brooks, Warren was also educated at Vanderbilt University, which he joined in 1921 and where he graduated in 1925. There he became a member of the Fugitives, and also joined a clique of Southerners who published a journal called *I'll Take My Stand* in 1930. This work jealously defended the right of the South to maintain its agrarian life. Warren subsequently went to the University of California at Berkeley where he graduated with an M.A. degree in 1927, and then went to Yale and Oxford.

For twenty-seven years from 1930 he worked in different colleges and universities. He collaborated with Brooks on *Understanding Poetry*. From 1944 to 1945 he was consultant on poetry for the Library of Congress, and from 1951 to 1956 he taught play writing at Yale. Then he spent most of his life at Fairfield in Connecticut. Some of his novels were made into film, and he won the Pulitzer prize three times, in 1946 for fiction and in 1958 and 1979 for poetry. At the time he was made poet laureate, in 1986, he was the only person to have won the Prize in two categories. He dedicated most of his later energies to poetry, and died in September 1989.

3.2.3.1 The nature of poetry

Some aspects of Brooks' view of the nature of poetry are more akin to the Formalists' than any of the New Critics', as we shall indicate in this discussion. According to him poetry has similarities with ordinary discourse, but differs from scientific language in that it does not aspire for absolute precision in its expression. Its language is embedded with emotional expression, while that of science, to the contrary, strips itself of "all associations, emotional colourings, and implications of attitude and judgement" (Brooks and Warren, 1976:6). There is also present or implied in poetry the 'sayer' who may be either unidentified, clearly identified by the first-person point of view, or fused with the identity of the poet, through the tone, style and basic feeling of the poem. This is akin to the distinction which the Formalist-Structuralists draw between scientific and poetic language, especially Mukařovský's differentiation between the informational and aesthetic functions of language (see section 2.2.3.1). The notion of the 'sayer' brings to mind previous coincidences with Jakobson's communication model to which we have referred in relation to Opland's consideration of such elements as the bard's voice, gesticulations and pitch as important communicative features in an oral rendition of a poem. Discussing the manner in which feelings may be seen to be an integral part of the

meaning to be conveyed in “most ordinary communication”, Brooks and Warren note that a hearer unconsciously relies heavily on so-called non-verbal elements (we have termed them ‘extratextual’ in our discussion of Formalist principles in the second chapter) : “Usually a hearer unconsciously bases much of his definition of ... communication, not on the words themselves, but on the gestures, tone of voice, and facial expression of the speaker, and on what he knows about the speaker” (1976:5). We shall return to the function of such performative elements in our discussion of African oral poetry in the fourth and fifth chapters. We continue with our discussion of the manner in which the nature of poetry is defined in *Understanding Poetry*.

The nature of poetry lies in “the way of the saying” and the “nature of the said”. This is what makes it distinct from other forms of language. Some of its indispensable distinctive features are: imagery, marked aural rhythm, rhyme, tone, theme, and statement, including non-verbal structures such as feelings and attitudes. Rhythm and rhyme, though not peculiar to poetic language, are its *sine qua non*, and metaphor is part of both the way of saying and the said, in that there is a relationship between metaphor and its referent. These are defined as follows: “We take metaphor as whatever kind of aura exists around literal aspects of the world; rhythm as including phonetic qualities in general, with such things as rhyme, alliteration, and sound variation; and statement as literal content, including objects, facts, events, and ideas” (Brooks and Warren, 1976:11). All these form a unified whole - vital unity, in a poem. Once again the similarities are apparent with the Formalist-Structuralist’s view, in that the “way of saying” is the self-reflective feature of poetry - a foregrounding, and *density*, which attracts attention to the poem as a sign (see section 2.2.2.1).

The elements of poetry do not merely stand together to form a particular structure, but have more significance because of the integral relationship between them to form meaning, an idea reminiscent of the Formalist-Structuralist idea of the inextricable relationship between structural parts of a whole system. However, a difference with Formalist-Structuralism has to be underlined, namely that Brooks’ thesis involves reference to the world outside the text:

The poem, in its vital unity, is a ‘formed’ thing, a thing existing in itself, and its vital unity, its form - embodies- *is* - its meaning. Yet paradoxically, by *the fact of its being ‘formed’ and having its special identity, it somehow makes us more aware of life outside itself*. By its own significance it awakens us to the significance of our own experience and of the world ... they are poetic because they contribute to the total significance of the passage (Brooks and Warren, 1976:11).

In this assertion there is both a denial and assertion of some principles of Formalist-Structuralism. The latter are not concerned with meaning, and the referential world of the text, though they are indeed concerned with the structure or form.

Another intrinsic aspect of poetry which is identified is its dramatic mode. The “stuff of poetry”, a phrase which Brooks and Warren resort to, is its dramatic presentation of what it says. It deals with particular situations, with implied or explicit narrative. This is a modification of their idea of ‘statement’. Brooks and Warren suggest that though poetry states something, it does not purport to state a ‘truth’ in the abstract sense, or truth in the empirical sense, but truth as experienced, something which man has experienced. Poetry is concerned with “something other than providing information or stating some abstract moralisation ... whether realistic or fantastic, whether concerned with apparently trivial or highly important matters, arise out of, and ‘say’ whatever they say through, dramatic situation. In a sense, they are not accurately described as ‘statements’ at all” (Brooks and Warren, 1976:48). We are here reminded of Mukařovský’s view that poetry is not subject to the ‘truth’ test (see section 2.2.3.2), and that its informational aspect is subordinate to its artistic value.

This could be useful in the analysis of oral poetry. Though oral poetry gives certain historical information or reflect upon some historical events, the poeticity of its statement of fact should not be equated with truth, or should not be put to a truth test. The oral poet may embellish the truth and express his own feelings and judgement, thus foregrounding the way of ‘saying’, and turning the said into a kind of stepping-stone, or vehicle, to arrive at the ‘saying’. We shall now proceed to look at Brooks’ reading of imagery.

3.2.3.2 Images (metaphor and symbol)

According to Brooks imagery is an indispensable element of poetry, and in it are embedded appeals to the senses; sight, smell, sound, sensation of taste and touch. It is the image which elevates the poem to a higher level of more than mere statement: “Images, properly selected and presented, would stir the reader’s imagination and thus ‘say’ more than an explicit statement” (Brooks and Warren, 1976:70), and they carry the subjectivity, the organically related elements, feeling, attitude and mood, of the speaker towards his subject, since poetry is not a scientific or clinical statement of fact, as Kunene puts it, “the poet is an artist, not a chronologist” (see section 5.1). There does not seem to be any disparity between the

New Critics' and the Formalist-Structuralists' view of imagery and its effect, and also with the view of the analyses of oral poetry which will be discussed in chapters four and five, especially with regard to Jordan's, Cope's and Kunene's analyses.

Brooks' examples of images are drawn from a variety of poems ranging from earlier Japanese poetry to Elizabethan Sonnets. Here are some illustrations:

[29]

A crow is perched
Upon a leafless withered bough-
The Autumn dusk (1976:69).

[30]

Even in the flashing
Of the lightning that does not linger
Even for a moment,
The very number of the drops of rain
Could be counted on the leaves of plants (1976:69).

[31]

Flickering of incessant rain
On flashing pavements;
Sudden scurry of umbrellas;
Bending recurved blossoms of the storm (1976:70).

In poem [29] the crow perched on a bough is said to suggest loneliness, "the pathos of the end of season, or some related mood". Here we realise that images can also suggest mood, attitude and emotions. Poem [30] is said to be the most objective, and the sudden flash of lightning may suggest that "a sudden fleeting insight may provide a profound revelation".

In poem [31] 'flickering' is said to suggest that it is a day of sun and rain, and "another shower has evidently just begun". 'Blossom', refers to the umbrellas, which are 'recurved', that is, like flowers turned upside-down, "just the opposite of corollas of natural flowers. For the stem of a flower ends in an open floral cup, whereas the 'stems' of the umbrellas end in a 'corolla' which is curved upon itself - that is, 'convex' (1976:70-1). Umbrellas are thus compared to flowers by the use of imagery. Obviously, this comparison could easily be described in Richards' terms of the umbrellas being the tenor, therefore indicating the actual subject of the poem, whereas the flower represents the vehicle, or what the subject is compared to. The

reference to 'flickering' as a verbal metaphor reminds one of Empson's analysis of the first type of ambiguity and our comment in that regard, that the verb as metaphor is yet to be explored as a tool in the analysis of oral poetry. Similarities with previous theorists notwithstanding, we shall adhere to Brooks' and Warren's general observations regarding the function of imagery in poetic texts, without indicating how the parts of the image could be analysed.

Another illustration of the use of images in poetry is drawn from the famous poem by Ezra Pound, entitled "in a Station of the Metro":

[32]

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough (1976:71)

But here the interpretation of the images resorts to an autobiographical explanation by the poet, where he explains the setting and event which inspired the poem, culminating in a circumlocutionary explanation which "suggests some of the ways in which Imagism is related to painting, an art in which the artist sets down images in line and colour", and that "we see to what pains he has been to keep himself as observer out of the poem".

According to Brooks there are a number of ways in which images can be employed in a poem. The poet may use a consistent series of related images to carry an idea or 'argument', as in Campion's "Follow thy sun, unhappy shadow" [33], or break down the continuity but conclude with an image which refers back to the initial image, or use one image to summarise the mood of a whole poem, and in certain cases this is done by using a series of different images which built up to one final image, as in Alfred Tennyson's "Dark House" [34], in which the final stanza concludes with such an image, and John Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" [35]:

[33]

Follow thy fair *sun*, unhappy *shadow*,
Though thou be black as *night*,
And she made all of *light*,
Yet follow thy fair *sun*, unhappy *shadow*.

Follow her whose light thy *light* depriveth
Though here thou liv'st disgraced,
And she in *heaven* is placed,

Yet follow her whose light the *world* reviveth.

Follow those pure *beams* whose beauty burneth,
That so have scorched thee,
As thou still *black* must be,
Till her kind *beams* thy black to brightness turneth.

Follow her while yet the glory *shineth*:
There comes a luckless *night*,
That will dim all her *light*;
And this the black unhappy *shade* divineth.

Follow still since so thy fates ordained;
The *sun* must have his *shade*,
Till both at once do fade,
The *sun* still proud, the *shadow* still disdained (1976:215).

[34]

He is not here; but far away
The noise of life begins again,
And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day (1976:237).

[35]

But we may love, so much refined,
That ourselves know not what it is,
Inter-assurèd of the mind,
Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss (1976:240).

In the quoted stanza of poem [34] the image of the drizzling rain summarises “the sense of bleakness and loss which the bereaved speaker feels. The fact that the poem is peculiarly bare of imagery sets off the concluding image with special force” (1976:237). Poem [35] is the concluding stanza of a poem in which Donne uses a variety of images, and closes with one image, which aims at a “total validation of what has gone before” (1976:241). Another example with an image of this nature is drawn from Herman Melville’s “Commemorative of a Naval Victory” [36], in which the final stanza introduces a twist of irony in the pleasure of the naval victory which

is celebrated by the whole poem. This is achieved by the use of the summarising image:

[36]

But seldom the laurel wreath is seen
Unmixed with pensive pansies dark;
There's a light and a shadow in every man
Who at last attains his lifted mark-
Nursing through night the ethereal spark.
Elate he never can be;
He feels that spirits which glad had hailed his worth,
Sleep in oblivion.- The shark
Glides white through the phosphorous sea (1976:238).

The first two stanzas of poem [36], of which only the third and last is quoted above, celebrate victory, but the stanza quoted above suggests that there is a 'shadow', which is explained by the last three lines, namely, that those who are supposed to enjoy the celebration of this victory have died. This is encapsulated in the image of the shark - "There is the image of the white shark that suddenly appears like a shocking vision across the scene of 'festal fame', the savage creature drawn to the bleeding bodies of the wounded and dying in the sea, the image of evil" (1976:239). The idea of the carrying over of a 'thematic' argument through images is, though remotely, reminiscent of Jakobson's idea of the principle of combination and selection, in the sense that an image which is carried over or extended can only be read as such in the context of other selections of images (paradigmatic), in opposition to isolated images.

According to Brooks images are not restricted to evocation of perception through sight, but also evoke all the other senses - touch (tactile), temperature, smell (olfactory), and sound (audile or auditory - the former being a term which was used in Psychology). An example is drawn from Keats' "The Eve of St. Agnes" [37], where images used are 'unclasps' (touch), "warmed jewels" (temperature), "fragrant bodice" (smell), and 'rustling' (sound):

[37]

Of all its wreaths pearls her hair she frees;
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one;
Loosens her fragrant bodice; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees (1976:251).

Metaphor, similes and symbols are but types of imagery. The difference between the two is that symbols can at times be read literally, whereas metaphor cannot. An illustration is drawn from Robert Frost's poem, "Desert Places":

[38]

Snow falling at night fast oh fast
In a field I looked into going past,
And the ground almost covered smooth in snow,
But a few weeds stubble showing last.

The woods around it have it - it is theirs.
All animals are smothered in their lairs.
I am too absent spirited to count;
The loneliness includes me unawares.

And lonely as it is that loneliness
Will be more lonely ere it will be less-
A blanker whiteness of benighted snow
With no expression, nothing to express.

They cannot scare me with their *empty spaces*
Between stars-on stars where no human race is.
I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with *my own desert places* (1976:203-4).

In these stanzas [38] the phrase "benighted snow with no expression to express", may be read literally. Though the adjective 'benighted' is often used with reference to human beings "living in ignorance", and "no expression to express" referring to a "bemused or benumbed person whose face wears no expression", they are used here with a symbolic significance, which can be read literally. The snow may be said to be virtually overtaken by darkness - "snow under the night", while the phrase "blanker whiteness" of this snow has "no expression".

But to the contrary, metaphor, which comes from "a Greek verb meaning 'to transfer' ", cannot be taken literally, as in "my own desert places" and "empty spaces". The transference which has occurred here is that of taking one experience into a different context. The former phrase thus refers not to "that great hole in my head" but to "that sense of terrifying emptiness that I find within my own spiritual

being - that lonely void in my psyche" (1976:205). Another definition of metaphor which Brooks borrows is that metaphor is "any replacement of one word by another, or any identification of one thing, concept, or person with any other" (1976:206).

Brooks argues that metaphor and symbols are often used together in poetry, but it is essential for the reader to be able to distinguish between the two. Symbols 'work' but metaphors 'transfer'. The symbol retains the same context while the metaphor transfers a word, image, or concept into another context, so that the interpretation becomes different from the original context. This is how we understand Brooks' meaning. He admits, nevertheless, that there may be an overlap between the two, and a metaphor may be argued to be a symbol, and vice versa. Simile is a kind of metaphor, but is easier to distinguish because of its use of 'like' and 'as'.

3.2.3.3 Rhythm, rhyme and metre

Rhythm is defined as the aspect which intensifies imaginative involvement in a poem by being an essential part of the 'forming' process, and the general emotional associations which it evokes. It is composed of "phonetic qualities in general, with such things as rhyme, alliteration, and sound variation" (Brooks and Warren, 1976:11). It can be easily grasped by a loud rendition or reading of a poem, to:

Listen to it as an aspect of the total experience of reading ... opening yourself as fully as possible to the movement of the language, trying to discover its basic quality. One fact to be discovered in reading aloud is that you physically participate in the rhythm and other aspects of the sound the poem makes ... you are, as it were, an echo, an amplifier, a sounding board for the poem even as you intellectually and emotionally respond to it (Brooks and Warren, 1976:49).

One important addition to this definition is that rhythm is not a particular or given element of a poem, but "an aspect of a total and expressive whole, and is closely associated with metre, though not all rhythmic poetry is metrical. The latter point seems to be an echo of Richards' view of rhythm as discussed above, though there is a clearly marked difference between their view of rhythm. While Richards regards Sense and Feeling as indispensably associated with Intention and Meaning, and undermines its physical qualities, Brooks' emphasis in its definition is its physiological aspect, its sound effect, and underplays its relationship with meaning, as revealed in the above quotation. He does, however, associate rhythm with

expression of feeling, but he is very tentative about this: "If rhythm is an important aspect of all discourse and if it has, even in prose, an important expressive function, one would expect it to be even more important in poetry" (Brooks and Warren, 1976:494).

Brooks' and Richards' view on the loud reading of a poem as a necessary means of determining rhythm are in accordance with each other. Brooks also takes it that the discussion of rhythm leads inevitably to that of metre, even though he agrees with Richards when he says that "even though all poetry is rhythmical, not all poetry is metrical" (Brooks and Warren, 1976:50).

Let us consider in passing some of Brooks' definitions of metre, an aspect which Richards desists from considering in detail. First of all he regards metre as synonymous with verse - "since verse is merely metrical discourse of meter" (Brooks and Warren, 1976:495). He follows the classic approach of metre, which defines it in terms of the beat of accented and unaccented syllables (iamb/feet). We need only mention them here rather than discuss them in detail. He distinguishes a number of types of 'feet': Monometer (one foot), dimeter (two feet), trimeter (three feet), tetrameter (four feet), pentameter (five feet), hexameter (six feet/Alexandrine), and heptameter (seven feet).

Of importance perhaps is the two sets of general rules which he sets in connection with scansion of metre, which we shall refer to without recourse to the examples which he gives. The first are:

1. Every foot we mark should have one primary syllable and only one.
2. Every foot has one or more unaccented syllables. If it lacks any, the missing syllable should be indicated by a caret in order to show that the foot is defective.
3. Let us always try to keep the treatment of variations, substitutions, and other literary devices as close as possible to the established metrical pattern (Brooks and Warren, 1976:504-5).

The second set of rules to observe are:

1. Remember that *sound*, not *spelling*, counts in scansion ... 2. In determining the meter (kind of foot and number of feet to a line) in order to scan a poem, one should take the poem as a whole and not merely a line at a time, for the lines may not be metrically identical.

One should try thus, to get a sense of the basic pattern. Always one should read a poem aloud, to establish the initial acquaintance. Any line of a poem, it must be remembered, may be irregular - even the first line (Brooks and Warren, 1976:505).

Closely associated with metre and rhythm is rhyme, which is defined as “a correspondence between the accented syllable of two or more words (*grow-know, rebound-astound*)” (Brooks and Warren, 1976:522), whose function is to establish unity a unifying form, and marks the end of lines. Like metre, it has to do with sound rather than spelling. There may be rhyme placed within a line instead of at the end (internal rhyme). This mainly works through the harmony of vowel sounds (assonance), or merely through repetition of sounds (alliteration), or a more rare form where the harmony is on consonant sounds (consonance). The latter’s function is similar to that of rhyme, to link lines. Respective examples are taken from Milton’s and Pope’s “Paradise Lost” for alliteration [39], and “The rape of the lock” [40] for assonance, and Auden’s “Poem III” [41] for consonance.

[39]

Hast thou *forgot* me then, and do I seem
Now in thine eye so *foul*, once deemed so *fair* (1976:524).

[40]

Or Alum styptic with contracting pow’r
Shrink his *thin* essence like a *riveled* flow’r
Or, as *Ixion* fixed, the wretch shall feel
The *giddy* motion of the whirling Mill ... (1976:524).

[41]

You are the one whose part it is to *lean*,
For whom it is not good to be *alone*.
Laugh warmly turning shyly in the *hall*
Or climb with bare knees the volcanic *hill* ... (1976:525).

We have already mentioned (see section 3.2.1.2) that among analysts of oral poetry there is a divergence of views as to the presence of rhythm and metre in this genre, and this will become evident in the following chapter. But so far as we can judge, the above discussion of rhythm and metre is irrelevant to the study of African oral poetry, for in the languages which we deal with in the fourth and fifth chapters

the accent on syllables is a foreign concept, as opposed to English. Sesotho, isiZulu and Setswana are tone languages; and accent on the syllable is not a functional feature, as Kunene affirms (see section 5.1).

The view that there is no rhythm and metre in oral poetry, as understood in European poetry, is a widely held one. It was expressed, amongst others, by the renowned Zulu scholar, B. W. Vilakazi, in his study entitled "The Conception and Development of Poetry in Zulu". After a lengthy discussion of how rhythmical and metrical patterns function in Classic poetry, he asserts that "Zulu has none of these outward decorations. The primitive poet did not think of reducing his words to written form, but composed as he was impelled ... A perfect scheme is found as found in Classic, and with some disciples of this scheme in European poetry is secondary, it is acquired through study and training" (1938:111). This was later supported by D. K. Rycroft, a keen commentator on Nguni tone and music, in an essay entitled "Melodic features in Zulu Eulogistic recitation" (1960). Rycroft was analysing musical features such as syllabic division, tonal patterns and levels of pitch in the recitation of *izibongo* as compared with normal speech and music. He made the following observation: "Regarding metre ... fundamental distinctions could be cited between practices in song - where syllable length is often distorted for metrical ends - and in *izibongo*, where such things as regular 'feet' are not to be found, but rather 'free rhythm' of speech" (1960:77). Damane and Sander (1974), in their study of Sesotho oral poetry, also suggest that: Lines, like stanzas, are units of meaning. Although there is no strict metre to which they conform, most of them are of roughly the same length and contain either three or four stressed syllables" (1974:52).

The fact that rhyme and metre seem to be largely absent from this genre, or the fact that language specific features prevent the use of such phonological structural elements according to the criteria used in 'Western' criticism, should not blind us to the fact that sound repetition, as well as rhythmical patterning, may function uniquely in African poetry.

In a study of 'modern African poetry', as opposed to studies on praise poems, J. M. Lenake in fact discusses the possibility of rhyme and rhythm in K. E. Ntsane's poetry, simultaneously outlining the difficulties caused by specific elements which are peculiar to the structure of African languages. Commenting on the fact that rhyme does not function in isolation, but that the African poet might find that it needs "a measure of syllabic symmetry" (Lenake, 1984:151) to complement the device, he outlines the difference with the manner in which rhyme and metre function in a Western language such as English, as follows:

However, if a poet avails himself of devices that do mark the rhythm of his verse lines (such as rhyme), it could be expected that he should heed some other rhythmic markers such as a certain measure of syllabic agreement and, together with that, a tonal pattern that contributes to the acoustic coherence of the poem. These two markers hang together. Dissimilarities in the number of syllables to a verse line will increase the possibility of tonal discord. (Lenake, 1984:152)

It should be clear from the above that a proper consideration of a unique exploitation of 'rhyme', 'rhythm' and even 'metre' in African oral poetry would require the combined efforts of the linguist as well as the literary critic. As we shall see, then, in our analysis of case studies from African criticism in the fourth and fifth chapters, the presence of rhyme, rhythm and metre is either rejected as untypical of African poetry, or otherwise unconvincingly 'applied' in terms of Western criteria that are insensitive to the structure of African languages.

We may note here, that without referring to him at all, Cope appears, in fact, to be considering all aspects distinguished by Jakobson in his formulation of the equivalence principle (see section 2.2.1.1): his "repetition in various guises" includes both syntactic and phonological forms of parallelism. All the above elements for a proper consideration of a unique exploitation of 'rhyme' and 'metre' in African oral poetry, would, however, require the combined efforts of the linguist as well as the literary critic.

3.2.3.4 Intention and meaning

The attitude of the speaker in the poem towards his subject and audience is expressed by tone. This implies that there is a three-dimensional implication in poetry. There is an implication of the presence of a speaker (sayer), the subject (the way of saying), and the audience. The latter may be in the poem, or the reader for whom the poetry is written. The central point of this relationship is the tone, which "indicates the speaker's attitude toward his subject and toward his audience, and sometime toward himself" (Brooks and Warren, 1976:113), it is "an indication of the meaning of the poem" (1976:115), and the meaning is for the reader. On the whole, tone "also has much to do with the emotional power of the poem and its claim upon our sympathies" (1976:128). The above supports the view expressed earlier, that the New Critics did not eschew the reader, but have assigned an interpretative active role for him or her. Brooks here goes beyond the Formalist-Structuralists in his insistence that tone (an emotive aspect) can be analysed; we are nevertheless

reminded of Jakobson's recognition of emotive communication, despite his emphasis on the autonomy of the poetic function. We have already referred to the relevance of the emotive function in regard to especially an understanding of the message conveyed in an oral rendition of a praise poem (section 2.1.1.2). We shall return to this aspect in our discussion of the criticism of African oral poetry in the fourth and fifth chapters.

Illustrations of how tone functions are drawn from the "Western Wind":

[42]

Western wind, when wilt thou blow,
The¹ small rain down can² rain?
Christ, if my love were in my arms
And I in my bed again! (1976:138).

The poem is said to be characterised by a "pure lyric cry, the naked expression of feeling". There is a noted contrast of tone between the first and second lines on the one hand, and the fourth line on the other, while the third line is said to denote a transition from the mood of the first two to the fourth line. The former lines "give the pure romantic cry, the appeal to the wind and the rain that they come to relieve the aridity and deadness of the lovers' loneliness". The third line continues this plea in an 'expansive' manner, with the exclamation 'Christ' sustaining the excitement, together with the phrase "in my arms". The latter has a romantic implication. The fourth line changes the tone by introducing a realistic and literal implication, making the whole poem 'credible' and 'acceptable'. This line introduces a context which makes the poem believable, what is referred to as "poetic sincerity".

There can be various forms of tone suggesting various moods. Another example is drawn from Samuel Johnson's "To a Young Heir" [43], whose theme is money and property. It dramatises the fortune of a young man who has inherited some fortune, at twenty-one, and soon falls into debt due to extravagance, and as a result has to sell his forebears' estate. The tone is said to be satiric, "indulging in serious mock-commendation", and ironic consolation of the heir by the poet or sayer:

[43]

Wealth, my lad, was made to wander,
Let it wander as it will:
Call the jokey, call the pander,
Bid them come and take their fill (1976:147).

Tone is the bearer of mood, and “has its special effect and important effect on the theme” (1976:267), and “mood implies an idea, and an idea implies mood” (1976:268). This indicates the interrelationship between these elements in a poem, in a manner which is reminiscent of Richards’ idea of the functions of sense, feeling, intention and tone. Though he does not use Richards’ concepts, Brooks’ ideas are akin. He suggests that the meaning or theme of a poem is not given as an element, nor is it stated, but it is dramatised as an experience, so that it pervades the whole poem, and when we discuss it as one aspect we are actually abstracting from the poem, of which it is an integral part. So in doing this we ought to be fully aware of the implication of this, for it is the reader who abstracts meaning and puts it in the form of a statement. The role of the reader is once again emphasised.

The theme, as part of a whole, is made up of the different aspects - mood, rhythm, imagery, and others - “an organic unity in which all the elements are vitally interfused”. The theme is an idea dramatised, embodying an “attitude towards life”, “a comment on human values”, and “an interpretation of life”. Theme is defined in these terms:

The common ground is the understanding of the fact that, insofar as a theme is coherently developed through a poem, insofar as it actually flowers from the whole process of the poem, *we are witnessing and taking part in the great human effort to achieve meaning through experience ... a poem is, in this sense, an image of our life process - and that, an enlightening image of ourselves* (Brooks and Warren, 1976:270).

Thus a poem does not state its idea either as a topic or as a slogan. However, some poems may put their meaning in the form of a statement, as in Longfellow’s “Psalm of life” [44], but generally the meaning may not even be present in words but may be weaved into the general mood of the poem, as in Keats’ “Ode to Autumn” [45], of which Brooks quotes only one stanza, and James Shirley’s “Death the Leveler” [46]:

[44]

Life is real! Life is earnest!

And the grave is not its goal;

Dust thou art, to dust returneth,

Was not spoken of the soul (1976:267).

[45]

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bossom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'erbrimmed their clammy cells (1976:87).

[46]

The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, and not substantial things;
There is no armor against Fate;
Death lays his icy hands on kings:
Sceptre and Crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade

Some men with swords may reap the field,
And plant fresh laurels where they kill:
But their strong nerves at last must yield;
They tame but one another still:
Early or late
They stoop to fate,
And must give up their murmuring breath
When they, pale captives, creep to death.

The garlands wither on your brow;
Then boast no more your mighty deeds!
Upon Death's purple altar now
See where the victor-victim bleeds.
Your heads must come

To the cold tomb:
Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in their dust (1976:271).

Brooks explains that in the above [45] “there is no statement of an idea, a theme”, but it is embedded “in the general mood, built up by the rhythm and imagery ... to an idea, a theme” (Brooks and Warren, 1976:268). With reference to [46] the explanation of the theme is suggested as follows:

In order to come to terms with the essential theme of this poem, the reader should pay careful attention to imagery. He should notice in particular, the way in which the peasant and the king are defined by their implements, by the sword on the one hand, and by the scythe and spade on the other. (The poet emphasizes this point by describing the warrior’s action as a kind of planting and reaping-activities like the peasant’s. The warrior “reap the fields” of battle and, in achieving fame, they “plant fresh laurels”, the trees from whose leaves the garlands for the victor were woven) (Brooks and Warren, 1976:272).

Since poetry was initially defined as a way of ‘saying’, and the imagery as part of the ‘said’, and that there was an implication of the ‘sayer’ in poetry, who has a tone, an attitude etc., we therefore see the interrelationship of all these aspects in Brooks’ conclusion: “What is a theme then? It is what the poem ‘says’. It is, as we have said earlier, the *total meaning* of a poem ... the total meaning of a poem resists being reduced to a statement, even a considered and carefully thought-out statement ... Thus the images, the tone, even the metrical patterning can qualify meaning significantly” (Brooks and Warren, 1976:311).

The idea of theme or ‘argument’ as a pervasive feature is another feature which is still to be explored in the analysis of oral poetry. It is another area of analysis which presents a strong case for the adoption of Western standards on African poetry. We shall illustrate this point in chapters four and five. The general tendency which leads to the neglect of a closer analysis of this aspect is the implicit fallacy that the sole function of praise poetry, and therefore theme is to praise.

3.3 Conclusion

We wish to conclude this chapter by suggesting that there are some aspects of Western critical methods which coincide with those of African oral poetry, and on

the other hand there are those which do not and cannot be useful. In the former respect we have seen how figures of speech, irony, metaphor, simile, personification, symbolism, paradox, hyperbole, antithesis, and poetic devices such as repetition are found in both Western and African poetry. These are features which are universal to human language. An interesting element which the New Critics have introduced in the analysis of poetry is the insistence that poetry is something to be 'experienced' by the reader or the listener. Despite the 'formalistic' nature of their analyses, then, they seem to have anticipated at least some of the aspects characterising the shift to reader response analysis which became prevalent in the literary theory since the sixties. We already noted the importance of the addressees (both subject of the poem and listeners) in an oral rendition of a praise poem. Obviously, the active participation of the reader, in the sense of being able to arrive at an informed assessment of a poem's meaning, is also important for a study of African oral poetry. The New Critics also made a contribution which overlaps with the Formalist-Structuralists', concerning the difference between poetic language and science prose.

This, as we have already stated, is another distinction which the critics of African oral poetry could do well to borrow in the finer definition of the nature of this genre. Looking at approaches by individual theorists one can note that Richards' concepts of Sense, Intention, Feeling and Tone can be useful, for oral poetry is not bereft of these aspects. Furthermore, there is the potential to explore Empson's ambiguities, which may in some cases be relevant, while in others not. We shall attempt to explore this possibility in the fourth and fifth chapters. However, among the irrelevant and irreconcilable are rhyme, rhythm and metre, which are definitely not found in African oral poetry. They thus cannot be used as tools to analyse this poetry, and they highlight the difference between English and African languages.

This difference simultaneously highlights the necessity to explore a different angle in the debate regarding Western critical methods as opposed to an African aesthetics referred to in the first chapter. A thorough analysis of language specific elements in African languages, and hence a possible unique exploitation of sound and rhythm in African (oral) poetry, could result in an important contribution to so-called 'Western' theories underlying critical practice. Although developing an exhaustive theory for the study of African oral poetry is not part of our project, we wish to point to this possibility in considering a syncretic approach in the search for an African aesthetics in future research.

CHAPTER 4

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter we would like to discuss critical methods of three critics on South African oral poetry written in African languages - I. Schapera, A. C. Jordan, and A. T. Cope. As stated in the first chapter, the choice of the critics and their critical methods has its shortcomings. However, there is a guiding principle, and that is, the attempt of this thesis to set the critical methods applied to South African poetry written in African languages through a period of time against the critical methods discussed in the second and third chapters of this thesis. These three critics cover the period from the 1930s (Schapera), through the 1950s (Jordan) up to the 1960s (Cope). In a way the first two, Schapera and Jordan, are contemporaries of Empson and Brooks, and also overlap with Jakobson, Mukařovský and Richards. Cope stands in transition to Kunene (1970s) and Opland (1980s), who will be dealt with in chapter five.

Since the critics we have chosen to study in this chapter range over three decades, we hope that this discussion will also indicate whether there is a general principle guiding the critical methods used in the study of this literature, and whether there is any evolution apparent with respect to the theoretical and critical methods thus applied. This exercise, as indicated in the abstract, also seeks to establish whether the debate on the search for a poetics of African languages literature in general, and oral poetry in South Africa in particular, has any hope of realisation in the actual practice. As we did in the previous chapter, in this discussion we shall give the general biographical background on the critics concerned and then analyse their criticism as case studies, and in the process set them against the theoretical and practical approaches discussed in chapters two and three of this thesis.

Besides ranging over nearly three decades the works we have chosen straddle across the two major groups of languages in South Africa, Nguni and Sotho languages. Thus our choice can claim representativeness, to a large extent. Schapera's work, which will be studied in this chapter, *Praise Poems of the Tswana Chiefs* (1965) is a work on Tswana oral poetry, while Jordan's, *Towards an African Literature* (1973), is mainly a study of Xhosa oral poetry, though he gives examples from other languages, and Cope's *Izibongo - Zulu Praise-Poetry* (1968), is a study of Zulu traditional poetry, *izibongo*, as the title indicates. The same representative

nature applies in the fifth chapter, with Kunene's *Heroic Poetry of the Basotho* (1971) and Opland's *Xhosa Oral Poetry* (1983), analyses of oral poetry in Southern Sotho (Sotho group) and Xhosa (Nguni group) respectively. All translations of textual excerpts used, unless stated otherwise, are those given by the critics themselves.

4.2 Critical methods

The choice of critical analyses in this chapter differs from those in the second and third chapters mainly in one respect, that they can be assigned to a group only in geographical terms but do not belong to any particular school of thought in the classic sense. The common denominator which justifies the classification of their studies under one thematic discussion is the subject matter of their genre, which deals with a regionally circumscribed kind of poetry in terms of the medium in which this poetry is written, or rendered, African languages spoken in South Africa, belonging to the South Eastern Bantu group. This is of course not meant to imply that oral heroic or praise poetry written in the Southern Bantu languages, Nguni (Xhosa and Zulu in this case) and Sotho (Southern Sotho and Tswana in this case) is different from the oral poetry of other regions in Africa and elsewhere. But what is of importance for the purpose of this thesis is to study ways of reading already established, or beginning to develop; thus we limit ourselves to case studies, since our interest is to work from the particular to the general, so that we can find specific results as to the general debate on methods of literary analysis.

Although the four critics we have chosen do not belong to one given school of thought which can be given a title such as Structuralism, Formalism, Marxism or New Criticism, we are working on the assumption that every critical act has certain underlying trends which determine the critic's stand vis-à-vis other critical methods. And this is what this thesis also seeks to determine. There is also some underlying ideological and philosophical principles, or even sociological views about this genre, which are either explicitly or implicitly stated, or betrayed by any analysis.

Cope suggests that "although the praise-poem is biased towards praise, it gives an accurate account of the chief's personality and actions, without which it would not fulfil its function as an agent of conformity to the approved pattern" (Cope, 1968:31). From the above definition of praise poetry, so far, it seems that the only characteristic in which it distinguishes itself from other forms of poetry is its content, more than its stylistic features. As far as its stylistic features are concerned there does not seem to be any strikingly unique feature defined. Thus the question which we would like to pose, in anticipating a full analysis of praise poetry, is

whether its analysis can be totally different from the analyses of the theoretical approaches studied in the second and third chapters, and whether there are any suggestions supporting some of the arguments stated in the first chapter, namely, that 'Western' standards or critical canons can be evolved.

The main feature of praise poetry as defined by Schapera and Cope, is that it consists mainly of the indispensable persona, the *imbongi/seroki* or praise singer, his subject, the chief, and the audience. We have already referred to the adaptation necessitated by these basic elements, when considering Jakobson's communication model with its six factors and corresponding functions (section 2.2.1.1). The peculiar role of the praise singer in regard to this relationship to the chief (which may be both the subject of the bard's praise and his most important addressee) is interesting in that it combines the referential and emotive functions distinguished by Jakobson - although the content of the praise song is at least partially based on known facts about the 'history' of the chief and the tribe, it is presented with a specific slant, which may convey both explicit praise and implicit ironical comment to the addressees (which, in turn, may include both the chief and the audience). Thus, in terms of Jakobson's model we may summarise here the adaptations required by the communication situation of an oral rendition of a typical praise poem: the slot of the addresser is filled by the *imbongi* or praise singer in an oral rendition and by the poet in a written transcription of the poem; the *message* is the praise poem itself, whether presented orally or in writing; the addressees include both the chief and the listeners in oral rendition and the chief and the readers in the written form of the poem; the *context* refers to what Kunene defines as "the situation he is talking about"; the *code* refers to the language used and the *contact* to the channel through which the praise poem (i.e. the message) is relayed - in an oral rendition the latter will be determined by performative features such as the bard's voice and facial gestures, as opposed to a written form, where the printing provides the channel of communication.

4.2.1 Isaac Schapera (1905--)

Isaac Schapera was an anthropologist, born in South Africa and educated there. He graduated with an M.A. degree at the University of Cape Town, and then went to the London School of Economics and Politics where he took the PhD degree. He returned to South Africa to teach at the University of Cape Town until 1950, and from there returned to Britain to teach at the University of London from 1950 until 1969.

His research work was influenced in the direction of structural and functional analysis by his instructors, Radcliffe-Brown and Branislaw Malinowsky. The thrust of his work tended to favour Radcliffe-Brown's theories of acculturation theories over Malinowsky's ahistorical model. Schapera's bias in his works placed emphasis on the empirical and historical perspective. The major works he published are *A Handbook of Tswana Law and Custom* (1938), *Praise Poems of Tswana Chiefs* (1965), *Rain Making Rites of Tswana Tribes* (1971), and *Kinship Terminology in Jane Austen's Novels* (1977).

4.2.1.1 The context of Tswana praise poetry

Schapera defines the nature of praise as "a form of traditional literature common in all clusters of Southern Bantu (Nguni, Tsonga, Sotho, and Venda). The Tswana term *mabôkô* (singular: *lebôkô*), a name derived from the verb *-bôka*, "honour by giving to a person in poems; sing the praises of", and as to the purpose and content he says that "they are composed not only about chiefs, headmen, famous warriors, and other prominent tribesmen, but about ordinary commoners also, including women ...". The point concerning women is denied by Opland, who says that "the man who runs away from a fight is looked upon as a woman, and women have no praises" (see section 5.3.1.1). Notwithstanding this diversity of opinion, it is worth noting at this point that the content of the praise poetry may be as varied as that of any poetry analysed by the Formalist-Structuralists and New Critics, which is dealt with in the second and third chapter. Thus, the validity of the assertion that the praise poem is a genre *sui generis* simply because of its central subject matter, the chief, is nullified.

According to Schapera, one needs to understand more than the language in order to have a full grasp of Tswana praise poetry:

To understand praise-poetry one does not merely have to understand their language [Tswanas], difficult enough though that may be. The poems abound in allusions to persons ... to places, to tribes, to subdivisions of tribes, to events, and to tribal customs and beliefs. If the chief praised ruled fairly recently, members of his tribe can generally understand the allusions. But even to them much of what appears in the praise-poems of earlier chiefs is nowadays incomprehensible (Schapera, 1965:25).

Following the above maxim, Schapera starts by giving a historical and cultural background of the Tswana people; tracing it back to about the year 1500, before they broke up into a number of groups such as 'Rolong', 'Hurutse', 'Kwena', and 'Kgatla'. This background is used in order to explain afore-mentioned allusions to historical events and characters. However, praise poems ought not to be understood as historical chronicles *per se*, as has already been asserted previously, and Schapera himself also concurs with this view when he says, "they are not so much epitomes of tribal history as clues to that history; all of them require a good deal of explanation, and none is in itself a sufficient source of information about the topics with which it deals". For instance, if we look at the third excerpt [49] below, which Schapera gives as an example of Tswana praise poetry, we find that knowledge of the person referred to in the proper noun 'Mabule' is of very little significance. What the text says about him can be read in the text. Our hypothesis is that a rigorous study has to go beyond merely finding historical elements, but has to look at the structure in a manner that will guide comparison with other poetic texts, so that a clear comparison of methods of analysis can be made. We shall continue with Schapera's analysis, as this thesis is attempting to do.

4.2.1.2 The poetic structure of praise poetry

According to Schapera the recurrent subject of the praise poem is the chief, and the purpose is mainly to praise, but criticism is also implied: "The content always includes eulogies of the chief, though sometimes also ... direct or implied criticism of his conduct or disposition". If this assertion is true, it means that the scope of the content, being so narrow, will determine the form, by restricting its variety, as Schapera suggests (quoting Casalis, a missionary anthropologist) it has "but little variety because the subject is almost always the same".

Referring to the praises of chief Molefi he says that in the beginning a single theme is developed coherently, and the "successive passages are conceptually related, and there is not surprising transition from one to the other". But as the poem develops it becomes difficult to see why a certain sequential order has been kept, why "any particular passage should occur where it does". A transposition of these parts would not disturb "balance and purport of the poem". Lestrade is then quoted to support this view:

The praise-poem is made up of a succession of praise-stanzas, linked together only in their general application, but not in their specific

meaning, and following each other in greatly varying order in different versions of the same praise-poem (1965:10–11).

An example to illustrate the above point is taken from two versions of the same praise poem (Note that Schapera's translation of [47] is inaccurate, as is shown by the translation provided by Professor Lenake for the same lines.):

[47]

Morêna keênê otshwaëllwang
morena keênê, obolaya pele.

The chief is the one whom others follow,
he is the chief, he kills first (1965:13).

[The chief is the one who joins the loot,
He is the chief, he is given the first choice]
(Translation by J. M. Lenake)

[48]

Morêna keêne obolayang pele,
morêna keêne otshwaëllwang.

The chief is the one who kills first,
The chief is the one whom others follow (1965:13).

[49]

Megogolope yaMabulê yalwa,
omotsho okobilê omohibidu,
waosullhisa seêma kwamoragô,
waolebisa kwaborwa osianye.

The rooster of Mabule fought;
the black one drove away the red,
pushing it through the back fence
and making it run to the south (1965:13).

There is a version of this poem [49] in which “only the first two lines have been preserved, yet little of the effect is lost”.

According to Schapera, quoting Léstrade, the features which distinguish Tswana praise poetry from prose are “dynamic stress (metrical rhythm), parallelism, chiasmus and linking”, he also refers to Grant, who said about Zulu praise poetry:

Apart from the clear emphasis on the penultimate syllable of each word (a dominant characteristic of all Southern Bantu languages), additional emphasis fell periodically on the penultimates of certain words, each of which would be followed by a perceptible pause. Thus the poem was broken up into short phrases, each of which appeared to be uttered with one breath. A magnificent rhythm was in this way apparent to the hearer (1965:16).

The main features referred to above, namely, dynamic stress, chiasmus and stress (we shall refer to chiasmus/parallelism later) are concepts which have already been defined and applied by the Formalist-Structuralists and New Critics in their analyses of ‘Western’ poetry. Schapera’s definition of dynamic stress or metrical rhythm comes short of Richards’ and Brooks’ (see Richards 3.2.1.2 and Brooks 3.2.3.3), and does not add anything new to it. It is borrowed from Lestrade, who defines rhythm in terms of its sound patterns only, the emphasis on syllables, pauses between certain syllables, and the grouping of phrases. It is also reminiscent of Brooks’ definition, that “every foot we mark should have one primary syllable and only one ... every foot has one or more unaccented syllables ...”. Both Richards and Brooks are fully aware of the sound patterns, or “phonetic qualities”, but their definitions go beyond and refer also to the emotional aspect of it. Given our previously noted scepticism (see chapters two and three) regarding the applicability of this particular aspect to African oral poetry, we may observe that Schapera fails to expatiate on this aspect because it is actually not found in Bantu languages, as Kunene (see section 5.1) asserts with reference to Sesotho oral poetry.

Schapera further suggests that the lengthening of the appropriate vowel sound of syllables creates pauses which enable the reader to break the poem into lines or ‘verses’. In the following examples the accent [ˈ] indicates the lengthening of the vowel sound or syllable:

[50]

Maselláne letlápa leikádi,

Lesále leikála kwabadimong (Kgatla) (1965:16).

Maselane is a rock that spreads itself,
It started spreading itself from the ancestors
(Translation by S. L. Bogatsu).

[51]

Phologólo yaBotlhapatlóu túba,
khunou yanóka yaMetsemotlhába (Kwena) (1965:16).

The grey-black beast of Botlhapatlou,
The brown one of the rivers of Metsemotlhába
(Translation by S. L. Bogatsu).

[52]

Makába onakaládi ya Makapana
Nakaladi yaMosana kgethisa (Ngwaketse) (1965:16).

Makaba you are a 'monakaladi' (sweet wild plant)
Nakaladi of Mosana the tax collector
(Translation by S. L. Bogatsu).

[53]

Mmamathúla wagáka, mfetóla bátho,
ofetótse boMonábya basetsána (Ngwato) (1965:16).

Ma Mmamathula, you change people,
You have changed girls like Monabya and others.
(Translation by S. L. Bogatsu).

Schapera's analysis, though not concurrent with any of the analysts in this and the following chapter, seems to be useful in one main respect. Since the primordial form of oral poetry was not written but rendered verbally, the question of breaking parts into lines raises a problem, and his idea of the use of pauses as a marking point is helpful. The first line of the first poem [50] reveals a prominent feature of deviation from standard language through foregrounding, abuse of syntax, as Mukařovský (see section 2.2.3.1) put it. We have a sequence of three nouns in succession (*Maselane* = a personal name; *letlapa* = rock or stone; *leikadi* = something which stretches out or is spread across wide space), and this is definitely not a feature of the standard code in this language. Even in oral poetry this is a very

rare phenomenon. An awareness of the Formalist-Structuralist concept would have better informed Schapera's analysis. In poem [50] alliteration of the sound [k'] is a prominent feature, but Schapera does not comment on it either in his analysis. Though the sound /ll/ spelt as *le* in [50] is not necessarily a deliberate poetic device but a morphological and syntactic rule of concordial agreement, it can be regarded as a poetic device in relation to its context in the poem, since the language of the poem calls attention to itself as a sign.

Following on the above examples [50], [51], [52] and [53], Schapera asserts that the common structural feature of Tswana praise poetry is the number of words in a line. His assertion is based on a sample study of a number of poems:

A random sample of eight poems ... consisting altogether of 432 lines, showed the following distribution of words per line: two, 24; three, 188; four, 176; five, 42, six, 1; seven, 1. In all, 264 lines (84 per cent) consisted of either three or four words. This suggests that there is an optimum length to a line, which surely is not due solely to the necessity of pausing for breath (Schapera, 1965:16-7).

If Schapera had been aware of Jakobson's analysis in terms of the distribution of different parts of speech (see section 2.2.1.2), verbs versus nouns, pronouns versus adjectives, etc., he would perhaps have shown whether these constitute a recognisable pattern.

Another main feature of praise poetry is parallelism, which Schapera defines as follows: "*Parallelism*, defined by the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* as 'correspondence, in sense or construction, of successive clauses or passages' ... where in each pair of lines, the first halves are identical in wording, and the second are basically alike in meaning" (Schapera, 1965:17). This definition falls far too short of Jakobson's elaborate one, and we shall see how Schapera's lack of awareness of his analysis renders his reading superficial. His examples are drawn from the following praise poems:

[54]

letlhôla bommaêno gobeolwa,
letlhôla bommaêno go lala balla.

you foredoom your mothers to mourn
you foredoom your mothers to weep all night (1965:17).

[55]

mogatsa-Legwale gaabôné mōsese,
mogatsa-Legwale otshotse bothhoko.

Legwale's wife does not menstruate

Legwale's wife is afflicted with sorrow (1965:17).

In [54] and [55] we have examples of parallelism where the first phrases of the first line are identical to the first phrase of the second line *lethôla bommaêno*, (“You foredoom your mothers”) *mogatsa-Legwalê* (“Legwale's wife”) and *dile kwasakêng* (“they were in the kraal”). We have already commented on poem [55] (see section 2.2.1.2). Kunene, as we shall see later, refers to this kind of parallelism as “vertical-line” repetition (see section 5.2.1.5). We have already indicated in chapter two how Jakobson elaborates on this kind of parallelism in a more analytical manner. In [55] and [56] the third and second lines “repeat the thought, but not wording, of the first line”. In poem [54] the parallel structure, as Jakobson would read it, is structured through synonymy in “to mourn” and “to weep”, while in poem [55] it is structured in two ways, firstly, the hemistichs of the first and second line are similar, while the second distichs are parallel in terms of opposition - *mōsese* (‘dress’), a concrete noun, stands in opposition to *bothhoko* (‘pain’), an abstract noun. This analysis is helpful, in the sense that it helps to identify a dominant feature of this genre explicitly rather than in vague terms. We will realise this when we come to the next poem [56], which we have already referred to (see section 2.2.1.2), where the “parallelism synonymous” is a dominant feature in the repetition of the same idea in the words ‘watchman’, ‘caretaker’ and ‘guardian’, and in ‘homes’, ‘ruins’ and ‘houses’, also in the qualifiers, ‘deserted’ and ‘derelict’.

[56]

Moletl wamatlotla,
molebêlêdi wamarope abatho,
modisa wasope lagammaagwê,

Watchman of derelict homes,

caretaker of people's ruins,

guardian of his mother's deserted house (1965:17).

Here are further examples given by Schapera, in which some of the kinds of parallelism identified by Jakobson would have been helpful in analysing the structure:

[57]

*Tau tshêtlha yagamarutlha-letsôgô,
etshetlha yagamafafola-serope;
tau etshaba kaserope samotho,
etshaba kakoto lagaGaborêkwe,
kakoto lamonna wagaKgabo,
kakoto langwana wagaSebogiswê.*

The tawney lion tears off an arm,
the tawney one also rends a thigh;
the lion flees with a person's thigh,
it flees with the leg of Gaborekwe,
with the leg of a Kwena man,
with the leg of Sebogiso's child (1965:17-8).

The poem above [57] has a very interesting parallel structure. The second hemistichs of the two lines refer to parts of the body, 'arm' and 'thigh', both following parallel synonyms, 'tear' and 'rend'. The second hemistich of the third line forms what Jakobson would call trichotomy, for it carries over the parallelism by repeating the end of the hemistich of line two. The parallelism is sustained from the third line into the fourth and the fifth. The latter lines repeat the construction of the former, for they consist of the following grammatical syntactic structure, possessive concord *la-* ('of') followed by the prefix *ga-* (which translate better into French *chez*), and a proper noun. This as a result also forms a semantic rhyme. We also find anadiplosis in the parallel of *serope* ('thigh') in the third line, and *koto* ('leg') in the fourth. There are also other ways in which parallelism is structured in this poem. The noun *tau* ('lion') opens the first and the third lines, while the opening of the fifth and sixth lines are syntactically similar, but differ with the opposition of the nouns *monna* ('man') and *ngwana* ('child'). Let us look at other poems to see how dominant parallelism is:

[58]

*Gorilê Nkwatlê asutlha seêma,
asutlha kamoratwi, kaMorwamang;*

*Mokgadi leênê asutlha seêma,
ênê asutlha kaMmatlhabanêlô.*

When Nkwatle fled through the fence,
he fled with his beloved, with Morwamang;
Mokgadi, he too fled through the fence,
he fled, with MaTlhabanelo (1965:18).

In the poem above [58] the dominant parallel structure is linking (anadiplosis), where the end of the second hemistich of one line recurs at the beginning or in the first hemistich of the next line. This we find with the verb *asutlha* ("he fled"), which behaves in this manner twice, in the first and second couplets of the poem. We also find this kind of parallelism in the next two poems, [59] and [60]. The verb *kathiba* ("I blocked") in lines two and three [59] and noun phrase *kelegorwe* ("by a tree snake") and *kenoga etala* ("by a green snake") in [60] are parallel. The noun *batho* ('people') in the first hemistich of the first line forms a parallelism by its repetition in the second hemistich of the second line. We also find anadiplosis in poem [62], where the phrase *okobile maburu* ("has driven away the Boers") is carried over from the end of the first line into the first hemistich of the second line. The phrase *la se ka la* ("it did not") behaves in the same manner in poem [63].

[59]

*Kathiba eyang Motlhabatse,
ditsela tsabôôMatlhaku kadithiba,
kathiba tsela diyang Lehurutse.*

I blocked the path going to Motlhabatse,
the paths to the Matlhakus I blocked,
I blocked the paths going to Hurutseland (1965:18).

[60]

*Batho bakilê batsênwa kelegorwe,
kenôga etala, tliômaganya-batho.*

People were once attacked by a tree snake,
by a green snake, dodger of people (1965:19).

[61]

oêmê foo, ketlê kegolaêlê,

kegolaêlê, kegonêyê dikgang.

Halt there, that I may command you,
may command you and give you a message (1965:19).

[62]

*Gothwe Rramono okobilê Maburu,
okobilê Maburu kafaKayê.*

It's said that Rramono drove away the Boers
drove away the Boers at Kaye (1965:19).

[63]

*Galeakgoka leru la ga baboni ...
la hupalala la se ka la na pula,
la se ke la twe sepê (1965:40).*

The cloud of those who could see does not have water
It tightened its lips and did not give rain,
and none did anything to it
(Translation by S. L. Bogatsu).

As we have already mentioned, Schapera is superficial in his analysis of the structure of the poems he gave to explain his definition. If he had been aware of Jakobson's analysis, or adopted a similar approach, the generalisations which he makes about Setswana praise poetry would have been more fully substantiated, guided by well founded suppositions, based on deeper analysis. We can note here, that parallelism, in various forms, is a typical poetic feature of oral poetry, as we shall see in the subsequent readings in this and the following chapter. But we find that Schapera could have extended his notion of parallelism to syntactic parallelism. The dictionary definition of parallelism which he has given does not help us to have insight into other forms of parallelism than the obvious ones. At this point we can conclude that Jakobson's is the most appropriate analysis as far as oral poetry is concerned, at least so far as Schapera's examples are concerned. We shall try to find out if this can be extended to texts given by other critics in this and the next chapter.

4.2.2 Archibald C. Jordan (1906 - 1968)

Jordan was born in the district of Tsolo in the Transkei and received his education there. He then went to St John's College in Umtata where he took a teacher's diploma, and thereafter proceeded to The University College of Fort Hare on a merit scholarship to read for the B.A. degree. After that he went to teach at Kroonstad in the Orange Free State, and then Healdtown, and then back to Kroonstad again in 1936 until 1944.

In 1942 he graduated with the degree of M.A. in African Studies by correspondence at the University of South Africa. When Professor D. D. T. Jabavu retired in 1945 Jordan took his post at Fort Hare. Later he was appointed lecturer at the University of Cape Town at the School of Oriental and African Studies, and remained there until 1961 when he emigrated to the United States, where he taught at the University of California, Los Angeles in 1962, and went to take a professorial post at the University of Wisconsin in 1963. He died in 1968.

Jordan wrote a number of works, including a series of articles which were published in the literary journal, *Africa South*, in the 1950s, and later published as a book entitled *Towards an African Literature* (1971). This book is a study of oral literature - praise poetry, riddles, proverbs, and the history of Xhosa literature. He published two novels, one of them, *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya* (1940), which was translated into English by his wife, as *The Wrath of the Ancestors* (1980), and short stories entitled *Kwezo Mpindo zeTsitso* (1975).

4.2.2.1 The context of oral poetry

Jordan's discussion of oral tradition covers a variety of genres, and his analysis of oral poetry extends beyond Xhosa to other Nguni languages and dialects, and also covers the Sotho languages. His definition of praise oral tradition suggests that:

Like other people of the world, the Africans gave utterance to their deepest thoughts and feelings about those abstract and concrete things that came within their experience; to their speculation about the origin of things, including man himself and the universe; to their interpretation of the struggle between man and the mysterious forces that surrounded him, and to their admiration of those individuals of the human race to whom legend gave credit for the triumph of man over such forces; to their interest in the ways and habits of animals; to their traditional wisdom concerning conduct. Lastly, they gave 'concrete and artistic expression ... in emotional and rhythmical

language' to their admiration of collective and individual courage and achievement in the mighty contests between clan and clan, between tribe and tribe (1973:3).

Oral poetry is therefore part of a larger generic system embracing other forms like myths, legends, folk tales, animal stories, proverbs, songs and lyrics. It had a specific role, that of extolling the virtues of "a nation, a clan, a person, an animal, or a lifeless object" (1973:21). In his analysis of praise poetry, Jordan does not limit his scope to traditional poetry, but also undertakes a comparative study with modern poems such as those written by Mqhayi – hymns, which evolved as a result of acculturation brought about by Christianity. He compared the role of the praise singer with that of the new hymn composer. To this purpose he refers to earlier Xhosa hymns which were composed by the renowned Ntsikana, the first Xhosa convert, as it will be seen in this discussion. This approach is in keeping with his assertion that "the idiom, style, and technique of the traditional lyric are easily adaptable to new conceptions". This would seem to suggest that if this poetry is adaptable, then it can also adapt to new methods of analysis.

According to Jordan, although generally everyone was expected to know certain praises, either of their own families or of animals, the praise singer, or the "tribal bard" as he refers to the person whose role is to render praise poetry, was an important figure, for he held a certain status in society. He was the custodian of tribal history and lore - "he held a position of honour in his community". The subject matter of the poems ranged widely, including praises of domestic animals - "the family bull ... favourite family cow ... of certain species of animals and birds" and so forth. Not only men were expected to know praises, but every boy who did not know some praises was held in disdain by his peers.

The bard held an important position as the observer of events which affected the tribe as a whole, and the subject matter of his praises was concerned with chiefs, and dealt:

Primarily with happenings in and around the tribe during the reign of a given chief, praising what is worthy and decrying what is unworthy, and even forecasting what is going to happen: rivalries of the chieftainship within the tribe; the ordinary social life; alliances and conflicts with neighbouring tribes; military and political triumphs and reverses, etc. Thus the African bard is a chronicler as well as being a poet. The chief is only the centre of the praise-poem because he is the symbol of the tribe as a whole (1973:59-60).

According to Jordan praise poetry reflected certain historical events which took place, like the wars of conquests in the encounter between the indigenous people and the Europeans when they first subjugated the nations, reflecting the names of characters among the two groups - “governors, missionaries and magistrates ... reference is made to Smith (Sir Harry Smith) ... Kondile (Rev. Henry Calderwood) and Tshalisi (Hon. Charles Brownlee)”, and so forth. Some of these poems decry the evils which the Europeans brought along with them to the sub-continent, like “the white man’s liquor”, while others bestowed honour upon respected leaders, like chief Maqoma, “a great warrior and orator, the hero of the battle of Mthontsi” (War of Mlanjeni 1852). In this regard one would agree that there is a necessity to study specific historical or cultural phenomena which give rise to certain references in oral poetry, in order to understand them, as Schapera stated. However, this does not equip one with the tools to analyse the structure of this genre, and does not, *ipso facto*, present a case for eschewing Western standards, because every literary work drawn from history, Western or African, bearing historically or culturally specific references, calls for attention to extraliterary elements.

4.2.2.2 The structure of songs and poetry

In his definition of praise poetry Jordan asserts that it is:

A genre for which no exact parallel is to be found either in classical or in Western poetry. In spirit, content and form, it partakes of the features of the epic on the one hand, and of those of the ode on the other. In general, Bantu traditional poetry has much in common with Hebrew poetry. There is no ‘regular metre’ in the classical sense, but there is marked rhythm achieved, inter alia, by means of balance of thought (1973:17–18).

We wish to observe at this point that Jakobson made the same reference to Hebrew poetry in his analysis of Russian folklore (see section 2.2.1.2), and that he analysed a Hebrew song to show how parallelism is structured. Perhaps this point supports our view about the universality of certain aspects of poetic language, which become part and parcel of poetic device. Jordan draws a distinction between praise poetry on the one hand, and “lyric and dramatic verse” on the other. The latter

embraces different kinds of songs like love-songs, work-songs, and hunting-songs. He starts with a study of lyric and dramatic verse.

Dramatic verse is rendered in song, presented by a group with a leading soloist. There are songs in which the words are more important than the tune, and those in which words have no significance. In the former case the words "fit into the part sung by the leader, and the chorus takes up the refrain, either in some meaningful word or words related to the main theme, or in meaningless, monosyllabic ejaculations like *fa la la* or *ho ho ho* (we shall comment on this when we come to poem [68]), as in the following love-song, which Jordan quotes only in translation:

[64]

The far-off mountains hide you from me,
While the nearer ones overhang me;
Would that I have a heavy sledge
To crush the mountains near me;
Would that I had wings like a bird
To fly over those farther away (1973:18).

[65]

Shade wherein I rest when I am weary,
Fount whereof I drink when I am thirsty (1973:18).

[66]

No more daydreams, tall proud maiden!
 O father! O mother!
 Why marry me off so young?
Think of her who is not my mother,
 How is she likely to handle me? (1973:19).

[67]

Come, it is late in the day!
All those of my age are married,
And now I wander, wander all alone.
Hold back the sun that it may not go down
Without carrying the news (of my betrothal to some
one) (1973:19).

Poems [64] to [67] are love-songs, which Jordan classifies under the nomenclature “lyric and dramatic verse”. He informs us that in this poem [64] a Xhosa girl laments the absence of a lover, in [65] a Xhosa young man apostrophises the young girl he “looks forward to meeting” at the end of a day of hard work. In [66] and [67] there is expression of the proverbial dread of the mother-in-law by the daughter-in-law. In [66] a Hlubi girl mourns the prospects of matrimony, and she “would rather continue to enjoy her youthful freedom than get married”, while in [67] another poem a girl of the same clan expresses her fears with regard primarily to growing old and secondarily to getting married, for to her “the prospect of a cruel mother-in-law pales into insignificance as she realizes how fast she herself is aging”. Jordan suggests that the latter poem [67] is highly dramatic, describing the performance of the song as follows:

As they sing, the leader and the chorus hold their hands appealingly to one side, and they sway their hips from side to side with graceful modesty. Meanwhile the young men, who hum the bass softly in sympathy, walk slowly in a row along the line of girls and gaze tenderly into the face of each one, especially that one of the leader (1973:19).

This kind of analysis does not go into details with identifying structural features of these poems, [64] to [67], although of course the information given above is necessary in order for the reader to understand the physical performance of this song, so that where words do not give sufficient meaning the drama which makes up for that shortcoming should be understood. Two of these songs, [64] and [65], present an opportunity where some New Critical reading can be applied. A dominant feature of these poems is imagery. In [64], for instance, we have a metaphor or personification of the mountains in the intransitive form of the verb ‘hide’, for it can only be an animate or human being which can perform this act of deliberately concealing something. Though of course this may be a ‘dead’ metaphor (see Empson, section 3.2.2.1), which can be read literally. Richards’ definition of metaphor is also pertinent here. He suggests that metaphor does not simply present in concrete form that which is abstract, but it is also an “expression of the speaker’s attitude to his subject and audience, connecting things which are not related” (see section 3.2.1.3). In poem [64] the tone is elegaic, with the speaker regretting the fact that the mountain is hiding his beloved.

The dominant characteristic of poem [65] is imagery, specifically metaphor. The 'apostrophized' girl is metaphorically referred to as 'shade' and 'fount', metaphors which transfer qualities of a concrete object to another concrete one - animate concrete to inanimate abstract - 'shade'. Poem [67] is characterised by a lack of images, and if the New Critics' approach to imagery as the main feature of poetry is followed to its logic, then this poem can be said to be prosaic. Jordan's analysis does not present us with anything which could argue to the contrary.

We also find that Jakobson's analysis of parallelism could have been used effectively here, as we have already indicated (see section 2.2.1.2). Poem [64] is structured symmetrically, with each couplet or distich balancing - in the first we find that the noun phrases in the first hemistichs are similar, "The far-off mountains" and "the nearer ones", with an oppositional parallelism between 'far-off' and 'nearer', and the second hemistichs balance in the same way in the verb phrases, each using two pronouns, 'you' and 'me' (singular and plural), and 'ones' and 'me' (singular and plural) respectively. The next two couplets stand in symmetry, the first lines being identical, "would that I had", and the second line starting with verbs in the infinitive, "to crush" and "to fly over". The second distichs are also similar, "mountains near" and "those far" have two parallels, 'Mountains' is repeated, followed by an adjective, 'far', while the demonstrative pronoun, 'those', is followed by an opposite adjective, 'near' with an antonym. We have already discussed the structure of poem [65] and [67] under Jakobson's analysis. In regard to poem [65] we may add here only that the perceived semantic equivalence 'superimposed' onto 'shade' and 'fount' as a result of the pressure of the syntactic pattern, is corroborated by our suggestion above of a New Critical reading that would stress the fact that the apostrophized girl (the tenor) is referred to in terms of 'shade' and 'fount' (vehicles). Thus the imposed semantic parallelism in these two lines serves to strengthen the metaphorical relationship between the two vehicles characterising the girl. The structure of poem [66] seems to be asymmetrical, and parallelism is found only within the second line, where the masculine noun, 'father', is set against the feminine, 'mother'. There is yet another parallelism, in the synonymy of 'maiden' and 'young', where the adjective repeats the meaning of the noun, and the interrogative form of line three is repeated in line five. This analysis could have given us a sharper focus on the structure of parallelism, and as we can see, it already reveals similarities with the poems which Schapera analysed. Without using Jakobson's analysis these similarities might have remained unnoticed, or not so conspicuous.

Jordan continues to explain that there are also farewell songs which are sung by these young men when they leave home to hunt for big game, "they used to

announce their departure on such an expedition with a hunting-song”, like the “buffalo hunt-song” famous among the Hlubi and Zulus:

[68]

1. Ye ha he! Ye ha he!
2. A mighty whirlwind, the buffalo!
3. Make for young homes, you who fear him.
4. They chase them far! They chase them near!
5. As for us, we smite the lovely ones
6. And we leave the wounded alone.
7. Ya ha he! Ya ha he!
8. A mighty whirlwind, the buffalo!
9. The Zulu warriors used to salute their kings as follows:
Bayede!
10. Thou art the heavens,
11. Thou, elephant-born! (1973:20).

The exclamations in the first and the seventh line, which Jordan merely refers to as “monosyllabic ejaculations” could be seen in the light of Jakobson’s ‘contact’ or ‘phatic’ aspects, one of whose functions is to “endeavour to start and sustain communication” (see section 2.2.1.1). This explanation is even made more plausible because the persona is addressing the second person, whose attention is being called to the ferocity of the buffalo. The fourth line has an internal symmetry, which also has an antonymy, in ‘near’ and ‘far’.

When studying metaphors closely, one recognises Empson’s ambiguity of the second kind (see section 3.2.2.1), in ‘whirlwind’. In this metaphor both negative and positive qualities may be read. It may, at one level, be praising the buffalo for its strength, but at the same time be referring to its tempestuous and thus destructive nature. This ambiguity is reinforced by the qualities of the subject itself, the buffalo. As a quarry, it is worth a song, but when it attacks and injures the hunter, then it is in vain to praise it. This idea of ambiguity could be helpful in resolving ironies where the bard’s message can either be read as praise or reprimand to the subject.

The ‘buffalo’ imagery can also be analysed in Empson’s terms. It is referred to as the “mighty whirl-wind” (transference of the concrete to the abstract) in metaphor, and the king of the Zulus as ‘elephant-born’, a compound noun-verb metaphor. In [69] we find another metaphor, ‘first-born’, which can only be regarded as a metaphor in terms of Empson’s idea of ‘dead’ metaphor. ‘First-born’

may be at one level read literally to suggest that the subject of the poem is virtually the first offspring in the family, or it may be a metaphorical expression of certain qualities of his character which make him a worthy successor to the kingship not only by virtue of his birth but also by his deeds.

The following one [69] is a traditional 'prayer' offered to the royal ancestors, while [70] is an example of a Xhosa Christian hymn, composed by Ntsikana, based on the idiom, style and technique borrowed from traditional oral poetry, followed by one [71] composed, also on the model of traditional oral poetry, by the Xhosa 'modern' poet Rubusana:

[69]

Hear thou, O king, tallest among the tall!
Offspring of Madondo Gumede, most beautiful!
I linger here to beg of thee, first-born:
Let us weave us a rope, O'Mandi, son of Jama,
And go to heaven where the evil may not climb,
For should they try, they break their tiny toes (1973:20).

We have already commented in detail on the elaborate parallelistic patterns in the above poem [69] when we were dealing with Jakobson's types of parallelism (see section 2.2.1.2). Let us look at Jordan's analysis of the following poem:

[70]

Thou great God that dwelleth in Heaven,
Thou art the shield, the stronghold of truth;
'Tis thou, and Thou alone, that dwelleth in the
highest,
Thou the maker of life and the skies,
Thou the maker of the sparse and the clustered skies,
As the shooting-star doth proclaim.
The horn soundeth aloud, calling us
To Thee, great Hunter, Hunter of souls,
Who maketh one herd of friend and foe,
All covered and sheltered under Thy cloak.
Thou art the little Lamb, Mesiyas,
Whose hands are wounded with nailing,
Whose feet are wounded with nailing,
Thy blood that streameth for ever and ever

For the sake of us men was shed (1973:20–1).

[71]

A mighty bell is six o'clock!
I went to Rhini and found the men
Driven by six o'clock;
I went to Qonce and found the men
Toiling at six o'clock;
Back at Tinarha, I found the men
Bullied by six o'clock (1973:22).

Jordan informs us that before his conversion to Christianity, Ntsikana, one of the first Xhosa converts to Christianity, was a diviner and a leader of dance and song, who was “completely illiterate”, thus the hymn [70] “was accompanied by dancing and singing in the traditional manner”.

We find the metaphor ‘God’, and ‘Heaven’, which can also be read as hyperbole, followed by other metaphors, ‘shield’ and ‘stronghold’. The first pair of metaphors can only be read literally by a reader who is informed that the subject of the poem is ‘God’ literally but not a certain human being whose qualities are likened to God’s. This knowledge can be gleaned from the wider context of the text. In this regard the background information about the composer of this poem, Ntsikana, given by Jordan, may be helpful, although it is not necessarily a key to analysing the structure of this poem.

In Rubusana’s poem [71] the persona is a boy who has been to *Rhini* (‘Grahamstown’), *Qonce* (‘King William’s Town’), and *Tinarha* (‘Uitenhage’), and is amused to discover that “there are places in the world where these ‘Gods’ [men] are so helpless and powerless as to be enslaved by a mysterious sound named ‘six o’clock!’. We may note here that a strong feature of this poem is its variance of repetition and internal deviations within parallelistic patterns. Thus the repetition of ‘six o’clock’ serves to suggest the dominance of the bell in the lives of the people, whereas the variations serve to register the increasing power of the announcement of time, in that the parallel ‘driven’, ‘toiling’ and ‘bullied’ function almost like degrees of comparison, with ‘bullied’ assigned to the superlative position. It is precisely these ‘degrees of comparison’ that strengthen the suggestion that the boy is cleverly insinuating that he is “mightier than any man in the community”. This second level of meaning, the irony, can be explained more effectively if we were to think of Empson’s definition of ambiguity, that it can occur when “a word or a grammatical structure is effective in several ways”, where “there is an indecision as to what you

mean, an intention to mean several things”, and so forth. He says that ambiguity works through different figures of speech, including irony. In this poem the boy may be praising the bell, whose authority ‘bullies’ the men, in addition to mocking the men through irony. The meaning may proliferate into yet another direction, for the persona, speaking through the boy, may also be criticising the industrial world, where inanimate objects such as the clock regulate the tempo of men’s lives. This fits Empson’s ambiguity of the third type, where what is said is allegorical, and is “valid in, refers to, several different topics, several universes of discourses, several modes of judgement” (see section 3.2.2.1).

According to Jordan the next poem [72] illustrates the hyperbolic language of praise poetry, where “the sea” refers to “nothing more than a big river”. Once again, we find that Empson’s concept of ambiguity could have been helpful in analysing this poem. How does the reader know that the use of ‘the sea’ is a hyperbole, without referring to the extraliterary information which Jordan gives? The hyperbole and the literal meaning may be reconciled, so that it can either be read as ‘the sea’ or the ‘river’, or even both simultaneously. The two words are, in any way, in paradigmatic relation, and the selection here can be made from a particular set of geographical images, such as ‘rivulet’, ‘stream’, ‘lake’, ‘pool’ and ‘waterfall’. If we read this noun, ‘the sea’ in conjunction with other images in the poem, such as ‘swallow’, we find the hyperbole overshadowed by the surface meaning, especially when we make association with the migratory nature of the swallows, who cross seas in some seasons. Richards’ definition of hyperbole (see section 3.2.1.3) can further clarify Jordan’s. He suggests that hyperbole is justified where there is a slight similarity between objects described, and that it is justifiable as a means to an end. Hyperbole, Richards asserts, does not necessarily have to be logical. In the hyperbole noted by Jordan above the similarity between ‘sea’ and ‘river’ is obvious for hyperbole to function, in a manner described by Richards. We proceed to the next poem:

[72]

Beautiful as the blades of grass in summer
They came, from the seas, the blood-red sea,
That mighty river unfordable to men,
Crossed only by swallows, because they have wings (1973:23).

According to Jordan this poem [72] recounts the travails and triumph of the Masinga clan as they made their difficult way to join the Hlubi, killing enemies along the way, and the next one [73] refers to the valiant Rhadebe [Radebe] clan who are

always ready to sacrifice their lives in defence of their homesteads. They are praised in the following terms:

[73]

They whose gates are not barred with poles,
But barred with the heads of warrior-men.
The Nozulu clan, whose daughters are famous for
their beauty (1973:23).

In the poem above [73] the Hlubi people “pay compliment to the mother of the famous Mpangazitha”, who belonged to a clan which joined the Hlubis as refugees. The praises are based on the legend which said that:

Her people came as refugees to the Hlubi. In order to enter Hlubi territory, they had to cross a big river. To make sure that they should be welcome, the parents decided to dress all the beautiful girls as attractively as possible and let them go ahead the rest of the group. The girls crossed the river and took a path through the cornfields. It was autumn. When the Hlubi saw these young women emerge from the fields, their admiration knew no bounds. ‘As beautiful as the cornfields themselves!’ exclaimed one. ‘As smooth as the stones of the river they have just crossed!’ observed another ... on reaching the royal palace they were told, ‘If you are related to such beautiful women, you cannot be bad people. We welcome you!’ (Jordan, 1973:24).

This historical background information, useful as it may be, is not indispensable in the analysis of the structure of the poem, for the Feeling, “the attitude of the speaker towards his subject” (Richards, section 3.2.1.1), can be clearly understood. The feeling of admiration for the subject is embedded in the metaphors: “whose gates are not barred with poles ... heads of warrior-men”, and the adjective ‘beauty’, which is carried over to the first and second lines of the stanza which follows [74], and sustained through parallelism synonymous (Jakobson) in ‘smooth’:

[74]

The beautiful Nguni of the Mother-of-the-heavens,
Who came fresh and beautiful as the cornfields in
autumn.

Smooth and bright as the round stones of the river (1973:24).

Our observation here is that poems [72] and [74] use simile and metaphor as dominant features. The dominant feature is simile in both poems - "beautiful as the blades of grass" in poem [72], and "beautiful as the cornfields" and "smooth and bright as the round stones of the river" in poem [74]. Poem [73] uses the linking parallelism, through the repetition of 'barred' in the second line. The sea [72] is described in the metaphor, "blood-red", and the people who crossed it are said to be 'swallows' which "have wings". The parallelism in [74] is sustained from the beginning to the end, through the use of the synonymous or near-synonymous adjectives, 'beautiful' in lines one and two, carried over into the third line by the use of 'smooth', 'bright', and 'round'. The concatenation of these adjectives can also be decided in terms of Richards' idea of 'affective-volitional' (see section 3.2.1) aspects of words. The stimulus sets in motion certain feelings or emotions associated with the visual impression of these words. In this case positive feelings are evoked.

In the next poem [75] the praise is directed to Mpangazitha, son of the subject of the above poem [74], and the next poem [76] is a praise of Shaka, the king of the Zulus. The latter poem has already received some analytical attention under Jakobson's (see section 2.2.1.2) analysis:

[75]

The praises of Mpangazitha, leader of the Hlubi:
The Despoiler-of-the-enemy, kinsman of Jobe,
He is the clearing-and-frowning skies,
a thunderer like the heaven above,
Ever smiting man, but never decried;
he is the thudding myriad of Zikode and Dloma
That came thudding amidst the land.
Till all the nation quaked with fear;
He is the wielder of the brain-weighted club,
The true guardian of his people.
He is the flatfooted buck Mashiya and Dlomo
That gores as it dashes along (1973:24-5).

Here again we find a lack of incisive analysis, in which both Jakobson's and Richards' ideas could have been helpful. As we have already dealt with this poem partly under Richards' reading (see section 3.2.1), we shall pay attention to

Jakobson's. The poem abounds with morphological, lexical, semantic and syntactic parallelism. The first line, with its complex noun, "despoiler-of-the-enemy", is repeated through the same structure in the following line with the phrase, 'clearing-and-frowning', which does not use the same morphological sequence exactly. The semantic value of the word 'Hlubi' ("a tribe or clan") is repeated in a number of lines throughout the poem, 'kinsman', 'man', 'nation', and 'people'. The last noun overlaps in meaning with the geographical image, 'land' ('people' and 'land'), and then links meaning with its opposites, 'skies' and 'heaven'. The proper noun, 'Mpangazitha', is echoed through the use of other proper nouns, 'Hlubi', "Zikode and Dloma", and "Mashiya and Dlomo" ('Dloma' and 'Dlomo' are different entities).

The next poem [76] was analysed in Jakobson's reading of rhyme (see section 2.2.1.2), and we mentioned the presence of semantic rhyme, rather than auditory or visual rhyme:

[76]

He is Shaka the unshakable,
 Thunderer-while-sitting, son of Menzi;
 He is the bird that preys on other birds,
 The battle-axe that excels other battle-axes;
 He is the long-strided-pursuer, son of Ndaba,
 Who pursued the moon and the sun;
 He is a great hubbub like the rocks of Nkandla
 Where the elephants take shelter
 When the heavens frown.
 'Tis he whose spears resound causing wailing,
 Thus old women shall stay in abandoned homes,
 And old men shall drop by the wayside (1973:25).

Jordan informs us that while some praise poetry normally describes "the hero in general terms", a praise poem may devote some lines to narrating specific exploits in the life of the subject of praise. An example is taken from the poem about Lerotholi [77], the grandson of the great king of the Basotho, Moshoeshoe I, who fought the English in the Gun War of 1880–1881, and he is praised as follows:

[77]

Deep in his pool the crocodile glared,
 He glared with his blood-red eyes,

And lo! the young White braves were drowned,
Aye, they fell into the jaws of the snake,
The black snake, khanyapa, King of the Waters (1973:25).

In this poem [77] the image of “the black snake”, *kganyapa/khanyapa* - “King of the Waters” According to Jordan this image is borrowed from the Basotho myth, where the snake “is supposed to have the power to ‘call’ people into the deep pool where he lives, by merely glaring at them”, and the mythical snake shares these characteristics with the *Koena/Kwena* - crocodile, “which is the totem of the House of Moshoeshoe. Here we find a balance between the informational function and the aesthetic qualities of poetry (Mukařovský, section 2.2.3.1). Also, we notice that Jordan uses the general term ‘image’ for both metaphor and symbol, without drawing a distinction between the two. He takes it as read that metaphors borrowed from cultural myths, such as those in poem [77], are symbols. A proper definition which draws a distinction between the two (Brooks, section 4.2.3.3) would be in place here. Here we find it plausible to suggest that both the metaphorical and the symbolic meanings may converge, according to Empson’s definition of the second type of ambiguity, where two readings can be reconciled. Whether we read the image of the snake as a symbol or metaphor, or as both, is not detrimental to our understanding of how imagery functions in this poem. We shall later see how Kunene (see section 5.2.1.6) also does not draw an explicit distinction between metaphor and symbolism.

The next poem [78] follows along the pattern of the above by praising the exploits of the subject, in this case Ncaphayi, the leader of the Bhaca people who was excellent at guerrilla warfare in the jungle, and defeated the Mpondomise. His praises say of him:

[78]

He is the light feather arching and vanishing
Only to feast on men below Nqadu mountain;
He is the jungle-home of leopards and lions (1973:26).

Our observation here is that metaphor in poem [78] is embedded in the verb ‘feast’ just as well as it is in the nouns “light feather” and “jungle-home of leopards”. The subject is not going to feast literally on his victims, but the verb, read literally, gives rise to a ‘dead’ or ‘subdued’ metaphor, which functions mainly through verbs. This kind of metaphor is clearly defined by Empson (see section 3.2.2.1) in his

analysis of a poem [12] to illustrate the ambiguity of the first type, when he suggests that it can be read figuratively or literally.

The nature of praise poetry is to praise, but Jordan remarks: “But it must not be thought that these bards were mere flatterers. While they drew attention mainly to the good and praiseworthy, they also had the licence to make sharp criticisms of the habits of their subjects. It is here that the bard has found the greatest scope for his wit”. The first example of this kind of poetic criticism is taken from a poem about Dingane [79], king of the Zulus who treacherously assassinated his brother, Shaka, and was renowned for greed and readiness to “eat up” the cattle belonging to his subjects, while the second [80] is taken from a poem about the licentious chief of the Bomvana, Luhadi, and the third [81] from a praise poem about the tyrannical chief of the Thembu, Ngangelizwe:

[79]

He is the needy offspring of Mpikazi,
With eye forever cast on the people’s herds;
His cattle are gathered like honey-combs,
Found and seized wherever he goes (1973:26).

[80]

Below the rocks it is dreadful to behold,
For there are the handsome of their concubines (1973:26–7).

[81]

See how the doves flutter and huddle,
Dismayed at the sight of the eagle.
Woe to the dove that has no wings! (1973:27).

In the poems [79], [80] and [81] Empson’s idea of the ambiguity of the second type can be a useful tool. In this case “two or more meanings are resolved into one” (see section 3.2.2.1). The intended meaning of ‘praising’, that is, presenting the subject in a favourable light, is reconciled with the ironic significance of these attributes. In poem [79] we find such a convergence and coincidence of two meanings in the word ‘needy’, which may mean both ‘poor’ and ‘greedy’, and the reference to the subject’s “cattle gathered like honey-combs” may be a praise of his wealthy status, but simultaneously a criticism of his greed. The latter meaning is reinforced when this line is read in conjunction with the second line.

In the same manner we find a reconciliation of the negative and positive qualities realised in line one and two lines of poem [80], where a deed is 'dreadful;' but the object of desire is 'handsome'. In [81] the hero is referred to as an 'eagle', and this metaphor is juxtaposed with 'doves', its antithesis. The admirable qualities are significant in the 'eagle' metaphor, and the negative ones are suggested by contrast in the metaphor of a harmless bird. The eagle's negative qualities as a bird of prey are thus suggested. We thus have two meanings reconciled.

Following up on his assertion that praise poetry is dynamic and adjusts to change Jordan observes that there are "modern Bantu-speaking poets ... who have shown very successfully that the idiom, style and technique of traditional praise-poems can be applied most effectively to modern themes, and an illustration is Mqhayi's poem [82], which was composed for the occasion of the visit of the Prince of Wales to South Africa in 1925. In the poem Britain is apostrophised as follows:

[82]

Ah, Britain! Great Britain!
Great Britain of the endless sunshine!
She hath conquered the oceans and laid them low;
She hath drained the little rivers and lapped them
dry;
She hath swept the little nations and wiped them
away;
And now she is making for the open skies.
She sent us the preacher; she sent us the bottle,
She sent us the Bible, and barrels of brandy;
She sent us the breechloader, she sent us the canon;
O, Roaring Britain! Which must we embrace?
You sent us the truth, denied us the truth;
You sent us the life, deprived us of life;
You sent us the light, we sit in the dark,
Shivering, benighted in the bright noonday sun (1973:27).

Our observation here is that a more close reading of the text would be helpful. The poem above [82] abounds with figures of speech, metonymy and metaphor. Verbs are mainly used as vehicles of metaphor - 'conquered' (one cannot literally conquer the ocean), 'drained', 'laid ... low', 'swept', 'wiped', 'sent', 'embrace', and

'sit'. These verbs remind us once again of the idea of 'dead' metaphor, for in general these verbs may be read literally.

Our observation also finds another figure of speech, metonymy, where transference has a one to one or restricted relationship, as 'Bible' can only stand for 'religion', 'breachloader' and 'cannon' can only signify 'war' or 'strife', and 'dark' for ignorance. The use of the pronoun 'she' for "Great Britain" has also become a dead metaphor in ordinary or communicative language, but in poetry it may function as personification.

In general, Jordan's analysis of these poems is a socio-historical one, and it pays more attention to extraliterary references and general characteristics of the genre, though at times he makes some effort in analysing the internal structure of the texts he chose. The analysis would have been enhanced, had he been aware of some of the more focused concepts used by some 'Western' theorists, in this regard particularly Jakobson and Empson. His approach remains paraphrasal, depending heavily on giving extraliterary information. This does help, to a certain extent, in clarifying what might otherwise be obscure references. Nonetheless it does not offer much in helping to find terms of defining oral poetry as a unique genre, nor does it provide any critical tools. Obviously his reference to symbolism shares common ground with the New Critics'. An important question to ask at this point is whether his reading is 'Western' or 'African' oriented. This question arises because he has given only translations but not the original versions of the texts that he analyses. We shall leave this question open ended until the final chapter, where we argue for a syncretic approach.

4.2.3 Trevor Cope (1928 -)

Cope was born in South Africa, Durban, and educated at Hilton College and the University of Natal. After he graduated with the degrees of M.A. and PhD, he went to the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London, where he took a Certificate and a Special Diploma in African Studies. He then returned to the University of Natal where he later became Professor of the then department of Bantu Studies.

4.2.3.1 The context of Zulu praise poetry

According to Cope praise-songs are part of a variety of oral genres - songs, regimental chants, lullabies, proverbs, which form part of Zulu folklore. The praise

song itself is “consciously an art; there is conscious striving after literary effect and a conscious effort to attain a richer, a more evocative, a more emotive, and more memorable use of language. The praise-poem exhibits all the characteristics of poetry” (Cope, 1968:24). In the composition of a praise-poem there are three important personalities of importance, firstly, the praiser - *imbongi*, and then the praise-songs *izibongo*, and the subject of the poem. Cope explains that *izibongo* means ‘praises’, and that it is “a plural noun of which the singular means ‘surname’”. Though every person may have his own praises, usually the subject is a person of paramount importance in the community or society, who has achieved some feat or other, and in the latter case we may have chiefs:

The purpose of the praise-poem is to present the chief as an object of admiration, and there is consistently a tendency to maximize praise and minimize criticism ... Although the praise-poem is biased towards praise, it gives an accurate account of the chief’s personality and actions, without which it would not fulfil its function as an agent of conformity to the approved patterns (Cope, 1968:31).

We observe here that Cope, in his definition of praise poetry, regards the communicative or informational aspect as equally important as the aesthetic function. In defining the nature of Zulu *izibongo* - praise-poetry, Cope suggests that they have been “likened to eulogies, odes, and epics” and that:

The most apt descriptive is eulogy, for the purpose of the poem is to praise its subject as favourably as possible ... Praise-poems are like odes in that they present a single subject for admiration, and like epics in that they record historical events. However, odes incline to philosophical reflection and epics purport to be complete historical records. The praise-poems have neither of these qualities (Cope, 1968:33).

Thus praise-poetry is a hybrid constituted of “both the ode and the epic”. The subject matter of this poetry is “an account of the chief’s actions and events of his reign”, without striving to achieve historical accuracy, and its form is fluid in that the poet may vary the form of stanzas by changing the number of lines, adding new ones or modifying others. The essential aspect determining the sequence of stanzas is chronology, so that some stanzas follow others in terms of temporal sequence. This

freedom of variation is illustrated with an example of two versions of the same praise-poem:

[83]

*UMagimba ongenamacebo.
Usihlangu dabul' uMkhingoma;
Inkomazi yakwaNgenetsheni.
Inkom' ezungez' umhlanga,
Ibuy' iplindela khon' emhlangeni.
UMagumundele ongenamuthi,
OnjengoMagamundele ongenamuthi,
Ojengomagamundele wakoMsiyana,
Yen' unomuthi.
Iwawa likamenzi.*

Magimba who has no deceit.
Shield that creates the Mkhingoma regimental sections;
Cow of the Ngenetsheni kraal.
Beast that encircles the reed-bed,
And then goes back to the reeds.
He who devours with his broad-bladed spear;
The Devourer who has no magic medicines,
Unlike the devourer at the home of Msiyana,
As for him he does possess magic medicines.
The favourite of Menzi (Mpande) (1968:36–7).

[83a]

*UMagumba ongenabuthi,
OngenjengokaSozacil' othakathayo;
UMaganundele ngeklwa lakhe.
Iwawa likaMenzi.
UMhlikizanzhlunu sengathi kayithandi,
Ingan' uyayithanda.
Inkom' ezungez' umhlanga kaMenzi,
Ibuy' iphindele khon' emhlangeni.
Isigele saseKwandeni,
Sibek' uMnguni ezalwa nguKhondlo,
Wabaleka wabangazela.*

Wizard who has no poison,
Unlike the son of Sozacile who is an evil-doer;
He who devours with his broad-bladed spears.
The favourite of Menzi (Mpande).
Scrubber of the vagina as if he does not like it,
While in reality he loves it.
Beast that encircles the reed-bed of Mpande,
And then goes back to the reeds.
Senior man of the Kwandeni kraal,
Who kept a watch on Mnguni son of Khondlo,
Who fled excitedly (1968:37–8).

The above definition of oral poetry, together with the examples, seems to agree with Schapera's and Jordan's definition. There seems to be unanimity as to what constitutes the content of oral poetry, though Kunene, as we shall see later, includes a wide spectrum of subjects which the 'heroic poetry', as he calls it, deals with. We shall now study Cope's analysis of the structure of oral poetry.

4.2.3.2 The poetic structure of praise poetry

Before embarking on a stylistic analysis of the structure of praise-poetry Cope explains that:

Praise-poems possess the qualities that distinguish poetry from prose in all literature ... it is more evocative, more emotive, and more memorable. These qualities are achieved by the use of imagery reinforced by repetition in various guises: metre (repeated rhythms), rhyme (repeated final syllables), alliteration (repeated consonant sounds), assonance (repeated vowel sounds), parallelism (repeated statements of identical construction, with different words expressing the same idea ... (Cope, 1968:39).

All the above elements are employed in different ways, but the most essential aspect is the use of imagery employed in most cases through repetition, the latter being the most dominant feature of praise-poetry. Now we shall look at how Cope goes about in his critical method, which is mainly based on figures of speech, parallelism, personification, alliteration, imagery, rhyme, rhythm and so forth.

Cope suggests that “Zulu praise-poems abound in images of great effectiveness”, and gives a condensed illustration of how images are used in various praise-poems concerning different Zulu chiefs and kings:

Senzangakhona is described as the gate-post (*uthi lwempundu*) of the kraal, and his son, Shaka, as the axe (*izembe*) of Senzangakhona, as the fire of the long grass (*umlilo wothathe*), as the wind of the south (*ummoya womzansi*), as a pile of rocks (*isixhololo*), as a hawk (*uhele* and *uklebe*) descending from the hills, and a young viper (*udlondlwane*) in great rage. Dingiswayo is the log (*ugodo*) that does not burn when the fire is stoked, Macingwane is the antheap (*isiduli*) that is light-coloured amongst those which are dark-coloured, Phakathwayo is the little stone (*itshana*) that trips up unwary walkers on the pathway. Cetshwayo, whose skin was dark and hairy, is described as a black forest (*ihlathi elimnyama*), thus indicating his awesomeness also (Cope, 1968:38).

Though Cope agrees that images are an effective element in poetry, he also makes a judgmental assertion that in some Zulu praise-poetry “some images tend to be overworked such as the sun and the sky”. We wish to observe that this is reminiscent of Mukařovský’s idea of ‘automatization’ (see section 2.2.3.1). An element may be used as a foregrounded device, but when it becomes schematized, it is more “consciously executed”, to borrow Mukařovský’s phrase, and thus automatized. However, Cope’s view is not as self-conscious as Mukařovský’s. It is merely dismissive rather than analytical, whereas if he had been aware of Mukařovský’s idea he would have noticed that this is a device deliberately used, but not a result of lack of ability to create variety, as his statement implies.

Repetition is also a prominent feature in praise poetry: “Repetition also contributes the aesthetic necessity of form, which gives unity and satisfactory completeness to a poem and to the constituent parts of it, such as couplets or triplets or stanzas. Repetition in itself is monotonous, and so it prefers to appear in disguise” (Cope, 1968:40–1). The disguise referred to, we suppose, is parallelism. Examples of how repetition is employed in praise-poetry are drawn from two poems whose subject is Zibhedu [84] and Shaka [85]:

[84]

Wadl' ubani obezalwa ubani
Angithandi ukunusho,

Uma ngimusho kungadum' isili;

He destroyed So-and-so of So-and-so,
I don't like to mention his name,
If I mentioned him there would be an outburst of wailing (1968:40).

[85]

*Oth' esadl' ezinye wadl' ezinye,
Wath' esadl' ezinye wadl' ezinye;*

He who while devouring some devoured others,
And as he devoured others he devoured some more (1968:40).

It is obvious that in the above poems, [84] and [85], Cope is referring to parallelism, which we see in lines two and three [84] and the two lines [85], which appear in the form of linking parallelism in both instances.

Cope then follows up with the analysis of parallelism, which he says is a major feature in praise-poetry. He says it is "the variety of rhythm to be found *par excellence* in Zulu poetry". Examples are given to illustrate the different types of this structure of parallelism from praise poems about different Zulu chiefs and kings, Dingiswayo [86], Ndaba [87], and Jama [88]:

[86]

*Ingqambi eyahlul' amakhosi amanye,
EbinjengoSongodo esahlul' umalusi.*

Innovator who overcame the other chiefs,
Just as Songodo overcame Malusi (1968:41).

[87]

*Obeyalala wangangemimfula,
Obeyavuka wangangezintaba.*

He who when he lay down was the size of the rivers,
He when he got up was the size of the mountains (1968:41).

[88]

*Nasenhlamvini yomkhonto angenela,
nasemagatsheni angaphathelela.*

Even on the point of a spear he can be at ease,
Even on branches he can hold tight (1968:41).

In poem [86] parallelism is created by the use of simile, where the subject of the poem is likened to another personality, 'Songodo' with *ebinjengo* ("just as"), and in poem [87] and [88] there is a repetition of phrases, which Cope refers to as "perfect parallelism", where repetition of an idea is achieved through the use of different words. The word 'perfect' is too vague to tell us anything, as we would need to define what 'imperfect' parallelism is in order to understand what is meant by this. Jakobson's term, parallelism synonymous, might have been helpful, since this seems to be what Cope intends to define.

According to Cope, in contrast to this type of parallelism there are two other forms of parallelism, "initial linking" and "final linking", in which lines are linked through direct repetition of a word. In this parallelism "the following line is linked to the first line by either repetition of the first word or the last word". This idea coincides with Jakobson's anadiplosis (see section 2.2.1.2), as is clear in poem [90], and what Kunene calls vertical and oblique parallelism (see section 5.2.1.5). An example of initial linking is taken from the praise-poem about Senzangakhona [89]:

[89]

*Ozithebe zihle uMjokwane,
Ozithebe zihle zidlel' amanxasakazi.*

He whose eating-mats are beautiful,
He whose beautiful mats are eaten from by womenfolk (1968:42).

[90]

*Umhlom' ehlathini onjengohlanya,
Uhlanya olusemhlwen' amadoda.*

He who armed in the forest, who is like a madman,

The madman who is in full view of the men (1968:42).

In poem [89] the phrase *ozithebe zihle* (“He whose eating-mats ...”) is carried over and partially repeated in the syntax of the beginning of the following line. Final linking is illustrated with a praise-poem about Shaka [90], where the word *-hlanya* (“a madman”) at the end of a line is repeated at the beginning of the next one, *uhlanya* (“the madman”). We shall later see how Kunene defines this ‘linking’ in terms such as ‘vertical’, ‘slanting’ and ‘cross-line’ parallelism (see section 5.2.1.5) in his analysis of poems [117] to [124].

Another variety of parallelism by linking is based on grammatical forms and semantic values of words, and of these we have ‘noun-verb’ and ‘positive-negative’ parallelism, as in the poems about Shaka [91] and [92]:

[91]

UDlungwana woMbelebele,
Odlunge emanxulumeni.

Rager of the mbelebele brigade,
Who raged among the large kraals.

UTeku lwabafazi bakwaNomgabhi,
Betekula behlez' emlovini.

Joke of the women of Nomgabhi,
Joking as they sat in a sheltered spot.

UGasane kade lubagasela,
Lwagasel' uPhungashe wakwaButhlezi,
Lwagasel' ...

The attacker has long been attacking them,
He attacks Pungashe of the Buthlezi clan,
He attacked ... (1968:3).

[92]

UShaka ubengadl' imihlambi yankomo,
Ubedl' imihlambi yezinyamazane.

Shaka did not raid herds of cattle,
He raided herds of buck.

*Owalokoth' ulwandle engaluweli,
Lwaluwelwa zinkonjane nabelungu.*

He who attempted the ocean without crossing it,
It was crossed by swallows and white people.

*Odl' izinkomo engantuli mazembe,
Amazembe uzakuwantula ngonyak' ozophenduka.*

He who raids cattle not needing hoes,
The hoes he will need in the coming year (1968:43–4).

In the first poem [91] we have the “noun-verb” parallel structure, where the idea is repeated from one line into the next through the derivation of nouns into verbs: *UDlungwane* (derived personal noun) becomes *odlungwe* (verb), *Uteku* (noun) becomes *betekula*, and *uGasane* (noun) becomes *lubagasela* (verb). Kunene uses the term ‘eulogie’ (see section 5.2.1.2) to describe this derivation. In [92] the parallel structure is negative-positive, where “the first verb of the first verse is the negative of the verb that achieves the linking in the second verse”: *ubengadli* (“did not raid”) is linked to the next verse as *ubedl'* (‘raided’), *engaluweli* (without crossing it) to *lwaluwelwa* (it was crossed), and *engantuli mazembe* (not needing hoes) *amazembe uzakuwantula* (the hoes he will need). This is also reminiscent of Jakobson’s parallelism through using different parts of speech.

In addition to the employment of parallelism by initial and final linking, it can also be done by linking couplets and ‘triplets’:

[93]

*Wadlul' uNomsimekwana obezalwa nguBikwayo,
Wamshaya phansi koludumayo eziqungweni,
Akwaba ndaba zalutho.*

He destroyed Nomsimekwana son of Bikwayo,
He laid him low in the noise of battle in the long grass

And it was a matter of no consequence (1968:44).

[94]

Washikizel' umashikizel' omnyama,
Endondolozela ngenhlendla yakhe.

The restless black one moved on,
Leaning on his barbed spear (1968:45).

The idea of parallelism in couplets and triplets seems to refer to the apposition of sentential object, what Cope calls 'victims', and obviously 'couplet' refers to the case when there are two victims and 'triplet' to three in one idea. This is similar to Jakobson's trichotomy, where a parallel relationship between two words extends into the third through one of the two (see section 2.2.1.2). In [93] and in [94] the couplets and triplets "vary in the names of the victims", and these are *indlovu* ('elephant') and *Amakhubalo* ("ritual medicines") in [93] *uNomsimekwana* (person's name), and *obezalwa nguBikwayo* ("son of Bikwayo") in [93].

The next dominant device is alliteration. According to Cope alliteration (consonant harmony) and assonance (vowel harmony) are well represented in Zulu poetry, for they are inherent in the system of grammatical agreement itself". He then goes on to discuss the Zulu noun class system and indicates how the subject prefix governs the syntax in sentence, and he calls this "natural alliteration", meaning that it is inherent in the grammatical rules of the language. But he suggests that in addition to this kind of alliteration there is also artificial alliteration. The former can only be noticed as a device, or 'appreciated' if it is accompanied by the latter kind of alliteration. Examples to illustrate this point are drawn from a poem [95] about the one-time governor of Natal, Theophilus Shepstone, and one about Shaka [96]:

[95]

Ithol' elinsizwa likaSonzica,
Ekade liwangq' amany' amathole.

Powerful calf of Sonzica,
Who has been rolling over other calves (1968:45).

[96]

Inkom' ekhal' eMthonjaneni,
Izizwe zonke ziyizwil' ukulila;

The beast that lowed at Mthonjaneni,
And all the tribes heard its wailing (1968:46).

In the first poem [95] there is alliteration of the sound “*li*” from the truncated (ellipsis) prefix of the noun *ilithole* (the beast) is carried over in the *elinsizwa* (powerful), and *amanye* (others) is echoed in *amathole* (calves), and in [96] there is a combination of the natural and artificial alliteration. The former is composed of the sound ‘z’ in *izizwe zonke ziyizwil* (“all the tribes heard”) and the latter by the echoing of the sound in ‘zw’ in the same line. Other examples are found in the following stanzas from the same praise poem:

[97]

*UDondlwane luya luhlezi,
Luya ludlondlobele;*

The young viper grows as it sits,
Always in a great rage (1968:46).

[98]

Isidlangudlangu esinjengendlebe yendlovu;

He is as rough as the ear of an elephant (1968:46).

In the first poem [97] the dominant alliteration is of the artificial kind, the ‘*dl*’ sound is taken from the first word, *uDondlwane*, and echoed two times in the second line in the word *ludlondlobele* (in a great rage) while in [98] the same sound is echoed throughout the line from the first word *isidlangudlangu* (“he is rough”). We have already indicated (see section 2.2.1.2) how this is similar to Jakobson’s definition and reading of alliteration.

In the analysis of the peculiar use of certain grammatical features Cope clarifies his definition and explanation by drawing a contrast with how these devices are used in English:

The constructions used in these ways are those making for great concentration. English poetry, for example, makes great use of the verbal past participle as an adjective, for ‘love’s long since cancelled woe’ is more concentrated and therefore more effective poetically than

'love's woe that has been long since cancelled'. This construction is used even to the extent of attributing past participles to nouns, as in Shakespeare's "chaliced flowers", "grim-visaged war", "this sceptered isle", etc. ... Zulu praise-poetry uses to great effect the construction in which verbal concords are prefixed to initially elided nouns (Cope, 1968:46).

The above construction is said to be used mainly to describe physical characteristics or features. Examples of the above are: *Ositho zihle* ('long-limbed'), *omehlo amnyama* ('black-eyed'), *obemzimba muhle* ("he who was beautiful bodied"). In these phrases above the subject described is omitted. In certain instances the structure is used in an unusual manner as in the reference to Senzangakhona as *ozithebe zihle* ("he who is eating-mats are beautiful") and *obesiyaka singamanzi* ("he whose head-dress was wet").

According to Cope personification is also used abundantly in praise poetry. This is so because "all Zulu names of the traditional type are personifications, like the names of Zulu chiefs, some of which are derived from nouns". Examples of these are: *uZulu*, a name derived from the word *izulu* ('sky'), *uNdaba* from *indaba* ('affair'), *uShaka* derived from *ishaka* ('beetle'). There are also names derived from verbs, like *uCetshwayo* from *cetshwa* ("to be slandered"). Personification is also achieved by deriving personal nouns from impersonal ones by substituting the personal prefix *u-* for the impersonal prefix, as in *uMadevana* ("Mr small moustache") and *uManxeba* ("Mr wounds"), which are derived from *amadevana* ("small moustache") *amanxeba* ('wounds') and respectively.

In the case of personal nouns derived from impersonal ones the concordial agreement in the sentence is no longer governed by the prefix or concord of the primordial noun but by the derived one, so that this serves to "stress the metaphor" of the noun. But sometimes confusion arises with non-personal nouns which have the proper noun prefix *u-*, which is similar to personal ones, such as in the reference to Shaka [97] as *udlondlwane*, which is a non-personal noun, and *uDlondlwane*, which is a personal one. Both nouns may take the concord "lu-" irrespective of their 'personal' or 'impersonal' nature. This is a very important observation, for this kind of morphology is unique, due to the peculiar nature of the Zulu (or Bantu) system of word formation.

Cope also suggests that praise-poetry also uses nouns which are also derived from verbs "to great effect in Zulu". This is achieved by (1) attaching the personal noun prefix umu- or um- to the verbal stem, and changing the final vowel of the verb a [all Zulu verbs end with this vowel] to i, and (2) attaching the proper noun

prefix *u-* or *um-* to the verb and adding the suffix *-ane* or *-ana*. Cope gives the following examples in the first category: *umudli* ('eater') is derived from *dla* ('eat'), *umfundi* ('learner') from *funda* ('learn'), and *umfundisi* ('teacher') from *fundisa* ('teach'); and the following in the second category: *umabhalane* ('writer') from *bhala* ('write'). But the common form of the latter derivation is usually found in personal names: *uJama*, from *jama* ("to stare threateningly") and *uDingane* from *dinga* ("to need"). In this poem [99] there is this kind of noun derivation, where *uMlunguzi* ('peerer') from the verb, *lunguza* ('peep' or 'peer'):

[99]

*UMlunguzi wezingoje,
Owalunguz' ingoje yomfowabo,
Owalunguz' ingoje kaZivalele.*

Peerer over precipices,
Who peered over the precipice of his brother,
Who peered over the precipice of Zivalele (1968:52).

The above analysis of morphological and grammatical structure of oral poetry reminds us of Jakobson's analysis (see section 2.1.1.3) of "Sonnet 129" and "Infant Sorrow", poems [2] and [2a]. It also follows very closely to Kunene's (see section 5.2.1.2)

4.2.3.3 Thematic structure

According to Cope, the thematic structure of the praise-poetry is basically made up of an opening with a 'statement', followed by an 'extension' of the statement, its 'development', and then 'conclusion'. But older forms, which Cope dates as pre-Shakan ("c1750–1800"), are the most primitive, and consist only of single lines which "seldom undergo development, and there is certainly no such unit as a stanza". Here the development is merely an extension of the statement based on a "dependent tense" [100a], a 'consecutive' tense [100b], a relative clause [100c] or parallelism with a noun-verb initial linking (see [99] above). In other developed forms the structure consists of a statement and an extension, made up of a couplet or triplet. Examples are drawn from the pre-Shakan [100a], [100b] and [100c] poems of Senzangakhona, and Shaka's praise-poem [100d]:

[100a]

*UBhid' elimathetha ngezinyembezi,
Linjeng' elikaPhiko eBulawini.*

Variegation like a multi-coloured animal,
Like that of Phiko at Bulawini (1968:51).

[100b]

*Oye ngomnyama wabuya ngonyezi,
Amadod' aphenduk' umbhejakazana.*

He who went in darkness and returned by moonlight,
And the men turned to vicious critics (1968:52).

[100c]

*Umthombo wamanzi wakaNobamba,
Engiphuze kuwo ngagangakaleka.*

Fountain of the rocks of Nobamba,
At which I drank and felt faint (1968:52).

[100d]

*Uteku lwabafazi bakwaNomgabhi,
Betekula behlez' emlovini,
Beth' uShaka kakubusa kakuba nkosi,
Kanti unyak' uShaka ezakunethezeka (1968:54).*

The explanation of the thematic structure in the above poem [100d] is as follows:

- Statement: The joke of the women of Nomgabhi,
Extension: Joking as they sat in a sheltered spot,
Development: Saying that Shaka would not rule, he would not
become chief,
Conclusion: Whereas it was the year in which Shaka was
about to prosper (1968:54).

[101]

*Ondlela bazibuza kuDunjwa,
Kanti angabazibuza kuMbokaze,
Yen' aphan' ukuya kuNomagaga,
Lafik' iqhude lamvimbela .*

Statement: He whose routes they inquired from Dunjwa,

Extension: Whereas they should have asked Mbozane about
them,

Development: As for him he was hurrying to go to Nomagaga,

Conclusion: A cock came and prevented him (1968:55).

[102]

*Ubhioze kuNomangci phezulu,
Eya kunqumel' umbango wakwaNyuswa;
Kwakubangwa lutho ngakwanyuswa,
Bath 'Ntekenteke zilinden' amajuba',
Wafika wababulalal bobabili.*

Statement: He who planted the top of Nomangci mountain,

Extension: Going to give judgement in the contention of
the Nyuswas;

Development: They were not contending over anything at the
Nyuswas,

They were contending over castor-oil seeds in
deserted sites,

They said 'Just a moment, wait for the pigeons',

Conclusion: And he came and killed them both (1968:55).

In the above poems two types of parallelism are used, the noun-verb [100d] parallelism in the statement and extension, followed by alliteration in the development, in [101] there are the two types of alliteration, the artificial and the natural in the statement and the extension, and in [102] there is negative-positive parallelism in the development, followed by alliteration in the conclusion.

The above structure is usually based on the statement, its extension and development, then a conclusion, which is contrary to the statement, usually introduced by the conjunction *kanti* ('whereas'), or the pronouns *thina* ("we on the other hand") or *bona* ("as for them"). Some variations do not have a conclusion. In

other variations, like in the poem below [103], the stanza is “one of three parallel stanzas, each of which commences with the same statement and deals with the same episode”, constituting “a unit in the nature of a great stanza within the total structure”:

[103]

*Washikizel' uMashikizel' omnyama,
Edondolozela ngenhlendla yakhe,
Eyoshona ngesikhala sikaMpehlela noMaqhwakazi,
Eya ngoNohadu obezalwa nguMswewli,
Eyawukhokh' umnyatheliso,
Iqabi lakwabo lezinkabi elimpunga.*

Statement: The restless black one moved on,

Extension: Leaning on his barbed spear,

Development: Going on to disappear in the gap between
Mpehlela and Maqhwakazi,

Conclusion: He pays the tribute of cattle,
a drove of his grey oxen (1968:61).

The following poem [104] has a “discursive or narrative style of the coastal tribes ... where many of the praises do not begin with a direct reference to the chief but consists of statements of events referring indirectly to the chief”:

[104]

*Inzinkomo zabantu zinenkelenkele,
Zikhungel' ingobe isemashobeni.*

The people's cattle are cause of the disaster,
They tie sharp knives onto their tails (1968:62).

There is also the “question-and-answer style” [105], and the type with ‘introductions consisting of three parallel salutations”:

105]

*Ezindleleni ufuna nayiphi na?
Ufuna nevundlayo;
Emithini lapha ufuna nayiphi na?*

Ufuna nomnyamathi;
Ezinyokeni ufuna nayiphi na?
Ufuna nenyandezulu.

Among the roads which one does he resemble?
He is like the one which cuts straight across;
Amongst the trees which one does he resemble?
He is like the hardy essenwood tree;
Among the snakes which one does he resemble?
He is like the large green one which resembles the
ancestors (1968:62).

[106]

UMkhatshwa wawoZimangele,
Okhatshwe ngezind' izinyawo
nagesimfushanyana;
UMkhatshwa wawozimangele,
UMzilikazi kaMashobana;
Inkubele abayilube ngamanxeba,
Abamklule ngezinyawo ezimfushanyana
Nezimaqhukulwana.

The expelled one of Zimangele,
Who was kicked out by long feet
And by short one;
The expelled one of Zimangele,
Mzilikazi son of Mashobana;
The wounded one whom they stabbed with wounds,
Whom they tripped up with short feet
and with big toes (1968:63).

This concludes Cope's analysis of Zulu praise-poetry. The underlying principle, which, however, does not come out explicitly, is that the 'statement', 'extension', 'development' and 'conclusion' are only deduced from the Sense, but they cannot be analysed as structures. This reminds us of Brooks' suggestion that the total meaning of a poem resists being reduced to a statement, even a carefully thought-out statement (see section 3.2.3.4). As Brooks notes, the idea of the development of the initial theme comes into play through the interaction of images,

tone and so forth. The kind of parallelism identified and analysed falls within Jakobson's different types of parallelism. The question which we asked at the end of Jordan's analysis still stands here, as to whether these overlaps of analysis are accidental or came by influence. The only way this question can be answered is through a comparative and meta-critical analysis, for the critics we have studied do not inform us of the origin of their approach.

4.3 Conclusion

The definitions of oral poetry according to the three critics which we have studied in this chapter, Schapera, Jordan and Cope seem to concur, namely, that though this genre mainly records certain historical events and the exploits of their subject, it does not necessarily serve as an accurate documentation, thus it is consciously an art. They also agree on the use of certain dominant poetic devices, particularly parallelism, imagery, metaphor, symbolism, irony and personification. They also emphasise the need to study the historical and cultural background of the text in order to understand it fully. This is indeed a valid point, but, as we have already stated, this can also apply to any poetry other than African oral poetry, thus it does not give us much in the argument for the search of a poetics of this genre.

The point of divergence, however, is the idea of metre and rhythm. Jordan differs from Schapera and Cope, who vaguely suggest that it is a feature found in oral poetry. The latter's argument about the presence of metre in oral poetry is not convincing, for they fail to illustrate this. This is perhaps a strong point for the need of the critic to learn the language of the African text thoroughly, so that the danger of imposing upon it the structures of his or her language should be annihilated. Nevertheless this is not a major point. What is of interest for our purpose is how they analyse the structure of oral poetry.

It seems that the main figures of speech which they identify as a characteristic of oral poetry do not differ in essence from how it is employed in the poems which the critics in chapters two and three have analysed. The most prominent feature is parallelism, which, when studied according to the critics in this chapter, is akin to the approach applied by Jakobson and the Formalist-Structuralists. It seems obvious that Schapera, Jordan and Cope were not aware of how this school of thought analysed parallelism. This seems to support our view that certain universal aspects of language present some similarities in the way poetic discourse is structured. Their contribution to the study of oral poetry should be acknowledged at the same level as that of the 'Western' critics studied in the early chapters. Though they have not given general principles upon which they operate, at least they have provided a way

of understanding oral poetry as an art form. Their analysis would have been further enlightened by an awareness of what Jakobson, Mukařovský, Richards, Brooks, Empson and other Formalist-Structuralists and New Critics have contributed in the study of poetry. The discrepancies which arise in their approaches should be attributed to the disparity of the language of the texts they deal with. It is for this reason that it seems reasonable to argue for a synthesis of what is common rather than debate on the need to eschew 'Western' standards, especially when one considers the advantage brought about by the versatility of critics like Jakobson, whose knowledge of various languages grants an perspicacity which critics with a restricted knowledge of languages, such as the New Critics, could never have. We shall look at further case studies in the next chapter, so as to see if there are any overlaps between the critics of African oral poetry and critics of 'Western' poetry.

CHAPTER 5

5.1 Introduction

In this section we are interested in studying the analysis of two critics, Kunene and Opland, who, for the purposes of this thesis, will be regarded as representative of the 1970s and 1980s respectively. We shall take the same approach as we did in the previous chapters. These two critics have defined their approach to oral poetry clearly and explicitly. For instance, Kunene is forthright about the principles guiding his critical method. He asserts that heroic poetry cannot be judged by standards set for other non-African languages:

A story has to be a novel, and a poem has to have rhyming lines and syllabic metre. As one modern Bantu language writer puts it, the alternation of weak and strong stresses must give you the impression of a galloping horse! ... How do you get a galloping horse rhythm out of a language whose main-stressed syllables are separated by widely varying numbers of syllables carrying secondary and tertiary stresses? ... Another thing: since poetry had to rhyme, many aspiring poets who have no knowledge of the vowel qualities represented by various vowel symbols (mostly imperfectly), went ahead and rhymed letter *o* with letter *o*, and not sound X with sound X. Eye-rhyme would often be the excuse, but this was mostly cover for sheer ignorance of the sound values of the different orthographic letters (1971:xii).

Kunene also describes his method as “analytical-descriptive ... analysis and description with excerpts from a variety of poems”. On the other hand Opland, though without stating an ideological or philosophical stand, tends to compare with analyses of other languages, including Greek poetry, and he states in his introduction: “My own interest in Xhosa oral poetry derives from the comparative study of Anglo-Saxon poetry and other oral poetic traditions”, and referring to his past work on Xhosa traditions he says it was done in order “to draw comparisons between Xhosa and Anglo-Saxon poetry; the living Xhosa tradition was used to illuminate the dead Anglo-Saxon tradition” (1984:x). He describes his eclectic method as follows:

I have tried to express my own fascination with Xhosa oral poetry through an exhibition of some of its aspects, each of which may be apprehended with profit from a number of disciplinary vantage points. A study of the tradition of Xhosa oral poetry should hold interest for the likes of anthropologists, folklorists, historians, political scientists, psychologists, sociologists, and persons interested in the history of religion and education, poetry, and comparative literature, but I believe a rounded view of the tradition cannot be gained exclusively from within any one of these disciplines. My approach to Xhosa oral poetry is essentially interdisciplinary (1984:xi).

Here we notice a divergence of approaches. On the one hand Kunene eschews using other literatures as standard for analysing African oral poetry, while on the other Opland does the exact opposite. It would be interesting to see whether these two different principles create totally variant approaches. Seen *a priori*, it seems it is only on the question of the presence of metre and rhythm that they differ radically, while in other instances there are many overlaps, especially on the study of figurative use of language, and the analysis of dominant devices such as repetition and parallelism.

As to the subject matter of the heroic poetry Opland and Kunene express what seems to be an apologia for and a defence of heroic poetry. Kunene puts his views as follows:

Some say that the poems [heroic] are mere flattery or boast. They ask: Did the hero of the poem actually perform the deeds ascribed to him, or is he being dressed in borrowed robes? ... The poet is an artist, not a chronologist; and if even Chapman - quoted by Schapera as saying 'Native chiefs are everywhere so fond of flattery that they pay for it' - can make the concession that the poets 'generally display much eloquence, and metaphorical poetry comes natural to them', then there is hope that the poet will ultimately be judged as a poet, as a man who makes no secret of his involvement in the situation he is talking about, of his partisanship, of the subjective nature of his creation (Kunene, 1971:xiii-xiv).

The above view is concurrent with what has been expressed by Schapera, Jordan and Cope, that the function of oral poetry is not to give accurate historical information or account, but that its main function is artistic.

We shall now proceed to look at how these principles are carried out in the case studies of oral poetry.

5.2. Critical methods

The critical method which Kunene uses differs to some extent with the previous ones, in the sense that it is comparatively the most elaborate one in terms of analysing the structural form of oral poetry. As we did with the other critics, we shall undertake a case study of how he approaches and analyses oral poetry, so as to see how it fits in with or diverges from the approach of the critics discussed in chapters two and three, and also those in chapter four. So far it seems some pattern is emerging in the way critics of oral poetry analyse it, in that they seem to explore both the textual and the contextual elements of this genre; in Jakobsonian terms, we could say that they seem to be equally concerned about the referential and poetic functions of linguistic communication. Besides divergence as regards language specific elements, where the applicability of Western critics' analysis of certain structural features, such as rhyme and metre particularly, is either questioned or otherwise unconvincingly 'accommodated'; the only other notable difference between the critics of Western and African poetry seems to centre around contextual, rather than textual, questions. The only new insight we may offer, then, at this point in our discussion, which is different from the case studies in the second and third chapters, is only the reference to historical and cultural elements found in the text. We now proceed to Kunene's study.

5.2.1 Daniel P. Kunene (1923 -)

Daniel Pule Kunene was born in Edenville, South Africa and grew up in the Orange Free State. He took the degree of Doctor of Philosophy on "The Sound System of Southern Sotho" at the University of Cape Town, where he was lecturer before he left South Africa for exile in 1963. He settled in the United States and travelled widely in Africa, Europe and America, reading papers. He taught at the University of California, and then went to the University of Wisconsin at Madison where he took up a professorial post in African literature, which he still holds up to the present. He has published a number of books on criticism, and poetry, *Pirates Have Become our Kings* (1978), and a number of satires and critical essays in literary journals. His major works are the *Heroic Poetry of the Basotho* (1971) and *Thomas Mofolo and the Emergence of Southern Sotho Prose* (1989). The critical work which our attention will focus on is the former, as already indicated above.

5.2.1.1 The context of Sotho heroic poetry

Kunene defines the content and purpose of the praise poems as follows:

The heroic poetry of the Basotho have, as their subject matter, mainly the heroic deeds of warriors and of kings. Their chief purpose is to praise - to extol the virtues of manly prowess; of courage, of valour, and of fighting skill. After a successful cattle raid or battle or hunt, each warrior who had distinguished himself composed praises for himself, or added more lines to his earlier ones (Kunene, 1971:1).

In the discussion of the purpose of heroic poetry of the Basotho, Kunene indicates that this kind of poetry was related to its context. Its subject matter, which is “mainly the heroic deeds of warriors and of kings”, and their objective is primarily “to praise - to extol the virtues of manly prowess; of courage, valour, and of fighting skill”. It is therefore clear that the nature of this genre has to be closely related to and determined by its environment.

Kunene gives examples from excerpts which celebrate this prowess; and goes on to give the following as a resume of the circumstances in which heroic poetry thrives, “which constitute an ever-present challenge to the valour of men”, and these are: “(a) frequent wars, battles, and skirmishes; (b) frequent encounters with wild beasts, as in hunting; (c) frequent hunting expeditions; (d) frequent cattle raids; and (e) generally, the presence of any source of danger to life and property; as, for instance, the prevalence of cannibalism” (Kunene, 1971:3-4).

According to Kunene these conditions have to be accompanied by a sense of close encounter with danger, and the genre also includes war songs which inspire warriors. As Kunene’s analyses will indicate below, an approach to the study of heroic poetry needs historical and cultural knowledge as a prerequisite, for the structural features, content and technique are inextricably intertwined with the culture from which the poetry is drawn. Certain images, metaphors and names call for a specific knowledge of certain cultural beliefs, myths, landscape and specific historical characters. The praiser’s role also has to be understood in terms of the context, for he is the bearer of the text, and also its creator, without whom the heroic poem cannot be, although Kunene’s approach, unlike Opland’s below, follows the text more closely rather than the praiser’s role in society.

Kunene prefers to use the term “heroic poetry” because it combines the role of the praiser and that of the subject, the hero. He puts his explanation as follows:

The hero of the poem performs deeds of heroism, and these inspire the poet to compose for him words of praise ... I have chosen *heroic* because it can be used for both the deeds of the hero (heroic deeds) *and* the lines composed for him as a result (heroic poem). Furthermore, the whole atmosphere of these poems is one of daring, courage, bravery, heroism (Kunene, 1971:xvi).

In all respects this definition coincides with what Schapera, Jordan and Cope have said, as we mentioned earlier. The only new insight, as far as Kunene's definition of oral poetry is concerned, is that the subject matter of oral poetry is wider than the others have suggested. Kunene's main body of criticism pays attention to grammatical features and the use of figurative language.

5.2.1.2 Grammatical analysis

One of the major grammatical features of praise-poems is the use of verbs to denote the central subject's (hero) actions, - "performed *by*" him, or actions in which he is passive - "*performed upon*". A key term which Kunene employs here is 'eulogue', which he defines as follows:

Eulogue is used to refer to the different kinds of praise reference: names such as deverbative nouns describing the hero according to his actions, or metaphorical names comparing the hero to natural phenomena; and, for example, praise by association of the hero with some person, whether himself (or herself) praiseworthy or not (Kunene, 1971:xxii).

Most eulogues are derived from verbs and "hint at the story of the poem" in which case they are referred to as "narrative eulogues", while some are descriptive and are accordingly referred to as "descriptive eulogues". This seems to overlap with parallelism, in the sense that if a name is derived from another word, and both are used in the same text, they are parallel, semantic (or etymologically), and also in terms of their sound. This may also give rise to a kind of internal rhyme.

From this point Kunene discusses in detail the grammatical or morphological principle governing noun derivation in Southern Sotho, agreeing with what Cope described as the main feature of Zulu oral poetry (see section 4.2.3.2), where he says that nouns of person's names are derived from verbs. The basic rule, with

variations, is to attach a noun prefix to the verb and changing the final vowel of the verb, *-a* (see section 5.2.1.3). The application of the rules are quoted here as given by Kunene:

1. Prefix *Mo/nw /* may occur with various verbal suffixes as follows:

(a) *mo ... a*

as in Mohlakola (Remover, Destroyer, Wiper-away):

mo-hlakol-a, cf. verb stem *hlakola* (wipe off)

(b) *mo ... i*

as in *Moqotjhi* (Pursuer):

mo-qotjh-i ... verb stem *qotjha* (drive away, pursue)

(c) *mo ... a-ne* [*mo ... a-nI*]

as in Mohlakolane (Depriver, Dispossessor):

mo-hlakol-a-ne ... verb stem *hlakola* (deprive or dispossess of)

(d) *mo ... e* [*mo ... e*]

as in *Mo-shwashwail-e ...* verb stem *shwashwaila* (scrape clean off; remove root-and-branch) (1971:22–3).

The same rule may involve the use of the prefix *Le-*, affixed to the verbal radical, together with one of the following suffixes *-a(ne)*, *-i*, or *-e*; as in the following examples: *le-beol-a* (“Shaver, Razor”), *le-pobets-i* (“crush, squash”), *Le-te-a-ne* (‘Striker’), and *Lehohoretse* (“Sweeper-away”), derived respectively from the verbs *beola* (‘shave’), *tea* (‘strike’), *hohoretse* (“sweep-away, rout”). There is also the use of the prefix *Se-* with a variety of suffixes, as in the eulogues *Sehulanya* (“Bringer-by-force”), *Sedumaedi* (‘Thunderer’) from the verb *dumaela* (“murmur, groan, sound”), *Sethulane* (‘Batterer’) from the verb *thula* (“butt, batter, strike”), and *Sengangele* (‘Headstrong-One’) from the verb *ngangella* (“dispute validity of views contradicting one’s own; insist, persist”). There are also a number of other noun prefixes used to form derived nouns, but for our purpose the above examples will suffice. Kunene’s examples illustrating their use are taken from the poem about Maama:

[107]

*Ngwan'a lona o jelwe ke Koeyoko,
O jelwe ke Koeyoko-ya-Letsie,
Koeyoko, Seja-bana-ba-Makgowa.*

Your child has been devoured by Koeyoko,
He has been devoured by the Koeyoko-of-Letsie,
The Koeyoko, Devourer-of-the-children-of-the-Whiteman (1971:21).

[108]

Makatolle-wa-Pheta-le-Moshoeshoe
A katolla kgoro di katilwe.

Unblocker-of-Pheta-and Moshoeshoe
Unblocked gates that were blocked (1971:22).

[109]

Makatolle wa kgoro di katilwe
Ho bile ho katilwe le ka Barwana ba Chere.

Unblocker of gates that are blocked
Having been blocked even with the little San of Chere (1971:33).

In this poem [107] the eulogic noun *Seja*- ('devourer') is derived from the verb *jelwe* ('devoured'), and it sums up all that is narrated". The verb is a symbolic description of "one of the actions of the hero (Maama) in the battle that gave rise to the poem". The same principle applies with the eulogic name *Makatolle* ('Unblocker') in [108] and [109], which is derived from the verb in the following line, *katolla* ('unblock').

Without suggesting that Kunene is informed by the Formalist-Structuralist school, we however note that the idea of analysing poetic features according to morphological and grammatical structures was the mainstay of Jakobson's approach, as we have seen in his analysis of poems [1] and [2] in the second chapter (see section 2.2.1.2). We have also shown (Section 2.2.1.2) how Kunene's analysis would have been more effective if he had used Jakobson's detailed analysis of parallelism. How far this could be regarded as coincidental is a question for which we cannot provide an answer. But for our purpose it supports our surmise that there are significant similarities in the analysis of universal tropes. However, the detailed morphological differences between Western and African languages underline the discrepancies in the minutiae of analysis. At this point we shall continue to study Kunene's analysis of eulogues.

5.2.1.3 Classification of eulogues

One of the main features of heroic poetry is the 'eulogue'. Kunene uses the term to refer to names which are used in praise poetry as epithets of praise with certain meaning. There are two types of these:

(1) Naming eulogues, i.e. those which are coined as aliases for the hero, each one being inspired by its own set of circumstances as the poet sees them; and (2) Eulogue of associative reference, in which the hero is not named, but is rather praised of his association, either in blood or marriage relationship or comradeship-in-arms, with other people (1971:35).

In the first category there are the following sub-types: Eulogues derived from verbs (as discussed in 5.2.1.3), metaphorical eulogues, and eulogues derived from regimental names, and descriptive eulogues, and finally those derived from clan names. Examples are from the following poems:

[110]

Mothiba-dipelesa (Interceptor-of-the-Beast-of-Burden)
Mothiba (Interceptor) (1971:36).

[111]

Tladi e ntsho ya habo Seeiso,
Ya tjhesa Maseru tsatsi le rapame.

Black Thunderbolt of the house of Seeiso,
He scorched Maseru when the sun was slanting westwards.

[112]

Letlaka, Lenonyane, Ramahotetsa,
Ramahotetsa hlaha ya Tswaing!

Vulture, Eagle, Setter-alight,
Setter alight of the jungle grass of Tswaing! (1971:36).

[113]

Nare ya habo Nkwebe

Buffalo of the house of Nkwebe

Kwena ya mor'a Mokhachane

Crocodile of the son of Mokhachane

Tlou ya Mabatla

Elephant from Mabatla

Pohwana e ntshonyana

Young Black Bull (1971:38).

The first poem [110] is an example of the eulogium derived from the verb *Mothiba*- ('interceptor') from the *thiba* ('intercept'). Usually this eulogium is followed by an object, in this case *dipelesa* ("beasts of burden"). In [112] we recognise the type of parallelism which Jakobson called anadiplosis, while in [113] the zoological metaphors, *nare* ('buffalo'), *kwena* ('crocodile'), *tau* ('lion'), and *pohwana* ('young bull'), are parallel, in that their characteristics repeat a certain semantic value - they all imply ferocity.

In the poem about Maama [111] there are metaphors which "identify the hero with phenomena of nature which are known for highest degree the quality observed and praised in the hero ... " like "lightning associated with speed and deadly accuracy"; *Tladi* ("black thunderbolt"), is a metaphorical reference to "Maama attacking Maseru with fury and without warning", and the phrase *tsatsi le rapama* ("when the sun was slanting") refers to the unexpected time at which the attack was launched, "on a cloudless afternoon when no one could expect a thunderbolt to strike".

In the following poem [112] the metaphorical eulogium *Ramahotetsa* ('Setter-alight'), may also have a literal meaning, in that the hero might have set a jungle alight. Kunene suggests that while "we are making a guess here ... History resolves the mystery", because "it tells us that Maama fought, during the Gun War, as Tswaing, but it says nothing about starting a fire. We therefore conclude that the setting alight of the jungle grass of Tswaing simply refers to the fighting of a furious battle in this area". This implies the disguise of historical fact through figurative language.

Some eulogiums use images of animals, "mostly wild and ferocious, but also domestic animals, specially the bovine", as in [113], which has wild animals, *nare*

(‘buffalo’), *kwena* (‘crocodile’), and a domestic animal, *pohwana* (“young bull”). The animal metaphorical eulogues are usually followed by the name of the hero’s famous forebear, or his place of origin. Examples of the former are in [113a] and latter in [113b]:

[113a]

Tlhware ya habo Seeiso

Python of the house of Seeiso

Leubane la Mokhachane

Swooping falcon of Mokhachane.

Pooho ya Peete

Bull of Peete.

Phofu ya bo-Mokabai le Motena

The Eland of Mokabai and Motena (1971:38).

[113b]

Tau ya mothati wa Qeme

Lion of the mountain ledges of Qeme

Tlou ya Mabatla

Elephant of Mabatla (1971:38).

The third sub-type, eulogie using regimental names, is of less significance because these names are chosen arbitrarily, even though the choice is determined by circumstances, while the fourth, descriptive eulogues [113e], uses physical features “which distinguish him [the hero] from other people, particularly those which make him look awesome and fierce, and are likely to inspire fear into his adversaries, accompanied by a qualifying expression. The following poems are given as examples:

[113c]

Mohale wa Qhoba-sekapa

Brave One who is Capturer-of-the-sheep

Mohale wa Mmalwela-Makgolokwe

Brave One who is Defender-of-the-Makgolokwe (1971:43).

The clan name eulogues usually use images of animals, so that we have “Bataung (people of the Lion), or the Lion-clan, Baphuthi or Baphuthing (people of the Duiker), Batlounge (people of the Elephant)” and so forth. Kunene explains that “where the clan takes its name from an animal, the hero might be called by the name of that animal”. In other words the name has metaphorical implications, though Kunene seems to suggest that in this case there is no overlap between symbolism and metaphor. An example is drawn from a poem about Masopha:

[113d]

Kwena e ntsho ya Mathula-sekepe

Black crocodile who is Collidor-with-Boat (1971:46).

The second major type of eulogues, that of associative reference, divides into three sub-types, association with relatives, association by genealogical reference, and association with peers. Examples to illustrate these are given in poems [113e], [113f] and [113g] respectively:

[113e]

*Malefetsane e motshwana, Letsitsa, kgaitsemi ya Mpinane
Mohats'a Maluke.*

Black avenger, Letsitsa-Warrior, brother of Mpinane
Husband of Maluke (1971:47).

[113f]

*Thak'a Sephohlele,
Thak'a Motlatle, mora Lets'hela.*

Peer of Sephohlele,
Peer of Motlatle, son of Lets'hela

[113g]

*Fako o futsitse bahale ba kgale,
O futsitse Thesele le Makhabane,
Hape le Peete le Mokhachane.*

Fako has taken after brave of long ago,
He has taken after Thesele and Makhabane,
And likewise Peete and Mokhachane (1971:50).

In [113f] the word *thaka* (translated as 'peer') means 'age-mate', and a person is usually associated with his "companion-in-arms". A special kind of reference by association with a relative is when a person is associated with his child. In this case the noun prefix *ra-*, which means "father of ... male owner/possessor of a thing or quality", is attached to the child's name, usually the daughter, as in the reference to the following chiefs, Lerotholi, Letsie, Moshoeshoe, Masopha and Molapo respectively as *Ra-Letshabisa*, *Ra-Senate*, *Ra-Mohato*, and *Ra-Tholoana* and *Ra-Mosa*.

Though the above bear factual or historical truth, Kunene warns that they are of primary concern mainly for their structural significance:

We are not concerned with factual accuracy, but rather with structural patterns and their frequency, and whether a style or styles and a technique or techniques are seen to emerge from the use of such patterns. If we are unable to see why association with a female relative [as in [5f]] should add glory to the hero, this does not, one would hope, make us question the validity of the technique of praise by associative reference and so that of the poem. We need other grounds for that (1971:52).

So far Kunene's analysis is the most detailed in terms of structure, as we mentioned earlier. His most original contribution is the analysis of the different types of eulogues. This is a unique way of approaching metaphor and symbolism, by looking at how certain figures of speech are drawn from the culture of the text, and how this culture sees natural phenomena and uses them figuratively, with a specific significance. The use of animal metaphor is the most interesting, and we shall come back to this point in the conclusion of this chapter.

5.2.1.4 Paragraph versus stanza

In the analysis of the topographical structure of heroic poetry Kunene rejects the terms 'verse' and 'metre' because of the "usual connotations they have for those

acquainted with European literature". He sums up his understanding of these concepts as follows:

A metrical system, which the above terms would suggest, is based on a syllable count, and the distribution of stress. A line must have so many syllables, of which so many must bear strong stresses being separated from each other by regular intervals. This is conventionalized, and poets use the iambic pentameter or the anapaest or whatever other form, counting so many 'feet' per line, and sometimes even so many lines per verse, The lines are therefore all even, or can vary their quantity only according to specified rules (1971:53).

He concludes this definition with a rejection, and asserts that "in *dithoko* the unit is not the syllable. The question of verse and rhythm in the above senses does not, therefore, arise". As a result he prefers to use 'paragraphs'. This, rather than syllables, he argues, determines a line in a praise poem. He argues that rhythmic pattern is, also, not determined by the number syllables but by aesthetic repetition "in so far as the repetition will mostly be from preceding line to following line". It should be clear that Kunene is very much aware of precisely which aspects of Western criticism may not be accommodated in African oral criticism, due to the language specific elements determining the composition of poetry in African language. As already noted above, this pinpoints a possible area for further research in order to explore the possibilities of a unique exploitation of phonological repetition in African oral poetry.

According to Kunene, the main points which ought to be borne in mind in analysing heroic poetry is that the poet composed at the spur of a moment, and had no time to consider rules, while at the same time his art was based on an old tradition, and thus "subconsciously he *is*, in patterning his poem, drawing from his tradition. He is a child of the tradition, but not its slave". We are here reminded of Empson's ambiguity of the fifth type (see section 3.2.2.1), where he suggests that the poet discovers ideas as he writes. Though it has not much significance here.

The paragraph, according to Kunene's analysis, carries the theme (not his word) in terms of the shift of the poet's perspective. At times the poet addresses the hero directly or talks about him, or addresses his audience, or the hero's enemy, in a pattern which Kunene calls the "eulogie-to-narrative formula". When the poet talks about the hero he does this in either of two ways, he talks about him, or talks "to him exhortatively or pseudo-exhortatively" - Kunene refers to this as "proclaiming the hero". The same applies to his address to the audience, he may talk about the

people listening “in their special relation to the hero”, or talk to them. When he talks about the enemies the same techniques are employed, he talks about the enemies “always defiantly and in disparaging terms” or addresses them directly, “apostrophizing them, warning them of the serious consequences of their actions should they dare to attack the hero”.

These three categories or proclamations form a formula simply referred to as “the eulogie” as opposed to another form, “the narrative”, even though the first may flow syntactically into the second. We refer to Kunene’s examples:

[114]

*Mohaeletse wa Mohato, Kgokotla ya Mokhachane,
Seforo sa maqheku, sa banna le ka bana,
Sa batho ba setseng marakong!
Le hoja o se bohale, Kgokotla ya Moshoeshoe,
Motse weno o ka be o le siyo.*

Protector (son) of Mohato, Wanderer descendant of
Mokhachane,
Stronghold of the aged, of men and of children,
Of the people who remain among the ruins!
Had you not been so brave, Wanderer (son) of Mo-
shoeshoe,
Your town would be no more (1971:56).

[114a]

*Lekena la Ranneko 'a Bakwena,
Tshwara thebe e tiye, wa Rasenate,
O a bona fatshe leno le a ya!*

Lekena-warrior of Ranneko of the Bakwena,
Hold your shield and grip it firmly, son of Rasenate,
You see that your country is perishing (1971:57).

[114b]

*Mohlanka wa-Selunwa-ke-babo,
Kajeno ba mo kwenehese Bakwena,
Bo-Masopha le Lerotholi.*

Young-brave-rejected-by-his-people,
This day they have forsaken him, have the Bakwena,
Such as Masopha and Lerotholi (1971:58).

[114c]

*Tladi tsa benya, mello ya banana,
Ya sala e ka di beetse thabeng
Ho ngwetsi ya marena,
Ngwetsi ya batho kaofela,
Lekena la Rasenate.*

Lightning flashed and fires blazed,
That it seemed they'd laid their eggs on the mountain,
Around him who is the daughter-in-law of kings,
The daughter-in-law of all people,
Lekena (son) of Rasenate (1971:59).

[114d]

*Motho o teng, o tsebe di thata, Mokutu;
Ha a qobe a e-ya morao:
Ke Matlejane, o hana ha a betswa,
Ha a betswa o qoba a tlolela pele, Sekwere,
Moo marumo a sa tlang ka bohale.*

There's a man who is hard to advise - Mokutu;
He does not parry blows retreating.
He is Matlejane who is not deterred when struck,
When he is struck he parries and jumps forward,
Sekwere,
To where the spears still come flying fiercely (1971:60).

In the first poem [114] the first three lines, which proclaim the hero, form the 'eulogie', and the last two the 'narrative'. This is the case where the hero is talked about but not addressed directly, while in [114a] we find the latter form, where the first line is a vocative eulogie calling for the attention of the hero. In [114b] we have the narrative form, which describes the hero by narrating his deeds.

The structure of the narrative form is based on the temporal tenses, the past or historic tense [114c] and the historic present [114d]. In the latter the narrative “dramatizes the actions of the hero, at the same time attributing to him the permanent quality of being able to deport himself in the manner he did on the historic occasion commemorated, should there be occasion for it in the future”.

The narrative which is oriented towards the audience uses the vocative, and that which is oriented towards the enemy uses the temporal tenses as that oriented towards the hero. Examples are drawn from the following poems:

[115]

*Le se mpate, bahlankana beso;
Ha le ke le re ke nna ka mo thula?
Ha le re ke nna ka bolaya pele?*

Do not hide my actions, young men of my country!
Will you not say it was I who struck him?
Will you not say it was I who killed first? (1971:60).

[115a]

*Tholo e fata seolo, e a tjhora
Ya ha Borane [President Brand] le yona e a fata:
Na e re e ka betana le ya Thesele?
Ke re ya ha Borane [President Brand's] molala o kgathetse,
Molala o kgathetse ke diforaga! (1971:60)*

The Male Antelope gores an antheap, sharpening
his horn.
Does he think he can wrestle with Thesele's?
I say again Borane's [President Brand's] one has a tired neck,
A neck tired from carrying heavy loads! (1971:60).

[115b]

*Jan Fick, o kgutle, o lopehile,
O batlile ho jewa ke Seja-batho:
Ntsu e rata e ka o ja ka dinala
Ya o qhaqha melomo, ya e qeta,
Ya o senyetsa ditedu o di rata.*

Retreat, Jan Fick, you've walked into a trap,
And were almost eaten by the man-Eater:
Had the Eagle a mind to, he would claw you,
And tear up your lips completely,
Spoiling the beard you love so (1971:63).

In the poem about Maama [115] the audience is addressed directly, and in the following one about Lerotholi [115a] the enemy is talked about, in the "historic present" tense, and in the poem about Bereng Letsie [115b] the enemy is addressed directly and called to attention by name, Jan Fick - "a Boer general during some of the wars between the Basotho and the Orange Free State in the nineteenth century".

A shift of perspective may be introduced by putting words into the mouth of the enemy, as in the following poem about Rafolatsane Letsie:

[116]

*Le teng ha eba o rata ho tseba Tjhesetsi,
O ke o ngolle lewatle, o botse.
O tla jwetswa ke bana ba Makgowa
Ba re: 'Tjhesetsi ha eso ha a sa rateha,
Basadi ba heso ba dutse metshele;
Le ha ba lla, ba shebile Lesotho,
Ere ha ba shadima Modumong,
Meokgo ya bona e be e se e etswa,
Ba re: "Banna ba rona ba feletse moo,
Ba itjeletswe ke Tau ya Mohato,
Thamahanyane ya ba kwenya le masapo!"*

And if it be that you wish to know the setter-alight,
I beg you, write to the sea and ask them.
You will be told by the children of the white man,
They will say: 'The Setter-alight is loved no more in our
country,
The women of our country do no more conceive;
And when they cry they turn their eyes towards Lesotho,
And when they look upon Modumong,
Their tears at once begin to flow,
And they say: "Our men have perished in that place,
They've been devoured without regard by the Lion of

Mohato,
The brown Hyena swallowed them together with their
bones!" ' (1971:61–2).

From the above examples it is clear that the paragraph is the determining structural feature. The idea is carried in the eulogic or narrative content. But there is no hard and fast rule as to the number of paragraphs in a poem or lines in a paragraph, “the way the poet arranges them is a matter of individual preference”, but it is evident that “the most frequently used one of these is the eulogic-to-narrative pattern”. The next feature which Kunene deals with is parallelism, and we proceed to see how he studies it.

5.2.1.5 Parallelism and structure

Kunene defines the following types of parallelism: “(1) Parallelism of thought through the repetition of words and phrases; (2) Parallelism of thought through the re-statement of ideas by synonyms and indirect references, and (3) Parallelism of grammatical structure through the repetition of syntactical slots (Kunene, 1971:68). The main form which this device takes is repetition. Kunene’s view partly agrees with Cope’s (see 4.2.3.3) when he says that “repetition may be aesthetic; it may also be unaesthetic and monotonous”. There are different techniques which are employed in implementing an aesthetic quality of repetition, which is what we will discuss in this section.

Parallelism, according to Kunene’s approach, ramifies into various forms, “repetition of words and phrases”, “cross-lined repetition patterns”, “vertical-line repetition pattern”, “discontinuous repetition”, “deverbative eulogic and cognate verbs”, “mixed tenses of the verb”, “climactic repetition”, “repetition of emphasis”, and so forth. Here we shall only deal with a few but not all examples and definitions so as to give a general idea of the principles underlying his critical method. This definition coincides with Jakobson’s (see section 2.2.1.2), though his application is not as refined as the latter’s, especially because of the kind of parallelism which he misses, parallelism antithetic (see section 2.2.1.2). Whether this coincidence is serendipitous, or brought about by ascendancy is an interesting question, which we will try to grapple with in the sixth chapter.

The following poems are illustrations of the different techniques of parallelism by repetition (see also poem [107]), where ‘oblique’ repetition is used. The phrases *o jelwe ke Koeyoko* (“has been devoured by the *Koeyoko*”) are ‘incremented’ by the phrases *ya Letsie* (of Letsie) and *Seja-bana-ba-Makgowa*

(“Devourer-of-the-children-of-the-Whiteman”) in the second and third lines “bringing something new into the narrative”. The phrase *ngwan’a lona* (“your child”) in the initial position of the first line is the ‘initiating’ word or phrase which determines the position of *o jelwe* and *ke Koeyoko* in the next line. The idea is schematised as follows:

[117]

a -----	b -----	c-	d -----
<i>Ngwan’a lona</i>	<i>o jelwe</i>		<i>ke Koeyoko</i>
(Your child	has been devoured		by the Koeyoko
c -----	c-	d-----	e -----
<i>O jelwe</i>		<i>ke Koeyoko</i>	<i>ya Letsie,</i>
He has been devoured	by	the Koeyoko	of Letsie,
d -----	f -----		
<i>Koeyoko</i>	<i>Seja-bana-ba-Makgowa</i>		
The Koeyoko	Devourer-of-the-children-of-the-Whiteman) (1971:70)		

We have already referred to the Empsonian dead metaphor (see section 3.2.2.1) in the verb ‘devour’. Kunene does not comment on this, but pays attention to parallelism. The obliqueness of parallelism is illustrated as follows:

a -----	b -----	c -----	d -----
b -----	c -----	d -----	c -----
d -----	f -----		

We have already indicated (see section 2.2.1.2) how Kunene’s structural analysis of the above lines misses further subtleties of parallelism. He misses a point when he leaves the compound noun *Seja-bana-ba-makgowa* (“Devourer-of-the-children-of-the-Whiteman”) intact without dividing it morphologically, for it consists of morphemes, even full words (e.g. *Makgowa* - white people). As a result of this he fails to recognise the semantic parallelism which *ngwana lona* (“your child”: literally - “child of you”), *ya Letsie* (of Letsie), and *ba Makgowa* (of the white people). Kunene’s reading goes only as far as suggesting that this kind of repetition is “of very frequent occurrence in *Dithoko*”. He points out that the lines

may slant from left to right, but there are instances where the parallelism runs in a “cross-line” repetition, a combination of lines crossing each other from left-to-right and from right-to-left, as in the following poem:

[118]

Tau ya Bolokwe le Majaraneng
Ya Bolokwe, Tau dinala di nsho.

The lion of Bolokwe and Majaraneng
Of Bolokwe, the Lion, his claws are black.

[119]

Tawananyane se llele bohale,
Bohale ke ba ditau tsa ditona.

Little young lion, cry not for warrior-fame,
Warrior-fame is for the great big lions (1971:75).

In the above poem [118] the lines run obliquely from *Bolokwe* (person's name) in the first line to *Bolokwe* in the second line (right-to-left), and from the initial word *Tau* ('lion') to the same word in the second line (right to left), and in [119] the parallel line runs from *bohale* ("warrior-fame") at the end of the first line to the same word at the beginning of the next line (right-to-left), and *Tawananyane* ("Little young lion") is repeated [the idea] in the second line in *ditau tsa ditona* ("great big lions"). This is, once again, similar to Jakobson's different types of parallelism.

Another kind of parallelism is achieved through "vertical-line" repetition, as in the following poems:

[120]

Ha kena Leubane la Mokhachane,
Ha kena Leubane Leitsomedi
Theb'e lebenyane ya Rantheosi,
Theb'e lebenyane ya RaMasopha
A hana a finyella seforong
A batla a ba qhalanya seforong.

There entered the Swooping Falcon of Mokhachane,

There entered the Swooping Falcon, the Bird of Prey
The Shining shield of Rantheosi,
The Shining Falcon of Ramasopha
He heeded not, but went into their stronghold
And nearly did he scatter them from out their stronghold (1971:79).

In [120] the parallelism runs vertically from *Ha kena Leubane* in the first line to the same phrase in the second line, these are divided into two phrases, *Ha kena* and *Leubane*, so that we have two vertical lines from each phrase; and in the third line the phrase *Theb'e lebenyane* and the connective *ya* make two vertical lines each to its repetition in the fourth line; and from the fifth line *seforong* is repeated vertically in the sixth line. In contrast to this kind of repetition there is “horizontal-line” repetitions:

[121]

Ntsho, Sehata-ka-thata, Sehata-ha-ho-tshwerwe-dithebe.

Black-one, Firm-treading-one, Treader-when-shields-are handled
(1971:80).

[122]

Se jele dinepe, se jele dintsho.

He has devoured the cows, he has devoured the black ones (1971:80).

In the above poems repetition occurs by the repetition of a phrase in one and the same line, *Sehata* is repeated in [121], and *Se jele* in [122]. This coincides with what Jakobson calls internal parallelism (see section 2.2.1.2).

We will look at examples of how ‘discontinuous’ and “deverbative and cognate verbs” are illustrated in the following poems:

[123]

*Kgomo di ajwa Sefikeng,
Phosholi wa habo 'Matsoenyane,*

Tsa ajwa, tsa newa bo-Mashabatela .

The cattle are apportioned at Sefikeng,
Phosholi of the house of Matsoenyane,
They were apportioned and given to Mashabatela and his like
(1971:80).

[124]

*O ka re jela o nakeng la podi,
O re o ka thulana le Ramasopha,
Nketu e le Sepholosa-batho?
O n'a pholose batho ba Motonosi!*

Can it be that, eating, as you do, out of a goat's horn,
You think you can strike against Ramasopha,
(Against) Nketu who is Rescuer-of-men?
He rescued the people of Motonosi! (1971:83).

Discontinuous repetition patterns differ from “ones in which repeated phrases occur in the line immediately following the line of their previous occurrence” only in so far as there is one or more intercepting lines, as in [123] where the word *ajwa* (‘apportioned’) in the first line is repeated in the third line with a left-to-right slant - there are other examples with a right-to-left slant; In [124] *Sepholosa* (‘Rescuer’) is a “eulogie [noun]” which is repeated by a verb derived from it in the following line, *o'na pholose* (“he rescued”). Kunene’s analysis of parallelism is far more elaborate compared to the three critics of oral poetry we dealt with in chapter four. At this point we shall continue to his study of figurative use of language.

5.2.1.6 Figurative language - The poet and his culture

According to Kunene the poet chooses images, pictures, symbols and representations from his culture. Though they have universal characteristics, they are also “localized as to time and place, they reveal cultural traits which may be unique to the people who provide them with a context, and specific culture-oriented attitudes to given phenomena begin to emerge” (1971:102). Kunene suggests that the use of figures of speech is a way of ‘avoidance’, a feature which the poet employs in order to avoid ‘reportage’. The poet uses figures of speech to ‘distort’ what he is talking about. He uses hyperbole, understatement, imagery, symbolism, metaphor

and simile. His definition of poetic language is similar to the New Critics' and the Formalists-Structuralists', in that it draws a contrast between poetic and scientific language. Kunene asserts that the poet's use of figurative language "is in the artist's tradition: factual reporting is the scientist's way", and that "what the poet loses in scientific exactitude, he more than makes up for in aesthetic excellence". The term aesthetic excellence seems to be equivalent to 'foregrounding' (see Mukařovský, section 2.2.3.1 and 2.2.3.2), for this is what the device may be said to achieve. Where Kunene uses the word 'distort' for the function of figurative language the New Critics use 'transfer' - but there seems to be agreement in Kunene's and their conceptualization of it in the same way.

The first figure of speech which Kunene considers is symbolism. The first considered is that of "eating up" or 'swallowing', which is used to symbolise 'conquest', 'imprisoning', or "rendering powerless", and this is expressed in various images of physical landscape, 'gorges', or 'cliff', 'ravine' and 'caves', and the "Deep pool". Examples are drawn from the following poems:

[125]

*Ngwan'a 'Mamokhachane, Thesele,
Thesele, Pharu-e-telele-telele,
Kgomo di kene ka yona, di sa ile,
Le batho ba kene ka yona, ba sa ile!*

Child of 'Mamokhachane, Thesele,
Thesele, Gorge-of-unfathomable-depth
The cattle have entered therein, and are still gone,
The people too have entered therein, and are still gone (1971:103).

[126]

*Beleme o wetse makodiopong,
O wetse selomong, ho Lerotholi!*

Beleme has fallen down a precipice,
He has fallen down a cliff, in the hands of Lerotholi (1971:103).

[127]

*Kwena ya sheba ka har'a bodiba,
Ya sheba ka mahlo a le mafubedu,
Bashanyana ba Makgowa ba wela.
Bashanyana ba wetse hanong la noha!*

Noha e ntsho, Kganyapa ya Morena

Mmane ya o hlatsa.

Deep in the pool the crocodile opened its eyes,
He stared with eyes that were red,
And the sons of the Whiteman fell in.
The boys have fallen into the mouth of a snake!
Black snake, Deep-pool Monster of the King,
He belched forth lightning (1971:104).

In the above poems, [125] and [126], the symbolism used is of landscape, and in the latter [127] it is drawn from the myth of the “deep-pool” monster, whose shape is conceived to be that of a snake, and when it migrates from one pool or river to another it becomes a *kganyapa/khanyapa*. Thus the mythical snake and the deep pool are always compatible, so that:

When the hero is symbolized as a deep pool in which his enemies sink, this whole concept may also be conveyed by the idea of the monster either drawing these victims into the pool or ‘swallowing’ them. The idea of monster and pool then become interchangeable, and the words ‘snake’ and even ‘crocodile’ may be used to suggest this pool that drowns those who would venture too close to it (1971:105-6).

Another myth related to that of the deep-pool monster, which is commonly used as a symbol in heroic poetry is that of *kgodumodumo* - which is thought to be “a monster of immense size”. This monster is drawn from the legend of *Moshanyana Senkatana*, where it is narrated that it once swallowed a whole nation and left one pregnant woman, who gave birth to a son (‘Senkatana’), and the son killed the monster and delivered the nation from the monster’s stomach. Another mythical monster used symbolically is called *Koeyoko*. The monsters are often used to symbolise the enemy, as they have negative connotations, as above [107] and in the following poems:

[128]

Moqotjha-ntsho, thak'a Masunya a 'Mamatla,

Ntsho e tla e ahlame!

E itse ka re e sa ahlama, ra finyella ho yona ra e betsa;

E itse ka re e sa ahlama hape, ra finyella ho yona ra e betsa,

Ya ba ya di siya di eme dikgomo tsa mor'a 'Mamakhabane.

Thing-Pursuer, Peer of Masunya of 'Mamatla,
The thing is coming with open jaws!
Vainly it opened its jaws - we came right close and struck it;
Vainly it opened its jaws again -we came right close and
struck it,
Till it left them standing there, the cattle of the son of 'Mamakhabane
(1971:106).

[129]

Kgodumodumo ya eja batho;
Batho ba feletse mpeng ya selo!

The *Kgodumodumo* ate up the people;
The people are all in the stomach of the beast! (1971:106).

In [129] the monster is used to symbolize the enemy who is threatening “to swallow up the hero and his armies”, although in [128] there is no direct mention of the monster’s name but it is “so much like a portion of the myth of *kgodumodumo*, that it is safe to conclude that the poet had that story in mind”. What seems to be at play here is Jakobson’s equivalence principle (see section 2.3.1.1), for the choice of symbols in the above stand in paradigmatic relationship, and the symbols chosen share similar characteristics.

Some symbols drawn on personal occupations are also used, like ‘herdboys’, who are often used as both negative and positive symbols, as above [128] and in the following poems:

[130]

Hlomellane-wa-Diodi, Masopha,
Hlomella ba Senekane lehlaka
Ba re ba ya nokeng, ba ye ba lla!
Ho bua ba re ba tebetswe naheng
Ke badisa ba sa ba tsebe.

Planter-of-the-Diodi-regiment, Masopha
Plant the reeds on the men of Senekane
That they may go towards the river crying!
That when they speak they shall say they were chased from

the pastures

By herdboys they'd never seen before (1971:109–110).

[131]

*Motshosi ya tshosang Bathepong,
Kajeno ha a sa tseba ho tshosa:
A tshosa dikgomo a lebala batho;
Badisa ba setse makodiopong,
Ba wela makopong ho Ratholoana.*

Bird-Scarer scaring in Tembuland,

This year he knows not how to scare:

He scared the cattle and forgot the people;

He scares the cattle and leaves the herdboys behind.

The herdboys have fallen down the precipice,

They fell down the cliff at the hands of Ratholoana (1971:110).

In [130] the herdboy is used as a positive symbol, the hero is depicted as 'protector' and 'defender', but in [131] it has negative connotations because it is used with reference to the enemies, who "defeated and their cattle captured".

The 'bovine' is used to symbolize status, because of the different cultural symbolism of cattle among the Basotho: "The bull is a symbol of virility, strength, endurance. Hence the frequent occurrence of the bull as a metaphor for the warrior". This symbol is also double-edged, in that it can be used both with reference to the hero and the enemy "with the opponent [enemy] being the weaker and therefore defeated one", as in the following poems:

[132]

*Tholo e fata seolo, e a tjhora,
E tjhora lenaka Poho-ya-Peete.
Ya ha Borane le yona e a fata,
Ha e na dinaka e thula ka phatla.
Na e re e ka betana le ya Thesele,
E hula joko ka mehla, molala o kgathetse,
Molala o kgathetse ke diforaga?*

The Antelope gores an antheap, and his horn is sharpened,

The horn is sharpened, of the bull-of-Peete.

Borane's [President Brand's] one is also goring,
 (But) He has no horns, and butts with his forehead.
 Does he think that he can wrestle with Thesele's
 When he carries the yoke everyday and his neck is tired,
 His neck being tired from all the loads? (1971:111).

[133]

*Kgomo ya ntlo ya marumo, Seodi,
 Phatshwana-e-mokaka!
 E ohleleng kgwele, e kgaotse,
 Bahami ba yona ba ntse ba lla,
 Ka bo-Letlala ka bo-Maketekete.
 Phatshwana ya ina seretse mafing,
 Ya se re kgai ka tlhako ya morao ...*

Bovine of the house of spears, Seodi-warrior,
 Rebellious Feminine-Black-and-White One!
 Weave for her a rope, she has broken her bonds,
 Her milkers meanwhile are crying,
 Such as Letlala together with Mateketeke.
 The Femine-Black-and-White One dipped mud in the
 milk,
 Splashed it with her hind hoof ... (1971:112).

In [132] the symbol of the bull in the first line refers to the hero, and in the third line to the enemy. In [133] the symbol of the cow is used, which is a symbol of prosperity, because of its "milk which sustains life". Here the hero is symbolized as a cow. In the above poems, and in the following, [134], [135] and [136], we find Empson's idea of the ambiguity of the seventh type (see section 3.2.2.1), in which, according to him, opposite meanings may be reconciled in one word or image.

Another animal which is used as a symbol, a symbol of death, is the bird in its various genera, the vulture, the crow, and the eagle. The vulture is often associated with death, because "people were often alerted to the presence of a dead animal - of death - in the veld by vultures". The symbol may have shifts of meaning which can be used both for the hero and the enemies, and all the birds mentioned above are "very often used as metaphors to symbolize the qualities in the hero which find perfection in the beings of these birds", as in the following poems:

[134]

*La utla la solla, lekgolokgolo,
Le na'be le utlwa lefotha ho nkg.*

He pounced, then soared, did the Yellow-billed Kite,
For he smelled the smell of meat.

[135]

*Bereng, Tlaka-le-mathe-malodi,
La tsubella la sheba Thaba-Phatshwa,
La ya nka e phatshwa maokeng.*

Bereng, Vulture-with-a-sweet-tongue,
He streaked across the sky, then looked at Thaba-Phatshwa,
And who went and took the black-and-white one from the
thorn-bush country.

[136]

*Letlaka ha le betswa la Lerotholi, le a inama.
La fola, Tlaka-la-letonanahadi,
Hloho la e isa ka mahafing!*

The Vulture, when he is struck, he of Lerotholi, bows low.
He leaned forward, the Great-Vulture,
And hid his head arm-pit! (1971:115).

In the three poems [134], [135] and [136] the symbolic use of *letlaka* ('vulture') has positive connotations, indicating good skill at war.

Closely related to the symbolism of the bird is that of "the sky and the elements". The bird may be used as a symbol of "the anger of the sky: lightning and thunder, hurricanes and storms", while these elements themselves may be used symbolically to suggest each other:

[137]

*Tladi ho otlala e pheo-lephatshwa,
E pheo-lesweu ha e ke e otlala ...*

The lightning that strikes is that of the black-and-white wing

That of the white wing never strikes (1971:120).

[138]

*Lehohoretse le tsamaile moo,
La hohoretsa dipheo, la tjhesa.*

The Lightning has moved across that place,
Scraping with its wings and destroying by fire (1971:120).

[139]

*Tladi ya duma e sa dutse fatshe,
Ya duma ya ikotlolla dipheo.*

The Thunder roared while yet upon the ground,
He roared and stretched out his wings (1971:120).

Kunene explains the use of the bird as a symbol for the elements in the above poems [137], [138] and [139] as follows:

The myth of a bird of thunder leads to a chain of associations, some of which superficially appear illogical. Almost all the actions and characteristics of a bird may be described as the actions and characteristics of lightning/thunder. Thus the first seeming illogicality would, naturally, be the use of the word for lightning as subject of a sentence, and the description of the actions of a bird in one or all of the predicates and their accompanying phrases (1971:120).

Further to this climatic conditions are used to symbolize human attributes, both good and ill. For instance, storms and hail-storms to symbolize 'anger'. The sky is often used to symbolize "protection and benevolence", and the rainbow to symbolize 'strength'. These are often associated with magic, as in the following poems:

[140]

*Sefako sa dinehella se matla,
Re itse ka re re a se lwella, sefako,
Sa hoba, sa nka mebu ya masimo.*

A magic hail storm is powerful,
Vainly we tried to avert the storm,
It roared and swept the soil from off the fields! (1971:122).

[141]

*Ngwana Morena, Seokamela-batho,
Lehodimo ho batho le ntat'ae.*

Child of the King, Tower-above-the-people,
Sky to the people of his father (1971:122).

[142]

*Mookodi wa naha ya Moshoeshoe
Wa tshehetsa maru le lefatshe,
Ha lefatshe le tetema.*

Rainbow of the land of Moshoeshoe
Supported the clouds and the earth,
The day the earth trembled (1971:123).

In the first example [140] the hero (Lerotholi) is likened to the hail-storm, a “thing of the hands’ - that is caused with intent to destroy the adversary”, and in [133] Masopha’s protection is likened to the sky, while in [142] Lerotholi’s strength is likened to the rainbow, “like an Atlas who carries the sky on his arched back, while he plants his hands and feet upon the ground”.

There is a variety of other culturally drawn images which are used, including the ‘magician-doctor’, “the reed”, and those which “hint at female sex in praising a male hero”, and “female reference in teknonyms”. According to Kunene imagery is the poet’s way in which he:

Arouses emotional response in the reader by a prolific use of concrete terms, incising the mind with the particular in order to suggest the general. This awakens the imagination, and creates vivid pictures in the reader’s or listener’s mind. Here again, the use of concrete images is universal, but we may expect that some of the pictures chosen for the poetry of the Basotho will bring us closer to an understanding of their culture (1971:127).

And then he gives examples of images which are drawn from the physical cultural and abstract milieu, encompassing death, people, animals, human activities, utilitarian objects, other people, and concludes that “there are many other situations where the poet uses concrete descriptions for abstract ideas, or perhaps even gives more concreteness to non-abstract references” (1971:130).

We would like to point out some shortcomings in Kunene’s analyses of symbolism, which might have been better informed by employment of New Critical analysis. Kunene seems to take for granted the knowledge of how metaphor and symbolism function, and therefore does not draw a distinction between the two figures of speech. This implies that he uses them synonymously. Brooks and Warren make a clear distinction (see section 3.1.3.3), when they suggest that metaphor ‘transfers’, that is, it carries characteristics of one subject into another, while the symbol ‘works’, that is, it is interpreted within the same context in which it is used. We quote a definition which clarifies the distinction between metaphor and symbol:

Metaphor tends to be (or at least to seem) more *consciously* analogical than symbol ... Symbols seem to be more “natural” and spontaneous than metaphors. They almost never seem shocking or startling, as metaphors sometimes do. Unless the symbol has a conventional and arbitrary meaning, such as the Cross (signifying Christianity) or the stars and the stripes (signifying the U.S.A.), the symbol may impress one as simply having its meaning from the beginning. But closer inspection will show that successful symbols depend very much on context, and the poet whose symbolism seems to grow quite effortlessly out of the poem has usually found - whether by conscious intellectual or mere instinct or inspiration - a context properly developed to bring out the symbolism in the object (or action or process) that becomes the vehicle for that meaning (Brooks and Warren, 1976:577–8).

When we study the examples of symbolism which Kunene indicated in poems [125] to [139], some ‘symbols’, such as “hail storm” and ‘rainbow’ also function in a manner which transfers but not only ‘work’, at one level they can be interpreted in their context, in a culturally bound manner (“localised as to time and space”), but also as metaphors, where their characteristics would not be taken as archetypal. The destructive nature of certain natural phenomena open themselves to symbolic use in one direction. Perhaps Kunene has concentrated on the overlapping feature of metaphor and symbolism, that they are both images with certain evocative qualities.

As far as he is concerned, symbolism (like metaphor), functions by giving “concrete description for abstract ideas”.

Our observation in this regard is that a clear distinction has to be drawn between metaphor and symbolism. Natural phenomena used as imagery seems to us to be appropriate as metaphor rather than symbol, because of their universal manifestations, which are not, generally speaking, related to any particular culture.

Kunene continues with an analysis of praises of animals and objects. He gives a cultural-historical description of the reasons for poets to ‘praise’ animals and phenomena such as thunder, flashes of lightning, sounds of guns, and so forth:

Why are these things admired? The answer is simple: the men of those days had to ‘look like the time’; their survival depended very much on their possessing the qualities which they saw in their powerful adversaries, qualities with great destructive potential. Hence the admiration also of the wild predators ... many a clan assumed the name of one or other of the wild beasts - the lion, the elephant, the leopard, the baboon, the hyena, etc. (Kunene, 1971:132-3).

We shall take two examples where some effort was made to analyse the texts, in order to highlight some salient points of Kunene’s approach and analysis. These were written by Mohapeloa [143] and Khaketla [144]:

[143]

*Tjhutjhumakgala, ntho ya makgowa,
Lefokolodi tumisa kgwiti.
Hoi! Hoi! Le a dikela,
Hoi! Hoi! Tumisa kgwiti.*

*Tjhutjhumakgala,
Potlakela dinako,
Kgaola thota,
Hae ho hole.*

*Beng b'a ntelela,
Se dulele mekgabo,
Mosi ha o thunye,
Thota di dume.*

Tjhutjhumakgala, ntho ya makgowa,
Lefokolodi tumisa kgwiti (1971:148).

Tjhutjhumakgala, thing of the white man,
You millipede, make the fields resound.
Hoi! Hoi! Now it's setting,
Hoi! Hoi! make the fields resound.

Tjhutjhumakgala,
Race after time,
Lap the distance,
Home lies afar.

My people cry to see me,
Tarry not to add grace to your step,
But let the smoke rise,
And let the lands reverberate (1971:148).

Kunene explains with a footnote that '*tjhutjhumakgala*' is an onomatopoeic word for the steam engine train, then goes on to suggest that in the poem "the poet actually addresses the animated, non-living object, just as if it were animate, while therefore animation is not necessarily personification, it may be so" (Kunene, 1971:149). He defines animation as follows:

Through animation, a lifeless object is inspired with the breath of life; it is given a mind and a soul. A vivid imagination never fails to find, among the living creatures, one to which the animated object has a striking resemblance, and animation is then accompanied by identification with a living object, a metaphor par excellence (Kunene, 1971:147).

Our observation here is that the function of this stylistic feature, whatever he prefers to call it, seems to serve the same purpose as 'personification'. According to Kunene the vehicle of metaphor is sound and movement. He explains that:

The train (the subject of poem [143]), for instance, runs, sometimes at great speeds (sic), sometimes slowly and majestically; as it runs, it beats a rhythmic tattoo on the rails; from its engine come the puffing

of the smoke and the hissing of the steam; its numerous wheels are like the legs of a millipede, and as it goes round a bend its resemblance to a millipede is much enhanced; from its whistle comes a sharp, shrill sound, etc. (Kunene, 1971:148).

This analysis seems to draw an existential relationship between the poem and a real steam engine. The metaphor is read in terms of its one to one relation with a real steam engine. Kunene notes that metaphor can combine two senses, 'sound' and 'movement', and this reminds us of Empson's idea of synaesthesia in the ambiguity of the first kind (see section 3.1.1.1), where an image appealing to two or more senses is used. Another observation which we would like to make is that the poem, whether by intent or accident, is a sonnet. It has three quatrains and closes with a couplet (see section 2.1.1.3). The difference is that it does not use the normal rhyme scheme of the sonnet.

Khaketla's poem is very long, so we shall quote only a few stanzas for our purpose:

[144]

*Tjhutjhumakgala, nthwan'a makgowa,
Mohala wa tshepe, wa kgomo e ntslo,
Ha e le wa kgole e ka o kgaola!*

*Ke yona Mmamosi, maloeloe,
Lehlanya, Serwala-katib'a-towane,
Sebaka-mehodi hodimo le sele,
Sefehla-maru meya e kgutsitse,
Re sale re se re aperwe ke botsho;
Mosi o tlole, ditlhase di qhome,
E b'e ke tetema e jeswa ditlhaka.*

*Sekaja sa yona, Paka-malilomola
Se tsosa difefo, tsukutla-diema,
Majwang, difate di ekeselake,
Di kgise ka kaja eke di a baleha;*

*Terene e lonya, Mantshonyane,
E nkile ngwaneso a ba ya timela,
Pelo 'a re nyedi, meokgo ya seka,*

*Ya qhitsu dinoka marameng a me,
Ka sala ke lihitsu sa mahlomola!*

*Lefokolodi la dithota, Mahlabe,
Maoto a sekete, boseberwana.
Tosolla ka pele ho sirue dithaba
Tsa heso - Souru, Letlwepe, Ntshupe,
Ka bo-Mmaseepo le bo-Sekitshing*

Tjhutjhumakgala, beautiful thing of the White man,
There's a steel rope tethering this black bovine,
As for a woman rope, he would break it!

It is indeed, the Mother-of-smoke-that-trails-behind,
A Madman, Wearer-of-a-towane-grass-hat,
Creator of fog even while the skies are clear,
Churner-of-clouds even while the winds are still,
Leaving us covered with blackness;
Smoke billows up, and sparks fly,
As when a bonfire is fed with dry reeds.

Its speed, this Bringer-of-sorrow,
Creates a wind-storm, shaker-of-things-that-are-still,
And the grasses and the trees sway madly back and forth,
Moving fast and being in simulated flight;

The train is spiteful, Little-Black-One,
It took away my brother and he was lost forever,
My heart was sore, tears welled in my eyes,
And flowed like rivers down my cheeks, And there I stood crying
aloud with grief (1971:149–150).

We shall quote Kunene's analysis of the above poem *in toto*, so that we can
make our observation:

Tjhutjhumakgala - an onomatopoeic descriptive eulogue arising from
the sound of the steam engine as the train moves.

Mmamosi (Mother-of-smoke) - a descriptive eulogue, based on the smoke coming out of the engine;

Lehlanya (Madman) - a metaphorical eulogue: the train runs as if demented;

Serwala-katib'a-towane (Wearer of a *towane*-grass-hat) - a descriptive eulogue incorporating a metaphorical reference to the funnel of the train as a hat;

Sefehla-mehodi (Creator-of-fog) - a narrative deverbative eulogue;

Sefehla-maru (Churner-of-clouds) - a narrative deverbative eulogue;

Paka-mahlomola (Bringer-of-sorrow) - a narrative deverbative eulogue;

Mantshonyane (Little-Black-one) a descriptive eulogue arising from the colour of the engine;

Lefokolodi (Millipede) - a metaphorical eulogue based on the numerous legs of a millipede compared with the wheels of the train, and also by the way the train curves as it rounds a bend;

Mahlabe (Dark-brown-coloured-one) - a descriptive eulogue arising from the colour of the carriages (Kunene, 1971:151).

Our observation is that in the above analysis Kunene has indicated how figures of speech function in the poem - onomatopoeia, personification, visual and auditory images, and metaphor. The terms 'eulogue' and 'deverbative' are marginal terms, which simply refer to nouns proper and nouns derived from verbs respectively. In essence the analysis has more similarities with the New Critics' than is apparent. It differs only in so far as it explains how eulogues are derived from other parts of speech, but in their function these eulogues have the same function as metaphors and symbols in other languages. The continuation of Kunene's analysis dispenses with the term 'eulogue', although he still retains 'animation':

The train once again is animated and even personified: it is 'spiteful', it takes away ('seizes by force') one's loved ones; and even though mostly it is talked *about*, we see how in the last four lines it is talked *to* [apostrophised] it is a madman who wears a *towane*-grass-hat and who, by intent, causes 'fog' (steam from the engine) and 'clouds' (Smoke from the funnel) despite clear and windless skies (almost here, the idea of a diviner-doctor causing these things with his potent medicines). The poem is marked by hyperbole ... What mars this otherwise legitimate and effective use of hyperbole is the incongruous metaphor

of The Day of Judgement, which is too august for the relatively light subject of being dealt with in the poem (Kunene, 1971:152).

Though Kunene strives to make his analysis unique and original with the use of terms such as eulogie and animation, it comes down to a reading of figures of speech, and sometimes it tends to become paraphrase and commentary rather than in-depth analytical study. As we have seen, most of his concepts and definitions overlap with Jakobson's, especially parallelism. The only difference is his reference to culture bound symbols. We proceed with Opland's study.

5.3.1 Jeff Opland (1943-)

Jeff Opland was born in the Cape in South Africa. He was educated there and took a post at Rhodes University, in Grahamstown. He became professor and Director of the Institute of Social and Economic Research there. His main interest was in Xhosa oral poetry. He later moved to England, where he is now teaching and doing research. The case study which we undertake here will follow the same method as we did with other critics, but we shall be brief in this section, for Opland's reading is the least rigorous, and tends to degenerate into explanation and general observation rather than an in depth analysis.

5.3.1.1 The context of Xhosa oral poetry

The poems which Opland sets out to study are classified into three main headings: Poems which praise individuals, those which praise the clan, and those which praise chiefs. Opland's definition and view of the purpose of oral poetry is quoted from Monica Wilson's:

People and animals are praised for gallant deeds. Never have I heard a man, who is coward, with praises. The man who runs from a fight is looked upon as a woman, and women have no praises. Those who are praised are men and boys, bulls, cows, horses, dogs, cocks, and certain birds ... A boy also has praises when he is good at aiming ... A man who had a bull which was always victorious over other bulls praised him ... The ox gets praises when it is good ... the cocks are praised during the day when people are happy (Opland, 1968:35-6).

From the above it is clear that praising is an inextricable part of social life, and thus praise poetry is part of the cultural context in which it is found. It is thus that Opland sets out to analyse the oral tradition of the Xhosa with reference to the cultural background, taking a diachronic approach to indicate the dynamism of the tradition, so that in the poems which he analyses he does not focus attention on what can be classically regarded as 'traditional' and static. However, his diachronic study is only a prelude to narrowing onto the praise poetry of a particular poet, Yali Manisi, over a period of time.

5.3.1.2 Critical analysis

Opland proposes to use Lord's critical method, which was used in an analysis of Yugoslavian oral poetry, and starts with an explication of the praises of Kaizer Matanzima, which were composed by Manisi. In his approach to this particular poet's work Opland actually uses an intertextual approach, in that he compares the stylistic features of the poem under discussion with features in other poems written by the same poet, as Lord's (quoted by Opland) approach suggests, that: "In order to use this analysis one must have a fair amount of material for study, and it must be the right kind of material; that is, it must be at least presumably all from one person" (Opland, 1983:158-9). He therefore commits himself that "in conformity with Lord's prescription of using for analysis the oral poems of one poet, I propose for this izibongo about Kaizer Matanzima produced by David Yali-Manisi" (1983:159-60). So far he differs from the other critics we have studied, Schapera, Jordan, Cope and Kunene, in that their intertextual studies involve different traditional poets, while he studies the work of one poet. In all other respects they are similar.

We shall not go into details into Lord's method and approach, for whatever influences there are, will become evident in Opland's analysis, and their significance is not regarded in their own right but in their manifestation in our area of interest. Moreover, Opland suggests that he does deviate from the orthodox Lordian approach. This is clearly suggested in the outline of his own method:

To undertake a detailed cross-cultural comparison of Yugoslavian oral epic and Xhosa izibongo with regard to the formula as defined by Parry [Lord's student] and Lord, therefore, one must take three aspects into consideration: meter, usefulness, and repetition. Now clearly, however much Parry and Lord may insist on it as a criterion in the recognition of a formula, usefulness is too subjective a concept

to allow us to differentiate on its basis a repeated phrase from a formula ... The meter of Xhosa izibongo awaits definition ... the metrical principle might thus be an aspect of performance that an examination of the text alone could not reveal ... (Opland, 1983:158–9).

As we did with other critics we dealt with in chapter four and this chapter, we shall take specimens from Opland's analytical study, so that we can place him within a framework of our comparative study. The following poem, we are told, was composed in praise of Chief Kaizer Matanzima, one-time Chief Minister of the Transkei, on a visit to the University of Fort Hare:

[145]

A Daliwonga

A Daliwonga

Yiyo leyo ke le nkumkani yabaThembu baseRhoda

Yiyo leyo ke le nganga yeentaba zikaMnqanga

5 NguBhayi nafelane kuyazalana

Kuloko kwahlukana ngemigca ukuwabanzi

'Gusha ziyafana ngokuba mdaka

Nabazaziyo bazahlula ngeempawu

Yiyo leyo k'indwatyula yakwaTato

10 Ngunkwenkwezi azivumani nelanga

Kuba ziqhel' inyang' int' ezihamba nayo

Ziyaloyik' ilanga ngokubashushu

Umhlab' onamandla ndiwuqondile

Nakub' unamandla ndiwuqondile

15 Kuba lithob' inbalela kutsh' imilambo

Nto zinolwini hay' iimbongi

Kutsh' amatye kusal' iziziba

Xa kulapho ke mabandla kaNtu

Xa kulapho ke mabandl' akokwethu

Mn' andithethi nto kuba niyibonil' inkwenkwe

Iphumil' inkwenkwe kaMhlobo

Yayicand' imilambo

Ikhe yangangagunguluza kumahlathi kaHoho

Kulokw' itwatyul' int' enkulu

25 Yaza kungena phantsi koQelekequshe

Induli yakuloSandile noDondashe
Xa kulapho ke gwangqa lomkaMhlobo
Wena ntonga zimnyama zeseemlovulovini
Esoza siziphuthume.
 30 *Mini siphuthum' amaxhob' akokwethu phantsi kwentab' eTa-*
file
Siyinikiwe kambe loo ntonga
Loo ntong' incikane
Ngokuphath' imilanjani' asempumalanga
Nkant' umhlaba kaXhosa uma phantsi kwentab' ooKhala
 35 *Intab' ooKhala nditheth' intab' eTafile*
Kuba kulaph' alele khon' amarwanq' akokwenu
Kuba walal' aph' uMfant' ixhiba likaMtikrakra
Walal' apho noMakan' into kaGwala
Loo madoda k' afun' ukuphuthunywa
 40 *Asikuwaphuthuma ngezikhali*
Sesiya kuwaphuthuma ngokondel' akubinza kweenkwezi
Warhuqe ke gwangqa likaMhlobo
Kuba lomhlab' awusalifun' igazi
 45 *Koko siya kwalatha*
Kuba nathi salathisiwe
Xa nditshoyo goduka nawo ngawakokwenu
Ndee bham dovalele ncincilili
Ncincilili (1983:161).

We may note here in passing, before continuing with Opland's analysis of the above poem, that he not only studied Manisi's poetic art, but also used the latter as an informant in order to determine characteristic features of Xhosa oral poetic composition. According to Opland, then, some phrases in the poem [145] are said to have been 'repeated' in other poems: "For example ... line 22 is a common phrase in the poetry of other *iimbongi* ('bards') and in Rubusana's [one of the major Xhosa poets] collection, what Lord terms a 'regional' formula ("one that is used by a majority of singers in a region"), and is likely to be a 'formula' in Manisi's poetic vocabulary as well. Furthermore, certain passages in this poem, such as lines 5 to 8 and lines 7 to 17, repeated verbatim elsewhere in Manisi's oral poetry, can also be found verbatim in his written poetry ... such passages have been referred to as 'praises' ... " (Opland, 1984:160).

There are also other lines which Manisi has used word for word in other poetic works he composed earlier, which are referred to as 'formulas', for instance, lines 25, 26 and 30. Opland also observes that there is "roughly 75 per cent of the poem repeated elsewhere in Manisi's poetry". On the application of the standards for 'formulas' Opland imposes certain restrictions upon his analysis:

I have tried to be strict on admitting phrases as 'formulas': I have not accepted *loo ntonga*, for example, in lines 31 and 32, since that repetition is a product of a stylistic trope, as is the repetition of the verb *ukuphuthunywa* (line 39) and *siyakwalatha* (line 45) in the following lines with the change of voice; and, on the grounds that they are one word and not a phrase ... I have not accepted distinctive verbs that recur in Manisi's poetry, like *yangangunguluza* in line 23 and *itwatyul'* in line 24 ... One may or may not choose to call these repetitions formulas, following Lord's nomenclature, but it seems reasonable to ask whether these phrases operate in the same way as Lord's formulas: Are they *necessary* to the improvising imbongi, or are they substantially different from Lord's formula? (Opland, 1984:162).

Some lines in the poem refer to the social context, "either immediate (Matanzima's journey to Fort Hare [lines 23 and 24]) or more general (Transkei has been given too little land [lines 31 to 33]), or else they constitute exhortations (the dead heroes must be avenged [line 39], but not with violence [lines 40 and 44]; Matanzima should lead his people to their destiny [lines 41, 45, and 46], and it is time for him to return home [line 47])" (1983:162). Lines 5 to 8 and lines 10 to 17 are examples of lines which are "associated in the poet's mind with only one subject, in this case Matanzima". Such phrases tend to "fix themselves imperceptibly in the poet's mind and recur time and again in performances about the same subject. After the subject's death, it is these recurrent phrases that will be remembered by his associates as 'the praises of' the subject".

Opland also draws a difference between eulogies and narratives, asserting that there is a higher frequency of repetition in the former than in the latter. This idea is borrowed from Kunene. According to Opland praises, *izibongo*, are in essence eulogies. Repetition, he suggests, helps the praiser "to compose his poetry on the spur of the moment, they are useful to him, but they are not necessary" (1983:165). This is reminiscent of Empson's ambiguity of the Fifth type (see section 3.2.2.1),

which, he says, occurs when the poet discovers ideas as he writes, so that, for instance, there may be a simile or figure of speech which applies to nothing.

Other formulaic structures found in these praises are those which make reference to genealogical descent, like "*inkwenkwe ka Mhlobo*" (son of Mhlobo), and those which facilitate "thematic transition", like "*Xa kulapho*" ("do then"), and phrases referring to physical characteristics, like *olumadolo luka Matanzima* ("tall long-legged one of Matanzima"), which is used by another poet in the praises of Matanzima. This concurs with Kunene's suggestion (see section 5.2.1.3) that eulogues are derived from, among other things, association with the hero's relative.

A feature which Manisi's poetry shares with other oral traditions is the use of 'linking', 'parallelism' and 'chiasmus'. The latter term is borrowed from Lestrade (1935). Examples of parallelism are found in lines 4 and 5 [probably Opland meant lines 3 and 4], 18 and 19 (*Xa kulapho*), and linking in lines 31 and 32, and an example of chiasmus is drawn from another poem:

[146]

*Umacekis' ingcek' abuy' ayiplu-
thume*

*Umaphuthum' ingcek' abuy'
ayicekise*

He puts aside white clay and
then reclaims it
He reclaims white clay and then
puts it aside (1983:166).

Parallelism by repetition is obvious in the above poem [146], where the phrase in the first two lines is repeated in the third and fourth lines. This poetic device has received ample attention from the critics we have already studied in this and the previous chapter, and also in Jakobson's study. Opland does not offer anything new in this regard. We thus pass on to the next aspect.

Under the title "poetry in print" Opland studies stylistic features of a number of 'written' Xhosa poetry. Here we shall look at a few samples as a case study of his critical method.

[147]

*Ulin guba inkulu siambata tina
Ulodali bom' uadali pezula,*

*Umdala uadala idala izula,
Yebinza inquiquis zixeliela.
Utika umkula gozizuline,
Yebinza unquiquis nozilimele.
Umze uakonana subiziele,
Umkokeli ua sikokeli tina,
Uenza infama zenza go bomi;
Imali inkula subiziele,
We wena q'aba inyaniza,
Wena wena kaka linyaniza,
Wena wena klati linyaniza,
Invena inh'inani sibiziele,
Ugaze laku zimman'heba wena,
Usanhla zakhu ziman'eba wena,
Umkokili ua, sikokeli tina:
Ulodali bom' uadali pezula,
Umdala uadala idala izula*

He who is our mantle of comfort,
The giver of life, ancient, in high,
He is the creator of the heavens
And the ever-burning stars.
God is mighty in the heavens,
And whirls the stars around
sky.

We call on him in his dwelling-
place,
That he may be our mighty leader,
For he maketh the blind to see;
We adore him as the only good,
For he alone is a sure defence,
He alone is a trusty shield,
He alone is our bush of refuge
We supplicate the Holy Lamb,
Whose blood for us was shed,
Whose feet for us were torn,
Whose hands for us were pierced:
Even He, the giver of life on high,

Who is the creator of the heavens (1983:214).

This poem [147] is a hymn which was composed by Ntsikana, an early nineteenth century Christian convert who could not read or write but composed from memory and taught these hymns to his people by repetition "till they could retain them upon their memories". Opland includes this as an example of Xhosa oral composition. Quoting A. C. Jordan, Opland suggests: "The fact that his [Ntsikana] Hymn of Praise [147] is the first literary composition ever to be assigned to individual formulation - thus constituting a bridge between the traditional and the post-traditional period - is of great historical significance", and that, in Opland's own words:

Ntsikana's hymn adopts the form of traditional Xhosa izibongo for its Christian material... The hymn is a Xhosa eulogie in praise of God, displaying stylistic traits characteristic of izibongo. Clearly it is not in any way narrative, and merely alludes to the achievements and qualities of God, exhorting the congregation to loyalty for him ... the text alone suggests it is an izibongo. As a hymn, it performs a function in Christian society similar in some ways to that of an izibongo in Nguni society, though its mode of performance is quite distinct (Opland, 1984:215).

[148]

Zifikil' iimini! zifikil' iimini!
Zifikil' iimini zokukhunjulwa
kuka Hintsu.
U Hintsu lo ngoka Khawuta ka
Gcaleka,
UGcaleka lo ngoka Phalo ka
Tshiwo.
UTshiwo lo ngoka Ngconde ka
Togu.
Ulifincil' ikhulu leminyaka
wafayo,
Kok' usathethl' iint' ezinkul' eziz-
weni zomhlaba

The days have come! The days
have come!
The days of the remembrance of
Hintsa have come
This Hintsa belongs to Khawuta
of Gcaleka
This Gcaleka belongs to Phalo of
Tshiwo,
This Tshiwo belongs to Ngconde
of Togu.
One hundred years have passed
since he died,
But he is still saying great things
to the nations of the world (1983:216).

Opland's analysis informs us that the whole poem [148] consists of eight sections, with an introduction of thirty-five lines. Each of the sections have lines varying from twenty-one to sixty-five, and that these lines are "addressed to the British, the Ngwane, the Thembu, the Bomvana, The Zulu, the Mfengu, and the royal Xhosa house". It is also noted that the poem has no "stanzaic divisions within the section", and that its form is that of *izibongo*. The purpose of the poem is stated in its introductory section, which is quoted above, and then the poet goes on to "appeal to seven different groups in turn to remember Hintsa as the centenary anniversary of his shocking death at the hands of British soldiers in 1835 approaches". The British are addressed directly:

Is it not he who bowed down like a lamb?
The lamb of sacrifice for the nation? (1984:217).

Our observation here is that a comment on the use of the simile "like a lamb" is drawn from Biblical symbolism. Opland continues to explain that after this section quoted above all the groups mentioned are addressed in turn, also urged to remember Hintsa "for his intervention in their history", and then the analysis concludes with the following observation:

The form of this poem is that of traditional *izibongo*. Mqhayi intersperses lines from the traditional poems of chiefs; this is the traditional way of Xhosa poetry. In recounting the historical

connections between Hintsá's and Gcaleka and the ethnic groups Mqhayi addresses, Mqhayi occasionally falls into a cohesive narrative mode, notably in the passage addressed to the Ngwane. This narrative itself is allusive ... the narrative is designed to serve the overall purpose of the poem, to provide support for the appeal for a memorial to Hintsá. Mqhayi functions as a traditional imbongi in incorporating into his poem genealogical, historical, and ethnographic data, and in attempting to sway public opinion (Opland, 1983:218).

Opland here offers more in the light of the context and explanation, but gives nothing in terms of analysis of the poetic structure. In the same manner he gives a detailed contextual study of a poem entitled 'UThuthula', by one of the major Xhosa poets, Jolobe, which starts as follows:

[149]

*Ewe siyawuvula umlomo
Sivuma ngabantwana begazi
Inyange lomhobe libe nathi
Lisikhaphe kwingoma yandulo,
Lisikhusele zesingaphandlwa
Sakujong' izinyanya zamabali
Zisiphe amazwi olu daba*

Oh yes, in sooth I open now my
mouth
To sing and tell of men of royal
blood;
And may the Muse with me
along the way,
Keep company in this my song
of yore
Vouchsafe protection to my
common eyes
As I look up to face the sun - the
king.
Indeed, I pray the spirits of the old
To give me words befitting this

my theme (1984:219).

This poem [149], like [150], is also divided into sections, which are numbered. Its lines consist of ten syllables (decasyllabic), “with enjambment common, and as such clearly displays its distinction from traditional izibongo and its Western source of inspiration”. The whole poem, of which the above [149] is only the first stanza, is divided into sections which are numbered. Opland summarises the content of the poem as follows: “In the first Jolobe describes the chance meeting at a forest between Thuthula the daughter of Mthunzana and Ngqika, the son of Mlawu in the Xhosa royal line. Ngqika and Thuthula fall instantly in love” (1984:219). Then he goes on to suggest that the poet, Jolobe, reveals “his romantic as well as his Christian sympathies” in some parts of the poem, of which Opland quotes only the translation:

[150]

Their tender souls had shaken hands that hour,
For love is old as this gaunt world of ours.
Our souls were made in twos like unto twins.
In life there is a search, a quest, a hunt -
One twin goes out to seek for its own mate,
For long ago it was proclaimed and said,
"It is not good that man should be alone.
Now let us make a helping mate for him".
The twin mate, we believe was meant by this (1984: 220).

Then the analysis informs us that Ngqika succeeds as heir to the throne, and his beloved departs with his uncle, the regent, migrates “with his followers, among them Mthunzana and his daughter”, Ngqika’s beloved. Opland goes on with an analysis which amounts to no more than a paraphrase of the narrative content of the poem:

Ndlambe, who has at least ten wives, desires a young wife for his old age, and he sues successfully for the hand of Thuthula. They are married according to traditional custom ... the third section recounts Ntsikana’s vision and conversion, and incorporates his hymn. Ngqika is impressed by Ntsikana’s preaching and invites him to settle in his chiefdom. The chief’s councillors reject Ntsikana... The councillors plot to separate Ntsikana and Ngqika ... and so they speak to Ngqika of Thuthula and revive in him the fire ... Ngqika consents to

Thuthula's abduction. The fourth section tells of messengers who travel from Ngqika to Ndlambe's kraal to put Ngqika's secret invitation to Thuthula ... At first Thuthula, duty bound, refuses, but after brief reflection she changes her mind and flees with the messengers by night ... Jolobe leaves the reader in no doubt about his attitude to Thuthula's decision and the spiritual source of his moral judgement ... Ngqika and Thuthula are reunited, happy for a moment: The plot ("The aim supreme it was to bring to naught the Word of God") has succeeded (1983:219-2).

On the question of decasyllabic metre Opland is just as unconvincing and as vague as Cope. He gives the impression that the feature exists in oral poetry, but does not justify this with a succinct illustration.

The above analysis concludes with the suggestion that "although the form and conception distinguish this poem from traditional Xhosa izibongo, Jolobe ... on occasion quotes from traditional poems of chiefs ...".

Another poem analysed in detail opens as follows:

[151]

Bek' indlebe, nntwanam!
Ndikutyel' iindaba zamandulo,
Mandul' umhlaba uselinqatha,
Inkomo zityebile zimbumba
zithandeka.
Amathol' ayedloba phay' emaul-
lelwemi,
Mandulo phambi kwesibetho:
ULindipasi!

Lend me your ears, my child!
 Let me tell you tales of days
 gone by,
 In the days gone by earth was a
 choice bit of fatty meat,
 The fat cattle were shapely and
 desirable.
 Calves gambolled yonder in the
 pastures,

In the olden days before the dis-

aster:

Rinderpest! (1984:226).

This poem [151] is the opening of a long poem with four sections and fourteen stanzas. The fourteen stanzas commence with the word *mandulo* or its synonym, *mhlamnene* (“days gone by”) and twenty of the stanzas end with the word *ULindipasi* (‘Rinderpest’), and “all but one preceded by the line (*A-a!* or *Ewe!*) *mandulo phambi kwesibetho*, (‘Ah!’ or ‘Yes!’) ‘in olden times before the disaster’” (1983:226).

The second section is entitled *Isihelegu* (‘disaster’), and gives examples of the effect of the Rinderpest, and all the forty-five stanzas of this section close with the line “*Eso sihelegu!* (“or *Sihelegu!* or *sihelegundini!*”) *ULindipasi, Isihelegu!* ‘That disaster!’ (or “you disaster!”) ‘Rinderpest disaster!’ ”. Thirty stanzas out of these are preceded by the line *Kwoku! Hayi ke khon’ eso sihelegu!* (“Indeed! Oh no, that disaster!”).

The second section, according to Opland, is entitled *Iindatyana namare ngentsusa yesibeth’ ULindipasi* (“News and rumours about the origin of the pestilence Rinderpest”), and it narrates the “consequences in Malawi of the violation of an injunction against hunting after the ‘sighing’ of a wild cat has been heard at night”, and then comes the last section, entitled *Emva kwesibeth’ ULindipasi*, (“After the pestilence Rinderpest”). This section is said to:

Announce the passing of the plague in three stanzas that are followed by eight stanzas each referring to a social ill that came in its wake: migration, poverty, vagabonds, fraud, assassination, thieves, antisocial people, drunkenness. The penultimate stanza occasioned by the actions of the veterinarians at Onderstepoort mentioned in the final stanza of the poem who put the rinderpest to flight with their knowledge. Except for the last, all thirteen stanzas end with the line *Awu! Ewe!* (or *Kwoku!*) *Isibeth’ ULindipasi!* “Oh! Yes!” (or ‘Indeed!’) “The pestilence Rinderpest!” The first three stanzas start with the line *Sadlula! Sadlula! Sadlula!* “It passed!” The following eight stanzas each start with the word for the social ill repeated three times: *Imfuduko! Imfuduko!, Ubuhlwempu! Ubuhlwempu! Ubuhlwempu!* and so on. The penultimate stanza starts with the line *Uvuyo! Uvuyo! Uvuyo!* “Joy! Joy! Joy!” (1984:227).

All the lines of the poem are of irregular length, without any end rhyme, and Opland suggests that “the form is thus characteristic of traditional izibongo except for the extreme stylization of the repetitions that mark the stanzaic division”, and that the poem “is not much of a coherent narrative as a set of narrative pieces and passages commenting on the impact of the cattle sickness”, concluding with the remark that “the subject is hardly the stuff of heroic epics: There are no leading characters, no admirable exploits”.

Further poems are analysed, but we shall not refer to the analysis in detail since it follows very closely on the explanation of the above poems. To sum up, Opland tends to give a content explanation of the text, stanza by stanza, then analyse it in terms of the number of sections and how they are related in their sequence to build up on the narrative. He concludes with this observation on Manisi’s poetry in particular and Xhosa oral poetry in general:

Early Xhosa poems adopt Western form, but from about the turn of the century, as the poetry of Mqhayi appears in *Izwi labantu*, poets feel free to return to traditional style and rhythm. The traditional poetry of Mqhayi and Manisi demonstrates that allusive eulogy occasionally turns to explicit narrative ... The traditional diction, designed to refer often metaphorically to personality traits, physical characteristics, or actions, is less useful for detailed description and a coherent plot. But Manisi’s oral narratives and Huna’s written epics remain unfettered by European meter and rhyme. The advent of writing, literacy, and printing does not in itself entail the death of oral poetic tradition; on the contrary, the oral tradition has persisted for over 150 years and has eventually come to be exploited and extended in the evolution of a new poetic genre that exists only in print (1983:232–3).

Opland’s time estimation of the existence of such an ancient genre as oral poetry is conservative. It ought to be noted that perhaps he probably dates it from the time when praise poetry was first written down, which was approximately that many years ago. According to Rycroft, for instance, “spradic documentation of Zulu *izibongo* dates back to the early 19th century ... in the 1830’s” (1974:55). Opland’s intertextual analysis reminds us of Cope’s comparison of a number of Tswana praise poems in order to determine the regularity of numbers of lines (see section 4.2.1.2). We are also reminded of Jakobson’s comparison of a number of Shakespearean

poems in order to determine recurrent features. Though Jakobson's is superior and far more incisive than Opland's superficial observations.

5.3.1.3 General structure

As already indicated earlier, Opland's thrust in his study of Xhosa oral tradition is that it is not a static tradition which has to be studied simply from a synchronic point of view, but that tradition has to be seen as a living and dynamic force, and thus changes can be noted through a diachronic and comparative approach:

In the course of time the bearers of the tradition might relinquish some of the elements in favour of new ones, with different elements altering at different points in time; thus aspects of the tradition might change, and the tradition would yet retain an identifiable character. At one point, the tradition may consist of elements 1 to 10, say; when next viewed, the tradition might be seen to consist of elements 3 to 14, say, and at another point in time, perhaps elements 7 to 18 (and possibly at a later point 11 to 24, so that it could have nothing in common with its existence at the first point of observation and yet by virtue of continuities and changes still be the same tradition (1983:236).

Unfortunately Opland does not give examples or illustrations of what he says above. He is content with making these observations, without substantiating them. He then goes on to argue that time is not of paramount importance in the study of tradition because changes may vary periodically. What is crucial in the study of tradition is the essence of what actually changes. Thus he suggests that "to define tradition we need to observe it along a horizontal axis, synchronically, at one point in time ... thus defined, the tradition may, if there is sufficient evidence, be compared diachronically".

Short of this principle he focuses attention on the work of one particular poet, Manisi, but to an insignificant extent sets it against the traditional norm of Xhosa oral poetry in order to illustrate derivations and changes leading to certain conclusions about the style of this particular poet and at the same time the dynamism of Xhosa oral tradition. Thus he is able to conclude that:

If we observed Manisi, for example, we might note that his oral poetry is mainly eulogistic, but sometimes he produces oral poems that are explicitly narrative; on the basis of this observation, we might conclude that Xhosa oral izibongo is eulogistic; Manisi's narrative poetry can accordingly be seen to be not traditional (Opland, 1983:237).

Opland's method of studying oral poetry diachronically seems to coincide with the Formalist-Structuralist principles (see section 2.1), which suggest that a diachronic study of language enables the reader to determine what changes have occurred, and what features are dominant in a particular epoch.

He continues to observe that there are three main elements which are composed in the praise poetry, the textual, the textural and the contextual. Under the first we find certain structural features such as opening and closing formulas, animal imagery, repeated phrases, and introductory salutation (*isikhahlelo*) in the form of exclamation or interjection such as *Hoyina! Hoyina!* or *Aho!* or *leliba!*. The latter serves to attract attention, and "has served as an opening formula in izibongo for some time" and are "still current in the tradition and are still heard in performances by iimbongi". There is also a concluding formula at the close of the performance, the common one being *Ncincilili!* ("I despair"). *Ncincilili!* is a form typical of praise poetry and is "never used at the end of a poem with Western rhyme, meter, or stanzaic structure but only at the conclusion of poems in traditional style". In summary:

Xhosa izibongo can be classified under one of six content categories: A statement of intention or salutation; praises treating physical and moral qualities of the subject; praises treating his achievements; genealogical information; references to the social context of the performance; and exhortation of the audience (Opland, 1983:243).

The above has already been noted by Kunene, and Opland notes that he also draws from Kunene's method. He then informs us that the praises of chiefs start with a sequence of the assertion "He is ...", and the praiser often coins phrases which recur in other praises of the same subject. These "consisted largely of cryptically allusive phrases". Opland then tells us that for the last one hundred and sixty years Xhosa oral praises have not evolved much in terms of traditional content, though he later states that certain images, especially animal metaphors, tend to be gradually fading out in modern contemporary praises. He uses Lestrade's words to sum up the

main stylistic features of this genre, who suggested that the major structural features of Bantu verse are “balance of ideas and balance of metrical form. This notional and metrical balance takes various shapes: it is found in *parallelism* ... as *cross-parallelism* or *chiasmus* ...”. He also quotes Kunene’s use of the term eulogie, suggesting that this structure is also found in Xhosa oral praises, and cites two examples.

The main form of imagery consists of cattle metaphors, *inkunzi* (“a bull”), *ithole* (“a calf”), and *inkomo* (“head of cattle”), and those of other animals and birds. Opland remarks on the dwindling of animal imagery:

I suspect that the metaphor and in particular the animal metaphor is no longer widespread in izibongo as it once was, that it is a feature that is passing from the tradition though by no means obsolete yet. The decline in popularity of the animal metaphor might be ascribed to the fact that wild animals no longer roam freely and hence are less useful as metaphors; or if the animal imagery derived from totemic beliefs, the imagery might disappear from poetry in a society that no longer supported such beliefs (Opland, 1983:247).

It would have been interesting, since his interest is in the diachronic study of oral poetry, if he had indicated what dominant images are taking over, and what the significance of this is, in terms of how this genre should be studied.

According to Opland, a feature which still persists in the Xhosa praise poetry is the “deverbative eulogie” which Opland defines in Kunene’s terms, “a praise whose ‘structural core is a verb’”. The metaphoric eulogues are often repeated. In addition to these structural features are ‘textural’ elements. This refers to elements “common to the performances of contemporary iimbongi, those features that the audience can see and hear but that would not be evident from an examination of the transcribed text of the performance”. The main feature is the texture of the voice in performance. Of this Opland does not say much but describes in general terms such as “gruff style of articulation”, “low-pitched growl”, “rhythm and pitch”, “high tone”, and refers to physical manifestations such as “vigorous gesticulations”, “histrionic performance”, and “loud voice”. Perhaps a phonetic study of sounds, such as Jakobson’s, would have been helpful in clarifying these aspects.

The contextual element refers to the regalia which the praiser adorns when he renders his poetry, which is composed mainly of skins, usually a leopard skin cloak, a spear, and a knobbed stick. The significance of the leopard skin is now obscured but Opland makes a surmise that “perhaps the animal-skin garb identifies him

symbolically with the chief ... in the poetic scheme of things, the imbongi serves as a surrogate for the chief, wearing the animal skin that identifies him with the chief”.

While the praiser’s role was governed by some kind of attachment to the chief, and his performance to festive occasions, the role has evolved with the changing patterns of the traditional status quo as it mixed with European traditions and political institutions, and the dynamism of praise poetry to adapt to the new situation was demonstrated by the praiser’s ability to accommodate new subject matter and personalities. This is in keeping with Jordan’s view (see section 4.2.2.1) that oral poetry is capable of evolving. As an example of this adaptability Opland refers to Mqhayi’s praise poem of the Prince of Wales, already mentioned by Jordan (see section 4.2.2.2), and Ncamashe’s praises of Ian Mackenzie on his inauguration as Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University in 1977. Examples given are a poem in honour of a Methodist Church president [150], entitled “The president through the eyes of the imbongi”, and one which was composed by a praiser called Mpumulwa in honour of Senator F. S. Malan [153] - “the respected minister of education whose sympathies with the course of African higher education enabled the University College of Fort Hare to be opened in 1916”:

[152]

We greet thee. O yee head of the Weslyans!
Thou honourable grey head,
And whose chin hangs,
Graceful beard like those of a he-goat;
A man of good brains thou art.
A man of commanding voice to all nations;
Whose voice is heard by the
Mpondomises, Fingos and Indians;
Thou art called “life”, live,
For thou giveth promise of everlasting life
To all nations that believe God’s Words ... (1983:254).

[153]

Go out April and let in May,
Star that ruleth our Rulers,
The month that closed the breach thirty years ago,
This May that gave our Land its banner,
That gave us the language Afrikaans;
In England too thou art praised.
In May do we initiate the young men;

Today makes graduates of the young men of Fort Hare.

Awake, Chief Maqoma, and cry out in wonder.

Awake, Chief Tyhala, beat thy breast in wonder.

Awake, Chief Sandile, and stare in wonder

To see this anny growing from thy bones;

Their assegais by no enemies shall be taken.

Behold the fruit of the War of the Axe;

Behold the fruit of the War of Mlanjeni -

War that began with the snatching of the Court-skin

Shared between Sutu and Brownlee.

Awake, Mlanjeni; behold the new doctors who wot [know] not of
ancestors,

But look with a glass and hear with a stethoscope

.....
Greet, all ye, greet Malan, the grey-haired, the Closer of the
Breach,

For his name is writ on the foundation-stone of No-College;

For thou, Malan, won for us the smiles of our Government,

Stroked it gently and made it kind so that it gave liberally.

Thou art Senator of Senators among the Bantu people.

Thou art our voice. Hail! Thou closer of the Breach.

Thou did sift out our thoughts and chose wisely,

Val'umsantsa.

To-day thou dost initiate our young men,

And a maiden also, my sister, Nothungabasele.

Copiously we pour forth our thanks;

Greatly we appreciate the counsel of experience.

Again we cry:

We thank thee and thank thee, thou Closer of the Breach,

Hail, thou, val'umsantsa!

Val'umsantsa! (1983:54-5).

Opland suggests that the difference between the praise poetry composed for white people and that composed for black people, as in the two above, is that "there are no references to pedigree and limited references to titles, virtues, and deeds. The immediate context of the occasion and the broader context of black-white interaction receive greater emphasis". Another difference is that when the imbongi performs

before the white guests he expresses the grievances of his fellow black people knowing that the white guests or audience do not understand him, and thus he “must at times perform orally in dislocation, as a writer does, for an imagined or theoretical audience that understands his poetry ... even if his actual audience present before him during his performance might not” (1984:256).

Going back to Opland’s analysis of the textual, textural and contextual features of the praise poem we find certain reminders of, if not similarities, with the Formalist approach. Opland suggests that the textual features consist of certain dominant elements such as imagery and opening and closing formulas. This is similar to foregrounding, for these are distinctive features which differentiate praises from other poetic forms. The textual, according to Opland, serves to attract attention.

Thus we see that Opland seems to bring about a different accent in Jakobson’s definition of the various factors and functions making up his communication model (see section 2.2.1.1). In Jakobson’s terms, foregrounded structural features such as imagery would exemplify the poetic function, which serves to draw attention to the poetic message “for its own sake”. However, Opland’s insistence on opening and closing formula which serve to attract the attention of the listeners, in trying to ensure that the communication channel is open, also reminds us of Jakobson’s conative and phatic functions respectively. The rapport established between the bard and the listeners, by resorting to devices such as the opening formulas distinguished by Opland, is also reminiscent of Richards’ ‘Tone’ (see section 3.2.1.1), which, he suggests, establishes the speaker’s attitude to his audience, or how he stands in relation to the audience. These, like Opland’s ‘contextual’ elements, are not given as analysable structural parts in a poem.

Other textural elements, according to Opland, are auditory and visual impressions. He suggests that these are lost in the written text, for the addresser, or reader cannot experience them. This seems to be a peculiar element of the performance only, if we keep in mind Jakobson’s recognition of the informative value of ejaculations, etc. However, Opland also seems to assign a rather passive role to the reader in suggesting that that type of communication may be lost in a written transcription. We would like to argue, here, that his reading could have been better informed if he had been aware of the New Critics’ idea of the role of the reader, especially the suggestion that the reader has to read a poem aloud in order to bring out its meaning. As a result, the reader has the capability to bring this out in his or her reading. This is more fully substantiated by Richards’ psychological model which explains reading (see section 3.2.1.1).

Following Richards' model, the reading of a praise poem would set the following stimulus-response reaction in motion: The written word releases visual sensation, and then "images closely associated with these sensations", and "images relatively free", and a chain of thought of or reference to "various things", and then emotions, and finally "affective-volition attitudes". All these constitute an active reading which brings into life all the contextual elements which the reader misses. These do not necessarily have to be existential.

Opland's analysis goes contrary to the Formalist-Structuralist and New Critical approach in some respects, in the sense that it tends to put the addresser (praiser) as the centre equally with the text, while the two schools tend to dissociate the creator of the text from the text. Though socio-historical in its focus, in some ways his analysis is informed, wittingly or unconsciously, by Formalist-Structuralism and New Criticism, except that it tends to be more general and descriptive, and less analytical.

5.4 Conclusion

In concluding this chapter we wish to observe that there are a number of similarities which one finds in the readings of critics of Western poetry and those of African oral poetry. The most prominent among these are the analysis of figurative language, and devices such as repetition and parallelism. This coincidence, as indicated in the discussion above, suggests that there are universal ways in which figurative language operates in poetry, which makes it different from scientific language, across various languages. It is interesting to note that the Formalist-Structuralists, New Critics, and Kunene pay attention to the difference between scientific and poetic language, and it is through this comparison and contrast that the definition of both Western and African poetry becomes more crystalised. Though the concept of 'foregrounding' is not used explicitly, the underlying principle seems to operate in the definition of oral poetry, for it is through the use of certain devices that the genre distinguishes itself from other forms.

There are, of course, also some differences, especially when we come to aspects such as rhyme and metre, which are definitely not part of African oral poetry, as opposed to Cope's and Opland's suggestions, whose readings seem to have been influenced by Western standards, especially New Critics such as Richards and Brooks, who find rhythm and metre an indispensable part of poetry. In this regard we find a clear case for what we would like to call, at this stage, a qualified rejection of Western critical methods. But only as far as this particular aspect is concerned

and keeping in mind our earlier observation that the possibility of a unique exploitation of rhythm and metre indicates a possible area for future research.

All the critics of African oral poetry, Schapera, Jordan, Cope, Kunene and Opland, are unanimous in asserting that there is a need to study the cultural background of a poetic text in order to understand fully what is involved in it, and this is a perspective which is not shared with the critics of Western poetry. Perhaps this arises because the texts they have used for their studies are not historically bound. They also do not emphasise the cultural aspect of the texts they study.

The most rigorous among the critics of oral poetry is Kunene's reading, which highlights the use of metaphors and symbolism in relation to the culture of the text. The most important contribution is the concept of eulogues, and how they are grammatically derived. There are certain overlaps with Jakobson's analysis of grammatical structures of certain poetic devices. It is these overlaps which emphasise the ideas of universal tropes. Empson, perhaps the most detailed after Jakobson, seems to have developed some ideas in his types of ambiguity, which might have been useful if employed in the analysis of oral poetry, as we tried to illustrate in our commentary in chapters four and this chapter. This seems to call for a consolidation of what can be useful rather than a rejection.

As for metaphor and symbols, and their relation to the context of oral poetry, at this point one can only suggest that this does not present a strikingly new approach, for there are certain natural phenomena, such as, for instance, lightning, thunder, storms etc, which can be universally attributed destructive qualities in any language or culture. The same could apply to wild beasts such as lions, tigers, crocodiles, and others, whose fierceness gives rise to certain basic attributes, which may either be negative or positive, depending on the particular given poetic state of mind. The divergence could arise when it comes to domestic animals, and that is where Kunene's call for cultural understanding of symbols, and his study, becomes important. Different cultures attach different significance to domestic animals, thus their symbolic reading in a poetic text may be culture bound, and require an understanding of the context in order to read them properly. For example, the symbolism of cattle may be lost to a reader in whose culture dowry is never paid in the form of these animals, or in a culture where wealth is not calculated in terms of the number of cattle a person owns. This, however, does not undermine the fact that figurative language functions in the same way in all languages, for whatever symbolic meaning is attributed, the underlying and governing principle is that of selection and combination, of choice among a closely related set of available codes. We can thus close this discussion by suggesting that our findings seem to lead to the

conclusion that the differences between the devices used in Western poetry and those used in African oral poetry are marginal, thus critical approaches could be shared. And that since there is not much evidence that the critics of African oral poetry did not consciously use any of the critical methods used by Formalist-Structuralists and New Critics, the similarities should be complementary, and a more sharp awareness can benefit the study of oral poetry, as we tried to indicate in this and the previous chapter.

CHAPTER 6

6.1 Introduction:

In this chapter we shall do a general overview of the meta-critical and comparative study which we undertook in chapters two, three, four and five of this thesis. Our purpose is to indicate the overlaps and divergences in the analytical methods employed by Formalist-Structuralists and New Critics on the one hand, and the critics of African oral poetry on the other. This is done in order to set our analysis in the proper context of the debate whose main focus has been dealt with in the first chapter, so as to assess the limitations or advantages of thinking along the lines of a dichotomy between Western poetry and African oral poetry, and to see how far the debate has been advanced in the actual practice of analysing oral poetry, in so far as the methods of the critics we have chosen can reveal.

Since our findings suggest that there are indeed coincidences in the methods of the Western and the African approaches to poetry, especially with regard to the use of figurative language, we shall also attempt to open up directions and ways in which further research could be undertaken towards a search for an African poetics. This will, however, be done in view of principles derived from our findings, namely that in so far as poetry is concerned, there will always be more universal features than unique ones across linguistic and cultural boundaries, as a result we would like to argue that a syncretic rather than an exclusive method should be the starting point in the attempt to finding a new poetics. But before we can go on to the main thrust of this chapter, we need to reiterate some remarks which we have already made, in order to emphasise our bias.

A number of survey studies, both historical and analytical, have already been done on the development and evolution of theoretical approaches to the study of literature. The scope of our thesis, as already stated *ab initio*, was not to undertake such a survey, but to focus attention on case studies selected from two schools of thought, Formalist-Structuralism and Anglo-American New Criticism, comparing their analytical methods with those of five critics of African oral poetry. Our approach claims originality in the sense that it has broken new ground in studying theoretical assumptions in relation to actual practice, whereas most studies, especially those which combine a wide variety of schools of thought in their scope, tend to focus their attention on the general principles of schools of thought, without ever attempting to analyse case studies of the theoreticians concerned.

In addition to the above, there has never been, despite the debate on African literary aesthetics in relation to Western standards, any attempt to undertake a comparative study of readings of genres, canons, standards or methods applied by critics of African poetry against the critics of Western poetry. As a result, the debate, if ever it took any practice into consideration, has produced only readings which run parallel with each other, and fail to reconcile similarities, so that the relationship between African and Western literature seems to be that of two dialogues which run in a continuous cycle of thesis and antithesis, without ever coming to any synthesis, or mutual acknowledgement. Even the proponents who admit the influence of Western aesthetics on the reading of African literature still have to produce detailed analyses which prove their case.

In our approach we chose Jakobson, Shlovsky, and Mukařovsky from the Formalist-Structuralist school, and Richards, Empson, and Brooks of the New Criticism school, both to represent 'Western' theories, methods and practices of reading poetry. The representativeness is arguable, as already mentioned in previous chapters, but the strength of our choice lies in the fact that they represent, indisputably, the most powerful and rigorous movements ever to emerge this century, whose influence, especially New Criticism, is still predominant in the study of poetry in American and British institutions of education, and other parts which have been part of the anglophone empire, including South Africa..

However, taking the members of these schools as individuals, a sharp shortcoming becomes apparent, in the sense that some more explicit than others, as is the case with Jakobson among the Formalist-Structuralists, and perhaps Richards among the New Critics. The analysis of Shlovsky and Mukařovský is characterised by lack of case studies of their readings. The reason is that most practical readings of their poetry which this writer came across were on poetry written in one or other Eastern European language, which are inaccessible to us. Moreover, most of their works are not widely available in English, as is the case with Jakobson. Nevertheless, their theoretical framework is supplementary to and contributed towards making the characteristics of the school become even more sharply focused. Their theoretical suppositions add to Jakobson's theory and approach, as members of the same school of thought. With the New Critics the situation is not similar, in that we have managed to present case studies for all three of our theorists. The advantage here is obvious, namely, that they are all anglophone, and their material was easily accessible to us.

A shortcoming in our study seems to be in the choice of critics in the fourth and fifth chapters. The suggestion of their representativeness opens itself to challenge, because they do not belong to any school of thought. This points at the

status and development of the scholarship of South African literature in general, and poetry in particular. Firstly, it indicates that there has never been a concerted and consolidated effort, except by a few individuals in isolation, to engage scholars in a coherent effort to establish a critical canon of African literature in general and poetry in particular, and put it into practice, or at least a debate which might give rise to such, so that on the whole the theory of literature is still in its infant stage, especially so far as African literature written in African languages is concerned.

The reason for this situation has already been discussed in chapter one, namely, that South African scholars, especially those in the mother country, were scarcely engaged in the discourse of 'post-coloniality' ideology. Whereas "Black consciousness" movements such as Négritude engaged in the debate on aesthetics of art, in South Africa the equivalence of this movement, the Pan-Africanist movement associated with Sobukwe and Lembede, and the Black Consciousness associated with Biko, never engaged directly in the discourse of literary aesthetics. Further to this, scholars of South African literature written in African languages never engaged directly in theoretical debate with scholars and theoreticians of Western literature. Instead, in most cases we find that the New Critical approach has dominated their analytical approach to poetry. This is evident, for instance in two major works on poetry by Ntuli (1984) and Lenake (1984). Both these critics set out to analyse the poetic works of Vilakazi and Ntsane respectively. The context to the literary texts they study receives very little attention in these studies, while the major focus is on the intrinsic structure of the text, as would be applied by Anglo-American literary critics.

Thus, trends in the development of critical practices cannot be traced to any school of thought, but through literary journals, for instance, *LIMI*, which started at the University of South Africa in the 1960s and its sequel, the *South African Journal of African Languages*, which started in 1980 when *LIMI* became defunct. Another journal is *African Studies*, initially called *Bantu Studies*, which started at the University of the Witwatersrand in the early 1930s, and is still extant. Another journal which pays attention to traditional literature is the *Southern African Journal of Folklore Studies*, which was initiated in 1991 and published at the University of South Africa. These journals are still to engage in theoretical issues. On the other hand the scholarship of anglophone literature has always found its tradition in English traditions, mainly the New Critical approach, which has dominated the departments of English literature in South African universities. The emergence of departments of Theory of Literature and Comparative Literature is a relatively recent phenomenon, which is only beginning to challenge the hitherto sacrosanct place of the New Critical method.

The movement towards the rise of a strong tradition of theoretical scholarship, or its apparent manifestation, is only in its early stages, which date approximately from the 1980s and 1990s. Swanepoel (1990) has made an attempt at a general survey of the number of engagements in this direction. This is the most recent work of this nature. Swanepoel gives a general survey of Western schools of thought, along the lines of Fokkema and Kunne-Ibsch (1966), Ryan and Van Zyl (1982), and others. However, he goes beyond that by undertaking a general survey of works which have been undertaken in the Departments of African Languages in South African Universities, with specific reference to theses undertaken at the University of South Africa. In this regard the work serves as a bibliographic survey rather than a critical analysis. It remains for new research to indicate in deeper analytical terms, which direction this renaissance is taking, and how far it has gone.

Our approach is different in that it is not essentially a survey, but seeks to analyse closely the critical methods which have been applied by critics of African oral poetry, thus we could not escape the imperative of selecting fewer critics, Schapera, Cope, Jordan, Kunene and Opland, in our quest for a closer analytical and comparative reading. Perhaps we should also point out that among these Kunene and Jordan are the only two who can be regarded as literary scholars in the classic sense, while the others take literature as part of another discipline of their major interest. Schapera approached literature as a means towards an end - anthropology, Cope also has some strong interest in anthropology, while Opland approached Xhosa oral poetry from the historical point of view. This makes them different from the Western critics we selected, for the latter are specialists in the field of language and poetry. This divergence of approaches therefore gives our selection a necessary variety. At this point we shall continue to give a summary of our findings, and highlight their pertinence to the major debate which has been outlined in the first chapter of this thesis.

6.2 Assessing the proposed syncretic analysis

As we indicated throughout this study, the similarities or coincidences which we find in the analytical method applied by the Western critics and critics of African oral poetry are determined by universal tropes of language. It has emerged that there is concurrence that poetic language differs from scientific language in the manner in which it constructs images and employs figurative language, and that the major and universal device of poetry is figurative language - metaphor, symbolism, simile, personification, irony, etc. There are also other predominant devices such as alliteration, rhythm, rhyme, metre, and parallelism. Thus we have a common base

upon which all poetry operates, and is constructed. We shall start with those structural features which are common to both Western poetry and African oral poetry and thus call for convergence of approach. In the process we shall also comment on those aspects which present a case for divergence.

Firstly, in defining how figurative devices function in poetry, there is also the underlying principle of defamiliarisation, in that it distinguishes poetry from other literary forms. Whether African or Western, poetry in general differs from other genres in the way it is constructed, and how its linguistic devices are derived and employed from everyday language. Here the Formalist-Structuralist concepts of 'defamiliarisation' and 'foregrounding' seem to be indispensable in the definition of both Western poetry and African oral poetry. The five critics in the last two chapters do not use the concept directly, but in their differentiation of oral poetry from other genres it is implied, namely, that oral poetry is different from other genres because of the way in which its devices are constructed. Jakobson, Richards, Brooks and Empson on the one hand, and Schapera, Jordan, Cope, Kunene and Opland on the other, are in harmony on the use of figurative language as the dominant device in poetry, especially metaphor and symbolism, followed by parallelism in its different forms, and then repetition. The New Critics do not deal with poetry which employs parallelism in their studies, thus it received little if any attention in their analyses. We shall come back to parallelism later, for, as it is defined by Jakobson, it is the most important device which cuts across linguistic and cultural boundaries as a poetic device.

As to the content of poetry there seems also to be concurrence in the Formalist-Structuralist and the African critics' approach, that poetry should not be regarded as documentation of truth or fact. Mukařovský put it thus: "If a work of art has a 'subject' or a statement, this statement cannot be held as documentary evidence of any phenomenon in society, even the one which it asserts to be its subject" (see section 2.2.3.1). This coincides with Jordan's and Kunene's view, who say that "the African bard is a chronicler as well as a poet" (see section 4.2.2.1), and that "the poet is an artist, not a chronologist" (see section 5.1) respectively. Here we find the autonomy of the text being asserted as a matter of coincidence in the definition of the function of poetry.

Considering the structure of both African and Western poetry, the understanding of figurative language or imagery can function in two closely related ways. At one level the understanding of how a metaphor or symbol, or any figure of speech, is determined by how the device functions in terms of other figures in a given text, irrespective of whether it is Western or African. This means that figurative language functions in a universal manner. However, at another level there

might be a need to understand the cultural context of the text in order to understand the culture-bound connotation of metaphor, as Kunene suggests (see section 5.2.1.6).

Having noted that, we wish to add that there does not seem to be any reason for the need to call for a separate approach to metaphor and symbolism, for both African and Western texts can bear images which call for an understanding of the cultural background. As a result the approach to the culture of the text could be the same. Perhaps the most important argument which the post-colonial polemicists could bring into the discourse of cultural understanding is that the Eurocentric reader of an African text generally tends to transfer and apply the habits or theories of his or her European reading, without making an attempt to understand the cultural idiosyncrasies of the African text, as pointed out in the arguments put forth in the first chapter of this thesis (see section 1.2). Notwithstanding this argument, we find no disparity in the definition of metaphor and symbolism, and how they function in both African and Western poetry.

The actual reading of metaphor and symbolism by Western and African critics in our case studies reveals a central divergence, where the Formalist-Structuralists and New Critics study metaphor in poetry without recourse to the cultural context, while the critics of African oral poetry insist that figurative language, especially symbols, is culture bound. Here perhaps it can be argued that the difference between Western poetry and oral poetry lies in the exclusively culture-bound use of metaphor and symbolism in oral poetry, while Western poetry uses free metaphors. This, however, does not indicate a significant difference between the application of poetic devices in Western poetry as opposed to how they are employed in African poetry, but rather points to the peculiarity of oral poetry from other forms of poetry, be they Western or African. Thus oral poetry can be regarded as a sub-genre within the poetic genre.

This point about the culture bound nature of metaphor and symbolism in oral poetry comes out very explicitly in the readings in chapters four and five. Perhaps this could be regarded as a major contribution of the critics of African oral poetry. Nevertheless, it must also be admitted that any text written in any language can employ images which call for an understanding of extratextual material. As a result this difference is not significant. This is not meant to underrate the importance of learning the cultural background of any text, but only to highlight the fact that the challenge of the student of poetry goes beyond that, for even after a clear understanding of the culture, there will be the need to understand how these images are constructed in relation to other images, and how they function in the text, in terms of their selection and combination. Moreover, we realise that the distinction which Kunene draws between metaphor and symbol coincides with that drawn by

Brooks (see section 3.1.3.3) when they suggest that the functioning of symbol is more bound to the context than that of symbol.

Furthermore, this view argues clearly the case of the Formalist-Structuralists' idea of automatization (see section 2.2.3.1). When symbolism and metaphor are used so much that they can be reduced to one-to-one interpretation in the reading of a number of texts, they become automatized, and thus become limited, or even hackneyed to such an extent that they cannot give rise to any other evocation other than that to which they are tied to by their cultural background. The reader of the text has no challenge but to take the received reading of the imagery.

Concerning the way in which images function in relation to other images in a given text, Jakobson's principle of selection and combination (see section 2.2.1.1) seems to be a useful tool. The reading of any figure of speech is determined by its paradigmatic relation to other figures in the same text, and can be read intratextually or intertextually, that is, as to how it is employed within one text and in related texts, or texts from the same cultural background. Here lies the importance of the relationship between the cultural background of the text and its use of figurative language.

At this point we would like to observe that no matter how culture specific certain images can be, there are different levels at which there is a degree of universality in their reading, especially when it comes to metaphors of which vehicles are drawn from weather conditions such as lightning, thunder, clouds, rain, storms, earth-quake; times such as night, dawn, day, sun, moon etc., and wild beasts such as lions, tigers, elephants, buffaloes etc. These categories of metaphor can universally be used to reflect the destructive nature of the referent upon the concept described in a poem, irrespective of whether the connotation is meant to be positive or negative. For instance, if we study images taken from our case studies of both Western and African poems, [1a] [68], [75], [77], [81], [112–3] and [113b], we will realise that their connotation is universal, implying the 'dangerous', 'fearsome', 'fierce', or 'powerful' nature of the phenomenon used as an image:

With me from Lebanon come!
Depart from the peak of Amanah,
From Senir and Hermon,
From the lairs of *lions*,
From the mountains of *leopards* (see section 2.2.1.2).

A mighty whirl-wind, the *buffalo*!
Thous art the heavens,

Thou, *elephant*-born! (see section 4.2.2.2)

He is the clearing-and-frowning *skies*,
A *thunderer* like the *heavens* above (see section 4.2.2.2)

See how the *dove* flutter and huddle,
Dismayed at the sight of the *eagle*.
Woe to the *dove* that has no wings! (see section 4.2.2.2)

Vulture, Eagle, Setter-alight,

Buffalo of the house of Nkwebe

Elephant from Mabatla (see section 5.2.1.3)

Swooping *falcon* of Mokhachane

Lion of the mountain of Qeme (see section 5.2.1.3)

In the above excerpts it is clear that the images used have a limited number of interpretations, even across a wide range of cultures. The images of 'lions', 'leopards', 'whirl-wind', 'buffalo', 'elephant', 'thunderer', 'heavens', 'eagle', 'vulture', 'eagle', 'buffalo', 'elephant', and 'falcon', can be used within a narrow field of selection and combination where they can only refer to specific qualities of character. And they can be opposed to other images such as 'dove', 'lamb', 'buck' and so forth, which stand in universal antithesis to the animals or birds of prey. Therefore to suggest that the use of such images in African oral poetry underlines its uniqueness from Western poetry is not a convincing argument. Perhaps a stronger case for this dichotomy can be found in images of artifacts or 'domesticated' natural phenomena or animals such as flowers, cattle, dogs, electricity, paper, pen, car, gun, and spear. This is where metaphor is reduced to symbolism. Another kind of metaphor or symbolism which is more culture bound is that which is derived from mythical animals, for these are culture specific, and can only be understood within the context of the culture which has created them. Both Sotho and Nguni oral poetry abound with such images.

Though the case studies provided in this thesis do not provide us with examples, we can extend our argument to pointing out that even images of persons, especially images which refer to gender, are universally used in a particular manner.

For instance, the use of 'woman', 'girl', 'maiden', and others, is always associated with cowardice or vulnerability, so that in oral poetry the lack of these images is a silence which implies their antithetic nature to what is brave, valiant and honourable, in terms of universal patriarchy. This point comes clearly into our mind when we consider Kunene's suggestion that in certain heroic poems the central subject, the hero, may be described in terms of female relatives (see section 5.2.1.3). He suggests that "it is not clear why the hero's relationship with his sister, for example, should add to his distinction, except maybe indirectly through the sister being descended from the same stock as he" (1971:52). We are also reminded of Opland's assertion that "a man who runs from a fight is looked upon as a woman, and women have no praises" (see section 5.3.1.1). An obvious area for further research is suggested by the patriarchal reading of both African critics: within the broader theoretical framework of post-colonial discourse, feminist critical practice would have a 'field-day' in attempting rereadings of African oral poetry in order to point to the marginalisation of women both in the poetry itself and in the criticism of this poetic genre to date.

Furthermore, it can be argued that the dynamism of oral poetry and the new subjects with which it deals, seem to be leading in the direction where the culture bound metaphors and symbols will be less and less employed, as is evident in one of the poems [82] analysed by Jordan (see section 4.2.2.2), which uses images such as 'Bible', 'brandy', 'breechloaders', and 'cannon', which are derived from Western culture. It would be interesting to see how readings of later oral poetry, such as that of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s have shifted away from or still retains culture bound metaphors. Judging by the oral poetry analysed by Opland, which reflects the most recent in our study, it is clear that there is a shift from the classic use of mythical and other specifically culture bound metaphors and symbols to those which are cosmopolitan, as determined by the new urban environment in which oral poetry now thrives. Arguing that Western methods would always be irrelevant to the study of oral poetry would be as good as arguing that this genre is a static form which remains fossilised in old tradition.

Kunene's major contribution in the study of metaphor and symbolism is his study of the derivation of 'eulogues of associative reference', where a metaphorical or symbolic name is drawn from a verb by adding a noun prefix and adding different endings to the verb (see section 5.2.1.2). This phenomenon is also found in the oral poetry analysed by Cope (see section 4.2.3.1). Because of the peculiar nature of Bantu morphological structure, this is not possible in Western poetry. He also makes an astute observation that association in metaphor tends to be "more consciously analogical than symbol", and that "symbols seem to be more 'natural'

and spontaneous than metaphors” (see section 5.2.1.6). He goes on to suggest that the symbol may seem to have been there from the beginning, but that a closer inspection will reveal that its reading depends more on context. Perhaps here one could suggest that symbol is more culture bound than metaphor. However, Kunene is fully aware of the universal nature of imagery, as he states that “the use of concrete images is universal, but we may expect that some of the picture (image) chosen for the poetry of the Basotho will bring us closer to an understanding of their culture” (see section 5.2.1.6).

Kunene further suggests that association in metaphor may seem illogical. This view is concurrent with the New Critics’, especially Richards’, which suggests that “there are few metaphors whose effect, if carefully examined, can be traced to the logical relations involved” (see section 3.2.1.3). Perhaps it is in the definition and explanation of how metaphor functions that the New Critics’ method can be more useful in the analysis of African oral poetry. Whereas the critics of oral poetry refer to metaphor in terms of what seems to be limited to the visual, the New Critics provide a more detailed approach to metaphor, more like Jakobson’s analysis of parallelism, when they define metaphor in terms of their appeal to all the senses - hearing, sight, touch (sensation), movement, smell, and taste, also metaphor which combine more than one sense - synesthesia (see section 3.2.3.1). However, Kunene realises the form of metaphor where sound and movement are used (see section 5.2.1.5) in his analysis of the poem about the locomotive train [143]. Empson makes yet further contribution in his discussion of the use of the verb as metaphor (see section 3.2.2.1). In making this assertion we do not suggest that Kunene and the other critics were not aware of this nature of metaphor, but we simply wish to observe that it is not explicitly elaborated in their analyses. If it were, it would have made their reading of the figure of speech more elaborate as a useful tool. It is in the study of metaphor and a wide variety of figures of speech such as simile, metonymy, hyperbole, paradox, irony and euphemism, that the New Critics have provided sound critical tools, which are yet to be explored further in the reading of African oral poetry.

The least explored of the New Critics’ contribution in the analysis of oral poetry is Empson’s ambiguities (see section 3.2.2.1), especially the ambiguities of the first, the second, the third, the fifth and the sixth type, which function through a variety of figures of speech, including pun, antithesis, paradox, onomatopoeia. We have already pointed out that the idea of dead metaphor, which is part of the ambiguity of the first type, is ignored in the reading of oral poetry. It is interesting to note that coincidentally Empson uses the verb ‘devour’, a word commonly used in oral poetry, as part of what can be read as dead metaphor. We have already

indicated (see section 3.2.2.1) how Jordan's and Kunene's reading of certain verbs in the study of oral poetry, especially this verb 'devour', could have been helpful if they had been aware of this concept as defined by Empson. The verb is used also in the poetry analysed by Cope. The ambiguity of the second type is another important one which could be adopted usefully in the analysis of oral poetry. The use of any image can result in reconciliation of two meanings. For instance, the reference to a person in terms of a wild beast, 'lion', 'tiger', or 'leopard', or natural phenomena such as 'thunder', 'lightning, or 'storm' may result in the convergence of both the negative and positive connotation of the imagery, depending on their use in relation to other images in the same poem or other related poems, as in two poems [130] and [131], analysed by Kunene (see section 5.2.1.6) where the 'herdboy' respectively has a positive connotation in one poem and negative ones in the other. The ambiguity of the third type is one which we find most potentially useful, as it may help to define clearly the use of irony, as we illustrated (see sections 3.2.2.1 and 4.2.2.2) with the poem analysed by Jordan. Since it is generally agreed that the function of oral poetry is to criticise and praise, and that it can do these two simultaneously, it seems that the only way to determine the convergence of this device is through an understanding and application of Empson's ambiguity of the third type, failure to do so can lead to an intuitive reading of irony.

Oral poetry, in its primordial form, is composed on the spur of the moment. It is therefore plausible to suggest that the poet at times discovers some of his ideas as the composition progresses, and that some figures of speech, specifically simile in Empson's terms of his definition of the ambiguity of the fifth type, might refer to "nothing exactly, but lies half-way between two things when the author is moving from one to another" (see section 3.2.2.1). This is akin to the ambiguity of the sixth type, when a statement "says nothing" or is irrelevant. To argue to the contrary may be tantamount to suggesting that oral composition of poetry comes from a genius which is so explicit that it cannot make mistakes, thereby implying that oral poetry is not an art but a mathematical calculation. Other types of ambiguity, such as that of the fourth and seventh types, seem to be less relevant in the reading of oral poetry.

It goes without saying that the need for understanding both the language and culture of the text is a *sine qua non* to the analysis of a text, so that any misunderstandings should be avoided. This brings to mind Schapera's (see section 4.2.1.2) and Cope's (see section 4.2.3.2) unconvincing argument about the presence of rhyme and metre in African oral poetry. Without due recognition of language specific elements characterising African language construction (as may be seen in Lenake's (1984) later study of rhyme and rhythm in Ntsane's poetry), this constitutes, perhaps, an illustration of the imposition of Western readings which are

not applicable to African oral poetry. It is also on this aspect of Western poetry that the New Critics' approach falls short and cannot be used in the analysis of African oral poetry, for metre, rhyme and rhythm (in the form in which they appear in English poetry, for instance) are not present in oral poetry, as we have seen in the critical readings and assertions of Jordan (see section 4.2.2.2) and Kunene (see section 5.2.1.4). The ideal critic of African oral poetry needs an understanding of a variety of texts, and perhaps languages, in order to be able to understand the limitations of borrowing analytical tools from one tradition into another. It is for this reason that perhaps Jakobson's approach, despite some of its limitations, is more adaptable, for he is conversant with a variety of languages and literary traditions, thus one would think that he is sensitive to the limitations of some analytical readings.

Looking at Jakobson's approach through case study reveals the fact that he cannot be said to be engaging a particular approach, but it seems that his analysis adapts itself to the text in question, hence the vastly different approaches he takes in the analysis of poems [1] and [1a] on the one hand and poems [2] and [2a] on the other. The analytical tools used in the reading of the first poem can be more useful than the one used in the latter poems, as illustrated in my comparative analysis. Aspects such as rhyme (couplet against quatrain), strophes (outer against inner; odd against even), as illustrated in his analysis of the poems [2] and [2a] are lost on African oral poetry. This does not, however, point at the shortcoming of Jakobson's reading, but at the peculiar nature of the poem under study. The meticulous and rigorous nature of the analysis suggests, paradoxically, that if he had undertaken a study of an African oral poem he would have shown more sensitivity to it than some of the critics of our choice have, as we illustrated with the example of his reading of parallelism.

Other major poetic devices dominant in both Western poetry and African oral poetry are alliteration and repetition proper, as opposed to repetition of meaning through different types of parallelism. This is perhaps so obvious a universal feature of poetry that there does not seem to be any point of divergence. Jakobson's (see section 2.2.1.2) and Cope's (see section 4.2.3.2) definitions of alliteration are similar. It is only when it comes to rhyme that Jakobson's analysis of sound patterns cannot be applied successfully to oral poetry, though pure repetition of sounds internally within lines is universal. We have already mentioned (see section 2.2.1.2) that some modern Southern Sotho poets have used rhyme in their poetry. On this point the proponents of a pure African poetics would argue that this is an element imposed by Western poetry, and assert that it should not be accepted as an integral part of African poetry. On the other hand an argument to the contrary may point at

the dynamic nature of all forms of poetry, including oral poetry, and assert that if rhyme can be used effectively in African poetry there is every right for the critic to use analytical tools which can read rhyme as an integral part of oral poetry. This assumption can be relevant to oral poetry, in keeping with Jordan's observation that "the idiom, style and technique of the traditional lyric are easily adaptable to new conceptions" (see section 4.2.2.1).

In terms of imagery, and poetic devices such as repetition and parallelism, we find the New Critics' general principles lacking, though we have to acknowledge that their study of imagery is akin to that of the Formalist-Structuralists, in that it does not refer to the cultural background of the text. Their analysis of rhyme and metrical pattern is in no way relevant to oral poetry. This shortcoming in the method of the New Critics arises perhaps due to their monolingual approach to poetry. The poetry they deal with is derived from the English language only, which has metrical pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables, a certain regulated number of 'feet' per line, and so forth, whereas that of Jakobson transcends linguistic and cultural boundaries, and thus is more adaptable to African oral poetry, though of course not *in toto*. The advantage of the critics of African oral poetry above the New Critics is obvious here, in that they are conversant with both the English language and its tradition, in addition to the tradition of African poetry. However, as we indicated in our meta-critical and comparative reading in chapters four and five, a more thorough knowledge of the theoretical tools used by other theoretical paradigms, especially that of Formalist-Structuralists, would have given them a further advantage, and enabled them to indicate explicitly what has to be eschewed from Western methods, rather than merely make general statements about rhyme and metre, as Kunene does.

The most dominant feature analysed by Jakobson (see section 2.2.1.2) and Kunene (see section 5.2.1.5) is parallelism. Their definitions, including brief ones by Schapera (4.2.1.2) and Cope (4.2.3.2), are concurrent. Jakobson is the most elaborate and more explicitly analysed, and can be employed in the analysis of oral poetry, in order to understand the various ways in which the device is used, as we already illustrated (see section 2.2.1.2 and 5.2.1.2). The analysis of parallelism in oral poetry could benefit from Jakobson's types of parallel structure - 'parallelism synonymous', 'parallel antithetic' and 'parallel synthetic' (see section 2.2.1.2), in addition to other types recognised by Schapera, Kunene and Opland, anadiplosis and cross-parallelism. The use of this device seems to support our argument about the universality of certain ways in which language functions, and perhaps how the human mind works in a poetic state of mind.

Some aspects of poetry which coincide in both Western poetry and African oral poetry are so obvious that they need no belabouring. By this we are referring to aspects such as the personas involved in the communicative function of the text, the addresser, the poetic message and the addressee, in Jakobson's (see section 2.1.1.2) terms, or speaker (sayer), the subject (the way of the saying) and the audience, in Richards' (see section 3.2.1.1) and Brooks' (see section 3.2.3.1) terms. These refer to the bard/poet, the oral or heroic poem, and the audience, in terms of the critics of African oral poetry. These three elements imply that there is something said to someone, in a particular way that is shared by both the hearer and the sayer. In the reading of both the critics of Western poetry and those of African poetry there is an implied though not explicit acknowledgement of this. Despite the apparent self-evident basic features of linguistic communication, we have nevertheless pointed to certain adaptations to the Jakobsonian model, which seem to be required by an interplay of performative features in an oral rendition of a praise poem: the position of the addressee could be filled by both the subject of the praise poem (the chief or the hero) and the listeners to the oral rendition, by the bard, of such praise; the main addressee (the chief or the hero) could at the same time be the subject of the praise poem (thus the 'content' of the 'message' in Jakobson's terminology); and the channel through which the poetic message is relayed, may be influenced by factors such as the bard's voice and facial gestures. Other elements which still need attention in the analysis of oral poetry include Jakobson's emotive, contact, phatic and conative aspects, upon which we have expatiated in the second (see section 2.2.1.1) and fifth chapters (see section 5.3.1.2).

As to the way meaning functions in poetry Richards puts this in most succinct terms when he uses the concepts Sense, Intention, Feeling, and Tone (see section 3.2.1.1). It is in an understanding of how these concepts are defined that a reader of oral poetry can clearly explain or analyse what is happening in a poetic piece. These concepts are dispersed, without definition, in the reading of oral poetry by Schapera, Jordan, Cope, Kunene and Opland, thus Richards' originality lies in his explicit definition and reading of these concepts in his study of poetry. The idea of the emotive aspect of poetry is also pervasive in the reading of the critics of oral poetry, but Richards and Jakobson offer explicit analytical terms of reference and reading in this regard (see sections 2.2.1.2 and 3.2.1.1).

At this point we should advance to our conclusion, and sum up our findings. Our comparative analysis leads us to make the following generalisations: (1) The universality of certain aspects of language, such as the basic parts of speech - noun (singular, plural, diminutive, feminine etc.), verb; Semantic value - abstract, concrete, literal, and figurative, renders considerations of culture-boundedness less

significant than the universality of how poetry employs devices peculiar to itself as a genre. Whatever historical experience poetry draws from, the resulting differences are marginal but not fundamental; (2) The fundamental differences which our meta-critical and comparative reading has found seem to be circumscribed to a limited number of devices, such as metre, rhyme and rhythm, whereas in most cases there are overlaps; (3) The general principles which govern the acceptance of one genre as poetry and another as non-poetry are universal, based on the principle of foregrounding and defamiliarisation.

A reader who indiscriminately imposes Eurocentric analytical methods of analysing poetry upon African oral poetry is just as anachronistic as the critic of the latter who insists upon eschewing all of what is regarded as European merely for the sake of a post-colonial ideology informed by decolonisation policies. The ideal reader of African oral poetry, or any poetry for that matter, is one who will approach any text open-mindedly and apply whatever method is available, with a sharp eye for what is not applicable, and at the same time applying himself or herself so innovatively as to syncretise from a wide spectrum of critical approaches, without being restricted by labels and fixed ideological leanings. The critic of African oral poetry should be able to do with Western critical methods what the speakers of English in the 'post-colonial' or 'neo-colonial' world have done with the language, manipulate it to effective benefit.

The question which remains, closely related to that which rears its head in attempts to define African literature, is whether any true critical act can claim to be purely African while it uses the medium of a Western language to analyse a text composed or written in an African language. Followed to its logical conclusion, the search for a purely African poetics devoid of any Western influence should seek such an approach as its teleological point. But the paradox lies in the fact that even the most vociferous opponents of Western standards use Western languages in their attempt to find an approach which is uniquely African, and also in their analytical reading.

An interesting contradiction in the critics we have selected is found in Jordan, who advocates an African critical approach, but at the same time analyses texts of oral poetry not in their original language but their translated versions. If his analysis is to be taken seriously, then it goes even beyond our suggestion that universal features of language or poetic structure which transcend cultural boundaries should determine the standards used in analysing oral poetry, but also implies that this poetry can be expressed in a Western language as effectively as it is in an African language.

The most important results which our findings yield in the case studies of oral poetry as compared to the readings of Western poetry is that the further an oral text is from the contemporary, the more culture bound it is, as is perhaps illustrated by the difference between the oral poetry analysed by Schapera, Cope and Kunene on the one hand, and that analysed by Jordan and Opland on the other. Our firm conclusion here is that the dynamism of African cultures, in their contact with Western culture, where the boundaries are becoming less emphasised because of industrialisation, especially in South Africa, is leading to an emergence of a type of oral poetry where the debate as to the relegation or adoption of Western standards will become irrelevant. It will result in a situation where the most important task of the literary scholar and student will be to seek the most efficient tool for analysing oral poetry, irrespective of its genesis or evolution.

6.3 Conclusion

In concluding this discussion we wish to point out a number of possible areas of research which may advance the debate or the search for an African poetics. There are a number of routes which new researchers who are interested in the discourse of African aesthetics in relation to Western standards can follow, which this thesis, because of our limited scope, could not explore. In the 1990s a number of analytical works on African poetry have been written, as oral poetry is receiving much more attention in its urban environment. A detailed study of some of the latest works could reveal how far advances have been made in incorporating or overthrowing Western standards.

Furthermore, the students of African oral poetry or African poetry in general can either study a number of poetic texts diachronically, using one particular approach, or study texts synchronically, using a variety of other approaches such as have been advanced by linguistic and literary scholarship: Discourse analysis, Stylistics, Pragmatics, Marxist criticism, Deconstruction and so forth. In this regard one can take one of many available approaches, which might yield different findings from those emerging from this thesis.

But if the exercise is meant to go beyond the polemic and seeks to determine the present state of the teaching of literature in schools and Universities so as to open the way for the future, then one of the following approaches could perhaps be useful, as a starting point: (1) A study of critiques in South African literary journals over a period of time, say a decade, with a selection of readings in a particular language or genre; (2) A comparative study of critiques of one genre in one language, synchronically, across languages; (3) Analysis of inaugural lectures

delivered in departments which teach literature, over a given period of time. The latter can take a number of directions: i) Comparison of similar departments in a number of universities over a period of time; ii) A comparison of different departments in one university, such as, for instance, African Languages, Afrikaans Language and Literature, and English Literature, Comparative Literature or Theory of Literature in one University or across Universities. (4) Another possible area is the comparative study of examination question papers and essay topics of different departments, or universities. This will clearly indicate the direction which different practitioners in the teaching of literature are taking, and could serve as a clear barometer for the discourse on the search for African standards. The above can only serve as measuring sticks as to the direction critical analysis and teaching of literature are taking in South African universities.

The real search for a new approach to African poetry can only be advanced through a totally different method. Our suggestion in this regard is that a lesson provided by the Western schools of thought studied in this thesis can provide a good model, namely that a school or schools of thought should be developed through clearly laid out principles such as those of the Russian Formalist-Structuralist school and the New Critics, as discussed in the second and third chapters. After laying down such principles, seminars, symposiums and conferences should be arranged, to deal with minutely circumscribed areas of poetics in order for scholars to undertake rigorous theoretical debate on certain aspects of analysis, with the view to suggesting new approaches. Under the present system of engaging scholars in conferences under different topics there can be no room for narrow focus and originality such as produced by Formalist-Structuralists and New Critics, and other schools of thought which developed this century in the Western and Eastern world.

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