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**A STUDY OF  
L.B.Z. BUTHELEZI'S POETRY**

BY

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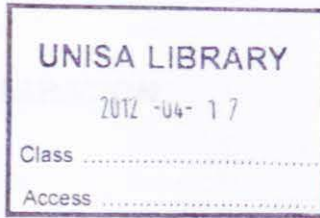
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(i)

## DECLARATION

I declare that this research project entitled:

### ***A STUDY OF L.B.Z. BUTHELEZI'S POETRY***

is my own work, that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and that this dissertation was not previously submitted by me for a degree at another university.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Handwritten signature of K. A. Kumane in black ink, written over a horizontal line.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### DEDICATION

I would like to thank my family for their support and encouragement, which has made this study possible.

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my family.

My two wonderful girls: Simphiwe, Ayanda and my loving husband Themba.

My supervisor, Professor C.T. Msimang, for his patience, guidance and expert advice throughout the process. Without his enormous support and encouragement, this study would not have been a success.

I also gratefully acknowledge my supervisor, Professor C.T. Msimang, at Volsa University, for his unwavering support and encouragement throughout the process. Your insight and your brilliant advice were a great help. When the mountain was too high to climb, you always showed me the way to the top and provided me with the necessary support and guidance.

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Mr L.B.Z. Buthebe, who never hesitated to accept my request for an interview with him, and for keeping in touch throughout my research process. Shange, Ntshona, Siphiso, I thank you very much.

My grateful acknowledgements go to Mrs. Mphahlele for the excellent work in preparing the initial draft. I would also like to show my gratitude to Mrs. Udo.

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Mr L.B.Z. Buthelezi who never hesitated to accept my invitation for an interview with him, and for keeping in touch throughout my research process. Shenge, Ndaba, Sokwalisa I thank you very much.

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## SUMMARY

Chapter 1 introduces the study and also give a biographical sketch of L.B.Z. Buthelezi.

Chapter 2 gives a theoretical outline and the application of the deconstruction approach with specific attention to multiplicity of meaning in poetry.

Chapter 3 presents the two dominant types of influences prevalent in Buthelezi's poetry which are the traditional and the biblical influences.

Chapter 4 deals with intertextuality as a literary approach. It highlights the interrelationship or rather the influence of B.W. Vilakazi's works on L.B.Z. Buthelezi as a latter poet.

Chapter 5 focuses on the cultural world view in Buthelezi's poetry and the various cultural forms that he imparts through his poetry.

Chapter 6 is a concluding statement that looks back into the first five chapters and also gives suggestions for possible future research.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of the study
- 1.2 Why a deconstructive analysis of Buthelezi's poetry
- 1.3 Life and works of L.B.Z. Buthelezi
- 1.4 Critical views on the poet
- 1.5 Scope of study
- 1.6 Conclusion



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research project is to present a deconstructive analysis of Buthelezi's poetry. It is also the aim of this study to show how African poets in general are profoundly influenced by their own culture, while at the same time they are deeply involved with the Western styles of writing poetry. Moloji (1973:93) quoted by Moleleki (1988:60) confirms this and says:

From these contradictory aspirations the Black author has not been able to free himself.

A careful look at Buthelezi's poetry reveals that his poetry is a poetry of specific meaning, and is relevant to a specific culture. It is evident, however, that it is sometimes difficult for authors to write outside their history, culture, tradition and beliefs of their times.

Buthelezi communicates tradition as well as culture through his poetry. He tries, through his poems, to remind Africans to maintain authentic language, culture and their customs. He believes that a nation without these fundamentals is not

a nation at all. It is the purpose of this study to illustrate that meaning and culture forms the basis of Buthelezi's poetry.

## 1.2 WHY A DECONSTRUCTIVE ANALYSIS OF BUTHELEZI'S POETRY

L.B.Z. Buthelezi is one of the major contributors in Zulu poetry, whose work has been neglected by many researchers in the Zulu language. Research works on the more prominent Zulu poets have been carried out as follows: *The poetry of B.W. Vilakazi* by Professor D.B.Z. Ntuli, *The Mind and the art of J.C. Dlamini* by S.G. Mseleku and more recently the work on C.T. Msimang's poetry entitled, *"Exploiting a grammar of possibilities": the poetry of C.T. Msimang* by B.P. Mngadi has appeared. I believe that the time is long overdue for research work on Buthelezi's poetry. All the aforementioned works emphasize the formalistic, the structural and the stylistic patterns, adopted by poets in writing poetry, without explicitly paying much attention to meaning and culture, as these two aspects form a strong basis of African poetry.

The deconstructive criticism seeks to bring to the fore the importance of meaning in a written text. It is a deconstructive belief that behind the structure of the text, the structurality of language is at work. The deconstructionists perceive meaning as contested especially when using the figures of speech which create ambiguity, which in turn results in the multiplicity, or plurality of meaning. The focus here is more on meaning rather than the structure of a poem, which is basically the way

words, sentences, or how the grammar is exploited by the poet to achieve his desired meaning.

### 1.3 LIFE AND WORKS OF L.B.Z. BUTHELEZI

Lizwi Bonginkosi Zacharia Buthelezi was born on the 12th December 1950 at eSifuleni in the Msinga district, in Zululand. Hence the poems, 'Ziyaduma eSifuleni' (Amaq. p. 26) and 'ePomeroy' (Izag. p. 37), relate about his place of birth. He is a descendent of the Zulu King, Phungashe Buthelezi. His father is Mbomvu, the son of Giniza kaLelele Buthelezi, who is a brother to the Zulu King, Phungashe Buthelezi. Giniza, whom we can say is Buthelezi's grandfather, was a Zulu warrior at Isandlwana on 22 January 1879. Giniza, is a brother to Sindawo, who was also a Zulu warrior in the Income battle. It is not strange, therefore, to find praise poems such as:

'Izibongo zenkosi uPhungashe' (Amath. p. 8), 'Ngo Phungashe Buthelezi' (Ithunga p. 16), 'Izibongo zikaMbomvu kaGiniza' (Amath. p. 21) and 'Lobuchopho obukaGiniza' (Izag. p. 44) in Buthelezi's works.

His mother is Nomasiliva kaMnukwa Majози. Mnukwa, the father of Nomasiliva, is a cousin of Chief Madudula kaNgoza Majози of Msinga. In October 1978 he married Thandazile Constance Sibisi, a lady teacher from the Nkandla district. Thandazile is from the ruling family of Inkosi Sibisi. The poems 'Nomasiliva

kaMnukwa' (Izinsu. p. 63), 'Mtalenkosi' (Izag. p. 68) and 'KuMntalenkosi uThandazile' (Amath. p. 68) are dedicated to the poet's mother and his beloved one respectively.

In their marriage they are blessed with two boys and one daughter, named Silindile Nondlini Buthelezi. The Anthology book entitled *Ithunga likaNondlini*, is an honour to his only daughter, and the poem 'Silindile Nondlini' (Ithunga: p. 2) relates about the birth of Silindile.

Lizwi Buthelezi started his primary education at Qinelane Primary School, near Pomeroy in Natal. He also attended the Gordon Memorial High School also in Pomeroy, but could not complete his secondary education there. He then proceeded to Soweto and attended the Sekano Ntoane High School where he obtained his matric.

He is presently at a theological University known as EBSEMSA in Pietermaritzburg. He is a licentiate in theology and also a marriage officer. This reveals that Buthelezi grew up in a religious family. He is a member of the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion which was founded by Bishop N.D.J. Marwa and Lizwi's father, Reverend Mbomvu Vivian Giniza Buthelezi in 1904. This bears testimony to the numerous religious poems found in Buthelezi's works such as: 'Namhla nguGood Friday' (Izinsu. p. 67), 'Shumayela Mfundisi' (Amaq. p. 21),

'Pontius Pilatu' (Amaq. p. 22), 'Intaba yase Sinayi' (Amath. p. 75), 'uZayoni engimkhumbulayo' (Ithunga. p. 22) and 'Mana njalo Zayoni' (Izigqu. p. 63).

In 1974 Buthelezi worked as a clerk in the Tugela Ferry, in the Department of Agriculture and Forestry of the KwaZulu Government Service. In 1976 he moved to Dundee, where he also worked as a clerk in Dundee Labour Office. In 1979 he was transferred to Vryheid as a clerk up to 1986. In 1986 he was employed by the Inkatha Freedom Party as an administrative secretary at uLundi. In 1994 he went to the Theological University in Pietermaritzburg as a student.

Buthelezi serves on various language, religious and cultural bodies. He is a member of the following bodies: The IsiZulu Language Board, the Usiba Writer's Guild, the African Writer's Association, and former member of the KwaZulu Monument Council at uLundi. He is also a prize winner of the Magolwane Jiyane Literary Award II.

Buthelezi is the president and the founder of the National Zionist Movement of South Africa. He is also the president of the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion. Buthelezi has successfully won the struggle for the recognition of his church by the Government.

## CREATIVE WRITING

1. ***Amagagasi.*** J.L. van Schaik, 1979. (A poetry collection in co-authorship with C.T. Msimang)
2. ***Izinsungulo.*** De Jager-Haum, 1980. (A poetry collection in co-authorship with C.T. Msimang)
3. ***Izagila zephis.*** J.L. van Schaik, 1980. (A poetry collection)
4. ***Amaqabunga entombe.*** J.L. van Schaik, 1982. (A poetry collection)
5. ***Ithunga likaNondlini.*** R.A. Burns and Co. (Pty) Ltd, 1985. (A poetry collection)
6. ***Khala nkomo kaZulu.*** J.L. van Schaik, 1986. (A poetry collection)
7. ***Uhlanga Lwezwe.*** Hodder and Stoughton, 1987. (A poetry collection in co-authorship with A.T. Ndlovu)
8. ***Ugubhu.*** Maskew Miller Longman (Pty) Ltd, 1988. (Poetry)
9. ***Izingqungqulu zosiba.*** Hans Kirsten/Seriti sa Sechaba Publishers, 1991. (A poetry collection in co-authorship with E.J. Mhlanga)
10. ***Ukukleza.*** Shuter and Shooter, 1991. (A poetry collection in co-authorship with E.T.Z. Mthiyane)
11. ***Amathambo ekhanda.*** Shuter and Shooter, 1994. (A poetry collection)

12. ***Isandlwana***: Hodder and Stoughton (Still in production),  
1994. (A poetry collection)
13. ***Ezakithi kwaMthaniya***: (Still in production), 1994.  
(Folklore)

He is also co-author of the following books: ***Ukadebona***, ***Imibengo*** and ***Isiqongo senkululeko***.



Lizwi Bonginkosi Zacharia Buthelezi





## **The praises of L.B.Z. Buthelezi**

Inkonjane emaphikophiko  
Unyazi oluxhophha amakhosana  
Igez'elincokazi lawo Tholakele,  
Inkomo ejahe ubunco yaphanga ubuncokazi!  
Ngiyifanisile leyo nkomo  
Ngiyifanise nogogo lwezinkomo  
ZikaLandapense.  
Ngayifanisa noqhotho olubambe  
Amahhashi kaNgogo eMankamane!

Ingudlane ekade iwagudluza  
Amabhuku enkisimane!  
Umahamba lugugube njengenalankala  
Inkalankala ekekele ngoMinzingwenya.  
Umbengo abawuzwe ngosi eMgungundlovu  
Indlovu ehamba yengama ezinde iziziba  
Kodwa kungathi bayibangile  
Abakithi eMgungundlovu!  
Ngokuyikhaphela ezinkwazini  
ZoThukela!

Amagqabhagqabha

Amabala engwe

Ingwe edla ngamabala kwezikaMbomvu!

Uvava lwenkunzi

Usokhaba khilikithi!

Umagwaza bekhuza iji ...!

Ugwaze ngosiba bathi iji ...!

Umababala ahlome akadinwa

Ukuhloma uhlome ngosiba.

Umagasela ugasele eSandlwana

Ehlome ngamathambo ekhanda!

UKadebona yena ngimbonile

Ehlaba usentu!

Egqebhula iziduli!

Kubheduka uthuli!

Ethiba eqhwisha ubala!

Unosakaza mthombo

Bosala beyicosha.

Uyisakaze eSolomuzi

Kwamangala izingqapheli

Zamazwe omhlaba bezizoqapha

Ingqophamlando yokhetho,  
Ingcugce yona yaseBhekuzulu  
Ingavuma ukuthi imbonile  
UBhidlzigugu ebhidliza igugu  
Lezithandani ezimbili.  
Kunini kusile zigudlana ngamahlombe  
Bekunge mahlombe odwana  
Bekungamanqina enyathi.  
Imbongi ekubonga kubili  
Ibonge amabandla akwaZulu  
Yabonga namabandla aseZulwini.  
Umanakashela onjengezinyosi  
Zinakashele imamba yeVuna.  
Imamba ekhafula igijima  
Ayikhafuli mathe  
Ikhafula izimpophoma zogqozi.

#### 1.4 CRITICAL VIEWS ON THE POET

Here we refer briefly to some critical opinions which reviewers have already expressed on Buthelezi's poetry. We do not yet have an in-depth analysis of his work. This research project is an attempt to assess Buthelezi's poetry more fully,

in order to determine the degree of his success. The comments of the reviewers shall not be exhausted here, as reference shall be made in more detail in the chapters that follow.

C.T. Msimang wrote a review about **Amaqabunga ENtombe** in 1984. In his review Msimang refers to the limited number of themes found in this collection. He mentions the themes of nature, historical personalities and the theme of Christianity. He, however, points out that Buthelezi's variety is somewhat limited by the fact that he tends to be a social critic. Msimang notes this and comments as follows:

Most of his poems are inclined towards the theme of protest in which he levels his criticism at certain people whom he regards as responsible for inequalities in life or whose conduct does not in his opinion conform to the norms of his society. (Msimang, 1984:110)

It is common for any person in life to express one's opinions about the most painful or unhappy experiences one has come across in life. **Amaqabunga ENtombe** is among the first collection of poems that Buthelezi wrote. The poet does not deserve to be condemned like this, for this collection of poems fall among his earliest stages in poetry writing. The problem of limited themes is rectified by E.S.Q. Zulu in his 1988 review of **Ugubhu**. Zulu (1988:101) puts it explicitly that in this collection, Buthelezi deals with a variety of themes. He states that:

Some poems deal with the theme of love, nature forms, philosophical nature and about individuals. ... Other themes treated in the collection are education, history, death, inspiration and the evil of 'apartheid'.

*Ugubhu*, as a later edition than *Amaqabunga eNtombe*, shows some remarkable progress on the edition of new themes by Buthelezi.

Msimang and Zulu are unanimous in praising Buthelezi's poetic diction. Both agree that most of Buthelezi's imagery is taken from the traditional rural world of the Zulu, rather than the modern and urban. Msimang (1984:111) puts it nicely when he says:

The greatness of Buthelezi as a poet is not to be found in poetic form but in poetic diction. His language is enriched by effective images. Most of these images are culture-bound and some knowledge of Zulu traditions and culture is essential in order to understand and appreciate his choice fully.

There is, however, a sense of disappointment expressed by both critics concerning the absence of formal techniques in Buthelezi's poetry. The application of formal techniques in this case, refers to a skilful employment of rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, assonance, enjambment, parallelism and repetition.

Buthelezi's poetry does not apply these western techniques with great success.

Msimang (1984:112) makes the following comment:

Buthelezi pays little attention to formal techniques ... Yet where Buthelezi has employed formal techniques his style becomes very impressive.

In the very same review Msimang (1984: 112) makes another comment:

Throughout the collection of 32 poems not a single one of them comprizes regular stanzas with an equal number of lines in each stanza.

According to the above mentioned quotations it is clear that there are still those literary critics who believe in applying Western techniques and Western standards of evaluation to works written by Africans. African poets, when writing African poetry, are criticised for not following the Western approach of writing poetry. It seems as if greatness in poetry is entrusted upon a poet who follows foreign and alien Western approaches of writing poetry. Some critics feel that in the evaluation and analysis of the African works of art, we should look for an African solution to our problems. We must use an African criterion and approach because other yardsticks will be inappropriate.

Mseleku (1993:56) quotes Achebe (1975:21) who in support of this says:

African critics should search for African solutions in criticism or should search for those solutions which, though not specifically African, will nevertheless do justice to the African works of art.

Buthelezi, like Dlamini and other writers, is committed to works of art that reveal and reflect African standards of poetry writing. On the same issue Ntuli (1984:12) quotes Iyasere (1975:109), who believes that:

To assess a work by standards that are alien to it is only to judge one system of values by another, which inevitably leads to a mutilation of the art.

It is, therefore, quite clear that when evaluating and assessing or even analysing the African works of art, one should first establish the school of thought from which the writer approaches his work, and the literary critic should use the same approach as the writer, when evaluating the work, so that fairness can exist.

Africans are masters of their own languages, and have the best knowledge of their own cultures. It would be more appropriate for them to try and establish their own writing and analysing pattern, which will suit their particular type of writing.

Eurocentric criticism of African Literature, according to Chinweizu *et al.* (1980:8), stems from colonialist attitudes, whereby these critics see the African as an

apprentice European, whose literary production has no other canons to adhere to, but those of whichever part of the Western tradition the critics happen to subscribe to. Chinweizu (1980:8) quotes Adrian Roscow (1971 :x) who comments on this matter as follows:

If an African writes in English his work must be considered as belonging to English letters as a whole, and can be scrutinized accordingly.

After considering Achebe's, Iyasere's and Chinweizu's remarks it becomes clear that critics do not concede the autonomy of African literature. Critics must grant the African literature the elementary right to have its own rules and standards, and should not insist on viewing it as an overseas or as a European department of literature.

## 1.5 SCOPE OF STUDY

The broad aim of this work is to look at Buthelezi's poetry from the semantic and cultural point of view. For the purpose of analysis and for a full picture of Buthelezi's poetry to be achieved, reference will be made to almost all his poetry books. A choice of specific books may lead to the elimination of some important issues that need attention. I would also like to make note of the point that this is only a research project, which is a general study that touches on a number of issues. It should, therefore, not be mistaken for an exhaustive type of research.



**Chapter 1** of this study outlines the objective of the study and also gives a detailed biographical sketch about the writer, as well as critical views on the writer received from different literature reviewers.

**Chapter 2** examines the theoretical assumption of the deconstruction approach, with specific attention to multiplicity of meaning in poetry.

**Chapter 3** reveals the importance of influence in poetry. Two types of influences will be dealt with, i.e. the traditional and the Biblical influences.

**Chapter 4** examines intertextuality as a literary approach that has important links with the deconstruction approach. The aim of the chapter is to illustrate the interrelationship between literary texts.

**Chapter 5** presents the cultural world view in Buthelezi's poetry. It will be illustrated how Buthelezi maintains and reveals some of the most important cultural issues through his poetry.

**Chapter 6** provides a concluding statement. It looks back on what was dealt with in the preceding chapters and gives a concluding statement and suggestions for further fields of research.

## 1.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter gives a clearly outlined framework of the whole research project. It gives a broad outline as to what the centre of the study is: **the importance of meaning and culture as the basis of African poetry**. The report on Buthelezi's life throws some light on the various types of influences that we find in his work. An endeavour will be made to look at his work more closely in the chapters that will follow, using some of the enlightening information from the reviews.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE DECONSTRUCTION APPROACH AND MULTIPLICITY OF MEANING IN POETRY

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 The deconstruction approach: a theoretical outline
  - 2.2.1 The importance of meaning in poetry
    - 2.2.1.1 What is meaning?
    - 2.2.1.2 Multiplicity of meaning — its implications
    - 2.2.1.3 Multiplicity of meaning in a poem
- 2.3 Conclusion

## CHAPTER 2

### THE DECONSTRUCTION APPROACH

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

It has become a rule in the academic circle, rather than a choice these days, to apply a particular literary theory when analysing a literary piece of art. The particular task of this chapter is to develop a theoretical deconstructional framework that will inform the analysis of the subsequent chapters. It is important to point out that deconstruction is a very wide theory. For the purpose of this research project, attention will be paid only to those deconstructional aspects that are relevant for this study. More attention will be paid to aspects such as: multiplicity of meaning, intertextuality and the question of sign and symbol, as distinctive aspects of the deconstruction approach.

#### 2.2 A DECONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH: A THEORETICAL OUTLINE

The term 'deconstruction' originates from the writings of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida in France in the late 1960's. According to Selden (1993:125) structuralism gave birth to post-structuralism; meaning that post-structuralism does not replace structuralism, but rather depends upon structuralism as a prior system of analysis. Later on deconstruction gained momentum in the United

States at Yale University, where it was associated with names such as Paul de Man, Hills Miller and G. Hartman. Deconstruction in the American way was too domesticated, such that other critics felt that it was more sophisticated and more associated with new criticism.

Deconstruction is generally considered to represent an important dominant element of post-structuralism. As a post-structuralist theory, it emphasises a totally different approach to the study of literature, from the approaches suggested by the earlier traditional critical theories. Norris (1982:vii) in support of this statement says:

Deconstruction suspends all that we take for granted about language, experience and the 'normal' possibilities of human communication.

Each new literary theory or methodical innovation, even the post-structuralist theories, present themselves as drawing from a distinct set of basic assumptions, laid down by the traditional approaches we had earlier. It is true that deconstruction brought a new light into the way we had to look into our literature, but we should not lose sight of the fact that the traditional approaches form the basis for the new approaches that appeared in the post-structuralist period.

To grasp the specific contents, and contribution of the deconstruction theory, it is important to note that it cannot be properly understood and studied outside its

relationship to structuralism. Post structuralist thinkers, such as Derrida and his American followers, adopted a radical position with regard to structuralist thinking in particular. Deconstruction is, therefore, seen as a reactionary theory, which had considerable influence on literary theory in both France and the United States.

In defining deconstruction Leitch (1983:ix) is in line with Norris' statement when he says:

As a mode of textual theory and analysis, deconstruction <sup>DESTROY</sup> subverts almost everything in the tradition, putting in question received ideas of the sign and language, the text, the context, the author, the reader, the role of history, the work of interpretation and the forms of critical writing.

It is for this reason that deconstruction is seen as a vigilant reaction against the tendency in structuralist thought, to tame and domesticate its own best insight. Deconstruction also questions the assumption of structuralism, that structures of meaning correspond to some deep-laid mental set pattern of mind, which determines the limits of intelligibility. It, however, refuses to identify the force of literature with any concept of embodied meaning, and shows deeply that such logocentric perspectives have influenced the way we think about arts.

Deconstruction is a theory that is against the promotion of logocentric thoughts in literature and the presentation of a text by the structuralists, as a meaningful whole or unit. Selden (1989:87) states that:

The notion of 'structure' even in 'structuralist' theory has always presupposed a 'centre' of meaning of some sort.

This implies that in structuralism the 'centre' is seen as a starting point, while in deconstruction this is not the case. Deconstruction unlike structuralism does not only promote the concentration on the centre when analysing a literary piece of art, but it promotes concentration even on the most insignificant features of literary works. Wilhelm (1990:3) *et al.*, like Norris (1982) and Ellis (1989) acknowledge the fact that deconstruction as a literary theory, reverses everything that we take for granted and what is traditional in literature, when he states that:

Jacques Derrida and other deconstructionists interpret texts in ways that reverse the accepted hierarchies, promoting the marginal over the central, the fragments over the whole, in an attempt to turn the text against itself and to expose its silent assumptions.

Structuralism concentrates on the structure of the text. It emphasizes the interrelationship between the constituent structures which form a unit or a whole, as opposed to deconstruction which is a more text centred approach. Deconstruction is seen as an activity of reading, which remains closely tied to the texts it interrogates. It in fact deconstructs or de-structures a text until it exposes

all its unnoticeable features to the open. Some scholars like Ellis (1989) even call deconstruction a 'scandal' because of its mutilation of a text.

Before the coming of deconstruction, different approaches to the study of literature had co-existed for centuries, with certain assumptions that were commonly held to be self-evident. One such assumption was that meaning is intrinsic to literary texts and that it is incumbent upon literary criticism to expose that meaning.

In structuralist terms the text is a vehicle of unalterable meaning. The formalist-structuralist assumption is that a text has a definite meaning. Gräbe (1986:38) acknowledges this fact and says:

Before the advent of deconstruction, text interpretation according to the traditional formalist-structuralist criticism frequently amounted to a process of assigning meaning to words and images, and textual problems were solved by comparing and joining together passages taken from various parts of the text.

According to the above statement structuralists are well aware of the fact that a text consists of various elements, but as a theory that promotes the centre or the whole of a text, it does not encourage a separate study of these elements from the whole as deconstruction does. Structuralists believe that text interpretation



ensured comprehensibility because it integrated the various elements of the text to form an organic whole.

The deconstructive reading method, however, differs considerably from the formalist-structuralist approach. It challenges not only the distinction between literature and criticism, but also the formalist-structuralist assumption that a text has a definite meaning. Bloom (1979) quotes Derrida (1977) who himself said that the text has no stateable identity, stable origin ... and that each act of reading the text is a preface to the next. Meaning unfolds itself in front of the reader. The meaning the reader acquires from his first reading might be different from the one he will obtain when he reads the text for the second time. Deconstructionists are of the opinion that the interpretation of a text can never arrive at a final and complete meaning for a text. Hawthorn (1992:33) states:

thus for Derrida the meaning of a text is always unfolding just ahead of the interpreter, unrolling in front of him or her like a never-ending carpet whose final edge never reveals itself.

Gräbe (1986:56) clarifies Derrida's opinion and put her comments as follows:

A further implication of Derrida's conception of textuality is that texts are not bound to the intention of the author, that a single retrievable meaning of the text is, therefore, not possible, and that consequently all texts can be radically deconstructed.

The above statements indicate that the meaning of a text cannot be pinned down in exact terms, and that a single correct interpretation is simply unthinkable. The meaning of a text then is the reader's interpretation of that text. This exposes us then to the belief that a text can have multiple meanings, since no two readers can arrive at the same interpretation of a text.

Multiplicity of meaning is inevitable in literature as Davis (1986:158) believes that in deconstruction, readers are given freedom to read texts without constraints, and that texts can mean an infinity of meanings, because readers use unrestrained creativity to discover meaning.

It seems Ray (1984:1-2) is in support of Davis' statement when he says:

Meaning as it pertains to literature, always seems to have at least two meanings, each of which entails a different, and frequently contrary, theory of the literary work, as well as a distinct critical practice.

It has been illustrated in the foregoing discussion that deconstruction as a literary theory starts from that premise that a literary text abounds in multiple meanings. Deconstruction does not only throw new light on the way we used to look at meaning in literature, it also subverts the traditional view of the signs that are used in a text.

Derrida uses the Saussurean terminology to develop his own ideas, preserving especially Saussurean key terms such as difference, signifier and signified. Structuralism was a necessary stage on the way to deconstruction. It served as a stepping stone for deconstruction. Derrida used the basic framework of Saussurean theory, its terminology and from there he developed his own ideas. The sign concept which is so predominant in deconstruction is a structuralist idea.

Structuralism is based on the relational principles of the Saussurean Semiotic model. The post-structuralist approaches, in particular deconstruction, radically subverted the concept sign and the possibility of meaning. Deconstruction maintains that a study of sign must of necessity deal with assignment of meaning and sign interpretation. It is important at this stage for us to gain a complete understanding of the deconstructive notion of the sign, by associating it with the Saussurean language theory from which it is derived.

The theory of the sign which has been influential so far as literature is concerned, is that of the Swiss Linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure's definition is not of the sign as such, but of a linguistic sign. Many of his followers, like the deconstructionists, have generalized his definition to include non-linguistic signs as well.

Saussure conceived a linguistic sign not as a name that could be attached to an object, but as a two-sided psychological entity, that could be sometimes translated as 'sound pattern' rather than 'sound image'. This means that concept and sound image cannot exist independently of each other; one denotes the other. Saussure's belief is said to go against the then current usage of the term sign. According to him the term sign was normally taken to designate only a sound image. When he became aware that his usage of the term sign was limited, he then pointed out that to avoid ambiguity three related terms were needed.

Hawthorn (1992:162) quotes him saying:

I propose to retain the word sign [signe] to designate the whole and to replace concept and sound-image respectively by signified [signifié] and the signifier [signifiant].

Saussure had introduced the word 'signifier' as the phonic shape or distinctive sound of a word, and 'signified' as the idea content of that word.

A sound is not an idea, and the Saussurean distinction is clear enough. Saussure emphasizes the fact that the association of the signifier (sound of word) with the signified (concept) is decided by an arbitrary convention. There is no natural or automatic connection between the combination of sounds forming a word and the concept denoted by that word. It is, therefore, important to note that the

Saussurean definition of the sign assumes an arbitrary connection, not only between signifier and signified but also between signified and reality, thus it rules out any prior or natural connection.

It is the notion of the sign that allows Derrida a limited opening out of his premises. Derrida takes a different stand from Saussure's. He brings to a text the knowledge that the marks on a page are not just random markings, but signs, and that a sign has a dual aspect as signifier and signified, signal and concept, or mark-with-meaning. Derrida equates language and a system of signifiers, and according to Saussure's terms, this is plain error. A language is a system of signs, with each sign consisting of both signifier (sound shape) and signified (concept). In Derrida's notion it means that a sign is both a signifier and the signified. The Saussurean model emphasizes the difference between language and signs unlike Derrida who equates the two.

Derrida elaborated the use of Saussure's notion that the identity, either of the sound or of the signification of a sign, does not consist of a positive attribute, but of a negative attribute that is difference or differentiability from other sounds and other significations, within a particular linguistic system.

Ellis (1989:432) confirms Derrida's point and says:

the notion of difference is readily available to Derrida, because inspection of the printed page shows that some marks and sets of marks repeat each other, but that others differ from each other.

Structuralists hold that sounds, morphemes and words derive their meaning in opposition to other linguistic features of their kind. They also used the concept in the literary works, where signs may be recognised, defined and described in terms of their oppositions, or counterparts. Even Saussure himself is of the opinion that meaning is created by the opposition of terms, that is, by specific differences. He, however, shows that it consists in the structure of distinctive oppositions which make up its basic economy such as the following given by Ray (1984:02)

subject/object

parole/langue

figural/referential

love/hatred

light/darkness

With his distinction between *différance* and *difference*, Derrida indicated the ultimate consequences of De Saussure's conception that if an element derives its meaning in opposition to other elements, there is actually no static meaning

at all, since its meaning is only determinable in terms of its relationship with other elements.

In opposition to Saussure's suggestion Derrida's first move is to introduce the word play, and substitute it for a word such as contrast, so that now we have a play of differences as the source of meaning. Play is no longer a matter of specific contrasts, but it is in Derrida's opinion limitless, infinite, and indefinite and thus meaning has become limitless, infinite and indefinite.

Derrida argues further that the play of differences means that meaning is not present to us but is deferred, which means that it is postponed into a future rather than the present.

Derrida's contribution to the Saussurean relations of difference is manifested in the realisation that difference shades into deferral, and this implies that the play of signification defers meaning continuously to an indefinite point. Gräbe (1991:127) makes the following example to illustrate this. She gives us an example of a chair and says:

In Saussurean terms the sound cluster comprising the word 'chair' denotes the idea of a **chair**, but the referent, the actual chair, is not present. Instead of displaying the object the sign is substituted for it, and by this means the referent is in fact **deferred**.

The process of substitution in Derrida's view represents a form of delay and this is what he says disrupts the immediate presence of meaning. According to Derrida the structure of a sign repeats the structure of representation, just as the sign is a substitute for a referent, the material part of the sign, the signifier, is a substitute for its ideal content, the signified. In Derrida's view language is thus seen as a play of differences and repetitions, that result in signification effects.

Ellis (1989:139) gives his perspective as follows:

For example words do not refer to things in the real world but only to signify other words, authors do not create meaning of their texts by composing them, but instead readers, by reading them; texts do not have a particular meaning that can be investigated but are limitless in their meaning because of the free play of signs ...

Derrida introduces the words supplement and trace to reinforce the idea that no single final act of perceiving meaning is possible. He, therefore, emphasizes that the extended and indefinite play of differences will introduce supplements or extras and uncover traces of them. By so saying Derrida is making the implications of play quite explicit and taking theme to an extreme. Supplementarity is regarded as an opposition term to the structuralist notion of a midpoint, or centre. Supplementarity suggests a species of compensation by multiplication on the part of the signifier, for a signified that can never be present (Gräbe, 1991:128).



Although structuralism is seen as a starting point for deconstruction, Derrida disagrees with the Saussurean principle in a number of points. He also raises a number of points in criticism against Saussure's language theory. Above this he coins a number of terms such as *différance*, dissemination, logocentrism, trace and supplement to indicate his indebtedness, and to free his deconstruction, of the Saussurean structuralist chains.

The Saussurean principle of arbitrariness and difference does not hold much water for the analysis of literary work, in that the deconstruction approach holds the position of deferred meaning. Deconstruction, however, purports the idea that a single 'correct' interpretation of a literary work is not possible at all. Derrida has shown how this is made possible by the play of signs. No text has a particular interpretation, but the play of signs allows the possibility of indeterminacy of meaning. Derrida then argues that signification is a matter of infinite play.

The indeterminacy of meaning is also due to the fact that deconstruction affords the reader more freedom in his reading of texts, since each reader has the opportunity to discover various meanings of a text. Literature is about meaning and maybe about various types of meanings. Deconstruction is just the right theory that offers the reader a chance to explore all the possible and available avenues of meaning. There is no doubt that deconstruction has had an effect on the current critical scene.

## 2.2.1 The importance of meaning in poetry

### 2.2.1.1 What is meaning?

Meaning is a word that has been associated with literary criticism for a very long time. In talking about poetry, one shall not be able to avoid talking about ideas. Poetry exists in the medium of words and these words inevitably carry with them some weight of idea, or some meaning. A poem cannot just be, it must also mean.

Hirsch (1991:24) has this to say about meaning:

It is not true that literary theories are no longer concerned with such questions as "What does a poem mean?" or "What makes a great work of art?" Instead theorists have turned their attention to such questions as "What is meaning?" and "What is language?"

It, therefore, becomes important to describe what meaning is before one can elaborate much on multiplicity of meaning as an aspect of deconstruction.

Meaning is seen as:

always a set of words substituted for a set of words, whether those words (both sets) are an impression of the author's intention, the reader's comprehension, or qualities inherent in the language system itself (Hirsch, 1991:24).

Meaning is acquired through words, and also expressed by means of using words. It is also perceived as a dual product, as an author's and a reader's product, since it consists of both the author's intention and the reader's perception. Meaning, in most cases according to Hawthorn (1992:100), is associated with significance. In his definition of meaning Hawthorn makes mention of Hirsch (1967:8) in his book *Validity Interpretation* who says the following about meaning:

Meaning is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the signs represent. Significance on the other hand, names a relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation, or indeed anything imaginable.

Meaning and significance are described in ways that are complementary. Meaning is according to the above statement acquired through words, through a particular way of using words, while significance is seen as a by-product of meaning. The presence of a word is equivalent to the presence of meaning. We cannot have meaning without words. Words create meaning. These two aspects work hand in hand in literature, they cannot be separated.

A reader must assign meaning to a text so that it can in turn be significant to him. In other words, significance comes after the assignment of meaning to a work of art. There is no doubt that to be significant, a text must say things which

one has not explicitly thought of or read about. Such ideas should in some way be related in a positive way to what one has in the past thought or read.

We are now familiar with the deconstructional belief, that a text is a book with no meaning in its own unless someone reads it and assigns meaning to it. Meaning in this way is imported into the text by the interpreter, hence Ellis says: "authors do not create the meaning of their texts by composing them, but instead readers do by reading them" (Ellis 1989:139).

Meaning is to be investigated by readers from a text. A readily available meaning of a text does not exist at all. Bloom (1979:1) has the following contribution to make about a poem's meaning. He asserts that:

The word (meaning) goes back to a root that signifies 'opinion' or 'intention' and is closely related to the word meaning. A poem's meaning is a poem's complaint.

Bloom states it explicitly that a poem delivers ideas, and his statement links well with Hirsch's definition of meaning, because it also touches on the intention, the objective which can either be the author's or the reader's intention. A poem utters a specific complain and this complain forms the gist of the whole poem.

Meaning is a very important aspect in poetry. It cannot be done away with so easily. Our next step is to look at the manifestation of meaning in a poem.

Deconstruction as a theory holds that no single correct interpretation of a poem or a text is possible. We shall first look at what is meant by multiplicity of meaning and this will be followed by the practical application of multiplicity of meaning in a poem.

### **2.2.1.2 Multiplicity of meaning — its implications**

Our starting point here is the deconstructional belief that a poem, like any work of art, has multiple meanings. In its simplest form, this line of thinking takes as its point of departure the idea that deconstruction, like several other modern critical schools, attacks the premise that there is one storable objective text or reality which a knowing subject or an interpreter is obliged to represent as accurately as possible (Saez, 1990:5).

William Ray (1984:9) believes that the double identity of the work as reader's meaning, and author's meaning functions both as a provocative theoretical paradox and the basis of an interpretive methodology. This merely means that readers should not only look for what they want from a text, but must also be aware of the writer's intention. Readers as it has been stated earlier on, are given freedom to read texts without constraints and, therefore, texts can have an infinity of meanings. A text, by so doing is, therefore, liberated from its author, to mean whatever it is taken to mean.

The statement that "authors make meaning" though not of course untrue, is merely a special case of the more universal truth that readers make meaning ... a poem really means whatever any reader seriously believes it to mean ... the number of possible meanings of a poem is itself infinite (Ellis, 1989:117).

The notion that a text must be liberated from its author should be clearly understood. Ellis says there are two steps. There is, first of all, liberation from the author, but second there is liberation from the rules and conventions of the language it is written in. In effect the argument operates with just two alternatives: either a text means what its author meant — or we have textuality and free play of signs.

To complement Ellis' point Bloom (1979:3) says:

Freedom in a poem must mean freedom of meaning, the freedom to have meaning of one's own ... Words will not interpret themselves, and common rules for interpreting words will never exist.

Bloom's statement suggests that readers can never interpret texts the same way, as there are no rules that are laid down and that are to be followed when interpreting literature. It is the readers who are instrumental in the texts myriad meanings coming to light. At times the reader is said to discover the text's range of meanings, sometimes actually to produce and create meanings, but what is

true is that the critic is far more important and creative than criticism has assumed him to be.

Nietzsche in Davis (1986:430) says that:

In fact interpretation is itself a means of becoming a master of something.

Nietzsche's comment touches on the position of the reader of a text. The reader is now no longer the humble servant or agent of text and author. It is on this point that deconstruction and reader-response criticism meet. The reader's mind at this stage is invaded by thoughts of another person, he is granted the experience of thinking thoughts that are foreign to him. Interpretation is seen on the part of the reader as nothing else but as a means of becoming a master of something. During the process of interpretation the reader struggles to understand and master the ideas that are of course foreign to him. It is during this process that Davis (1990:430) recalls Lewis Carroll, a linguistic philosopher who asserted that meaning is imported into a text by the interpreter's will to power. Davis continues this argument by giving us a dialogue about interpretation between Alice and Humpty Dumpty that goes as follows:

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "Which is to be master — that's all."

Deconstructive claims are not based on simple dogmatic assertions like the Humpty Dumpty fashion but are derived from particular linguistic premises. To consider the meaning of a text as a broader matter than its author's intention, has nothing to do with allowing it to mean anything. It simply represents the decision that meaning is best described, not in terms of mental processes — which are unobservable and unrecoverable, but meaning is best described in terms of the text's particular use of the linguistic system that it employs.

Deconstruction as a literary theory never comes to terms with the perceived idea of mental processes. There is a difference of emphasis here between deconstruction and reader-response versions of the argument. Deconstruction puts more emphasis on the free play of signs, and reader-response stresses the freedom of the reader's mental processes. Reader-response returns us once more to mental processes and private unobservable and unrecoverable facts which the deconstruction theory totally rejects.

Swanepoel (1990:24) urges us to consider the two following questions posited by Brooks and Warren in their revised edition of *Understanding Poetry*, the questions are:

- (i) What is the feeling which the poet is interested in giving the reader?
- (ii) What does he want the poem to mean to us?



Brooks and Warren suggest that readers should be able to find the author's feelings from a poem, and link this to the meaning that he intends to impart to his readers.

Swanepoel is not alone in his suggestion. He is backed up by Ellis (1989:143-144) who gives readers guidelines to be followed when interpreting a poem. He suggests that the first step is to focus on the most literal, surface meaning of a text, and thus avoiding any attention to subtleties it may contain.

The next step is to demonstrate that there is a second layer of meaning; an ironic layer, or one indicated in imagery and metaphor rather than in the literal meaning.

Ellis, however, points out that this procedure has, after all been part of the stock-in-trade of critics for a very long time. What Ellis has suggested in the above steps is not simply to look at the different layers of textual meaning, but he also emphasises that once we have done this we have in fact deconstructed the text, we have demythologized it.

Besides the revelation of the surface meaning and the figurative meaning, there are many underlying meanings a reader can detect in a text, or a poem.

Nietzsche, in his assertion about the 'rightness' in 'interpretation' says:

the same text authorizes innumerable interpretations: there is no 'correct' interpretation (Davis, 1986:430).

Nietzsche's views on interpretation are relevant to the deconstructive theorists like Jacques Derrida, who insist on the radical indeterminacy of the linguistic sign, which goes along with the unlimited plurality of meanings in a text.

It, therefore, goes without doubt that the immediate grasp of a poem in the totality of its meaning, and the thing we desire may come later rather than early. It might come on the fiftieth reading rather than on the first. We must perhaps be able to look forward as well as backward as we move through the poem.

### 2.2.1.3 Multiplicity of meaning in a poem

Under this sub-heading we will have a look at the possible number of interpretations a reader can identify in a poem. It is a known fact that a poet chooses words for their suggestive power, as well as their meanings, so as to best express what he wants to impart to his readers. This implies that critics, or readers should look for what is 'there' in the poem, 'there' in the sense that it can be described and referred to as unarguably given by the words. Sayce in Nowotny (1962:1) says:

The critic's first and most important task must be to discover, as far as he is able, the objective characteristics of the work under consideration. Even if he does no more than this he will have put the reader in a position to see for himself the merits and defects of the work.

We shall now have a look at the following poem and an endeavour will be made to illustrate the various interpretations it embodies.

Iminqwamba yamathwasa

Ngayibona imifula yakho

Igqisha igqishelana,

Ilingisa wena ugqisha imfundo

Ekhanda lakho.

Ibuthise phambi kwami ngayibuka

Ngaphosa ixube lami lahamba labuya.

Ngazilaya ngaziphaqula ngezimhlophe

Izihlabathi zolwandle kumanjenje,

Bengithi ngilingisa wena

Uphothana nolimi uphendulana -

Namadwi nezihlonono ngaze ngazilaya,

Ngihamba ngihhema ngedwa okhalweni.

Lapho igagasi lingqabashiya

Liza kimi kwasiphuzela

Izinwele ekhanda.

Ngacishe ngavuma ukuthi

Sesofa silahlane nalemifula.

Kwangathi nguwena uqephuza ugiya

Ngemifulá yomhlaba, ngoDedangendlale.

I saw today in my life you

Isifolile emasangweni akwaLulwandle.

Ngalubona luchitha izandla

Lwalandula luthi "Akusoze kwangena

Izono nokungcola."

Ngagqolozela ngihlangezela

Izinyembezi eziwuju,

Yonke lemifula yayihlamba wena.

Kwamhlophe amadwala

Engiwabuka kushелеle amehlo

Ngathi — Halala kanti luyayidedela

Imijuluko yakho ingena.

Ngiyayibuka namhlanje

Injengamaza ngelungelo kwaLulwandle

(Amaqab, p 16).

I saw a river in my life

(I saw your rivers "There would be no way for

Pressing in and flowing in heavily,

Like you pressing education

Into your head.

It stood near me and I looked at it

I threw in my bead necklace it went away and came back.

I admonish myself by smearing myself with white

sea sand and now,

I was trying to imitate you

Rolling your tongue when answering -

Frogs and tumultuous noises oh I admonish myself,

Walking and talking alone in the veld.)

(When the wave moves forcefully

Coming towards me and there is a creepy sensation

Of the hair in the head.

I nearly agreed that

We will die and bury one another with these rivers.

It was like you were dancing in a vicious manner

With the rivers of the earth, and the level open country.)

(They are lining up on the gateway of the sea.

I saw it dispersing its hands

It denied and said: "There would be no entry for

sins and dirt."

I looked and wanted to cry

Tears that are honey,

It is in all these rivers you swam across.

In those white flat large rocks

When I look at them my eyes get slippery

I said — congratulations just when it released

Your perspiration into me.

I look at it today

It is like the waves that are given the right by the sea.)

There are various interpretations one arrives at after a careful study of the above three paragraphs. There are at least about six prominent interpretations one can arrive at when looking closely at these three selected paragraphs. An endeavour will be made to show all the six interpretations. It must, however, be pointed out that the poem used here does not only consist of these three paragraphs. These first three paragraphs have been selected solely for the purpose of the illustration of multiplicity of meaning or ambiguity in poetry.

***First interpretation: A witch-doctor in apprenticeship***

The first idea that comes to mind when looking at the title of the poem: Iminqwamba Yamathwasa is that of a person who is still a witch-doctor in

apprenticeship. The word 'Iminqwamba' in this particular context refers to a witch-doctor's leather cloak that a witch-doctor wears around his neck. Explaining what a leather cloak is Msimang (1975:307) says:

Iminqwambo isikwa emhlane wesikhumba leso sembuzi emnyama.  
Isikwa ibe imibhelenja emibili ehlangene phakathi kwamabele  
iphume emahlombe naphakathi kwamakhwapha ihlangane futhi  
emhlane.

(A leather cloak is cut from the skin of that black goat. It is cut in form of two strips that becomes one piece under the breast and separates into two at the shoulders and under the armpits and also becomes one piece again at the back.)

In the first stanza the poet conveys the difficulties that the 'ithwasa' experiences. There are various problems that this person comes across before he can qualify as a witch-doctor.

They (amathwasa) do not give up because they are inspired by those who have already qualified in this field. This inspiration is presented by the poet in a metaphorical form as powerful rivers that come as a challenge to the learner. The word 'ixube' refers to a bead necklace that, according to superstitious belief, is thrown into the sea for one to know whether or not it is safe for one to get into

(If that witch-doctor received his training in water, and came out with his body white because of the white clay, his trainees will also smear the white clay. If the witch-doctor received his training outside the water all his trainees will smear their bodies with a red clay.)

Like his predecessors a witch-doctor in training hears noises 'izihlonono' that he does not understand. This makes him wander in the veld like a mad person. The poet is informing us about the secret world that these people find themselves in. This is a difficult task for the trainee as he has to make sense out of the tumultuous noises that he hears.

In the second stanza the strong sea waves represent the difficulties and the challenges that fills the trainee with fear. The trainee, however, decides not to give up. What keeps him going are the thoughts about his predecessors who have successfully gone through these problems.

In the third stanza the witch-doctor-to-be sees himself waiting at the entrance of an institution where those who have completed their training are welcomed. To his dismay, it seems as if he is rejected. This indicates the roughness and the difficulty of the process towards the end. He waits there with tears of joy, when he thinks that his predecessors have gone through the same problems. When he



the sea. It is, however, believed that if these beads come back it is a sign of good luck, but if it doesn't one should not get into the sea because one may drown. As a learner, a witch-doctor-in-the-making associates himself with a person who wants to get into the sea, into the unknown land of witch-doctors.

He, therefore, tests his luck first before he continues with this chosen career. He continues with his training as he is assured of success because his beads did return. Lines 7 and 8, which read:

Ngazilaya ngaziphaqula ngezimhlophe  
Izihlabathi zolwandle kumanjenje

(I admonish myself by smearing myself with white  
sea sand and now),

indicate the beginning of the learning process of this witch-doctor-to-be. We usually come across witch-doctors-to-be who smear their faces with white and, sometimes, red clay. To these people the difference in the clay they use has a specific meaning. Msimang (1975:306) explains this as follows:

Uma umngoma lowo ethwasa emanzini, waphuma emhlophe qwa  
umcako, onke amathwasa akhe ayohuqa umcako. Uma ethwasa  
ngaphandle onke amathwasa akhe ayohuqa ibomvu.

is to congratulate his predecessors, he is filled with his predecessors inspiration, this means that he is given the green light to continue with his career.

**Second interpretation: Buthelezi's inspiration by B.W. Vilakazi**

The second interpretation is associated with the poet himself. It is about Buthelezi's inspiration by B.W. Vilakazi's works. The rivers referred to in the first paragraph represent the strong powerful inspiration. Buthelezi perceives himself as a witch-doctor in apprenticeship, and this is because he was at his early stages of poetry writing. He was still young in the field of poets. **Amaqabunga entombe** is his second anthology book. The word 'ixube' in this context can be taken to refer to Buthelezi's first anthology books which served as a qualifying test for him. **Izagila zephisi** (1980) and **Amaqabunga Entombe** (1982) are the first books that opened doors for Buthelezi as a successful poet.

The poet makes a plea that he wants to be like Vilakazi who, at this stage understands 'izihlonono', which we can say in this context represents the poetical language. There is a link between the first interpretation and the second one which is brought by lines 11 and 12.

Upothana nolimi uphendulana -

Namadwi nezihlonono ngaze ngazilaya,

(You are rolling your tongue when answering -

Frogs and tumultuous noises oh I admonish myself,)

A witch-doctor in apprenticeship and a person who is still at the first phase of learning something, like a poet who is beginning to write, are referred to by the same term 'ithwasa' in Zulu. A witch-doctor in apprenticeship as well as a young poet both experience the same problems as the above lines suggest. Both experience difficulties in understanding the tumultuous noises that they experience in their different fields. A shrewd poet just like a witch-doctor who has been in the field for a long time, understands a particular language which the young ones do not understand. It is also common in Zulu to refer to both the poet and a witch-doctor with the name 'uhlanya' (an insane person). The reason is because these people have a privilege of understanding and of seeing visions that an ordinary person does not experience. Besides all these problems Buthelezi is inspired to write poems like Vilakazi.

In the second stanza the waves represent the difficulties Buthelezi faces as a young poet. These problems make him doubtful whether he would succeed in this field, and this also makes him fearful. It is Vikakazi's works like Imifula Yomhlaba, and kwaDedangendlale in Amal' ezulu (1954) that strengthen Buthelezi to persevere.

In the third stanza Buthelezi perceives himself as awaiting an acceptance to the land of poets. He imagines himself being rejected and he wants to cry. He thinks of Vilakazi who has gone through the same problems. When he congratulates his hero his inspiration deepens.

### ***Third interpretation: Education***

The word 'iminqwamba', according to the dictionary by Doke, Malcom, Sikakana and Vilakazi (1990:597) also means an academic hood. This meaning links well with the meaning of the verb 'ukunqwambisa' which means to be draped over the shoulders with something. An academic hood is always put around the neck and it covers the shoulders as well.

This introduces us to the idea of education in this poem. In the first stanza for instance, the poet tells us how people are inspired to study. The word *ixube* in this instance refers to the tests and examinations that determine the students success or failure. Some pass and some fail. Some people study because of the inspiration they get from others who are more highly educated than themselves. In this context lines 11 and 12 refer to the educational difficulties that new students come across. Studying is at times so difficult in such a way that some people go mad. Educated people, poets and witch-doctors possess the knowledge that other people who are not like them do not possess. This makes

them appear as mad people. When students think of failure it is the thought about their inspirators that keeps them going.

In the third stanza the student, like any other learner, is on the verge of being accepted in the working field. This is a crucial stage. Some do not succeed in their studies, some do. Even those who fail and cry are kept strong by the motivation they get from their inspirators. They persevere in educating themselves until they succeed.

#### ***Fourth interpretation: The newly-wed bride***

The bride is covered from head to shoulders in the Western marriage by a veil on her wedding day. Hence the term 'ukunqwambisa' is also relevant for this context. In the Zulu traditional wedding celebration a similar case is also observed as Msimang (1975:281) says:

Emahlombe (umakoti) wembeswa izikhumba zezinsimba, eziyofike  
ziqoshwe phambili kube izinjobo zowakwakhe.

(The bride's shoulders are covered by a skin of a wild cat, that will later on be used for making her husband's loin-cloth).

In the Inqolobane Yesizwe (1992:119) Nyembezi and Nxumalo say:

Umakoti wayebuvala ubuso bakhe afake imvakazi.

Imvakazi yayenziwa ngamaqabunga obendle.

(The bride covered her face by a veil.

The veil was made out of leaves which always hang down from a shrub that bears yellow edible blooms).

A newly wed bride is also called a (ithwasa) learner, since she is still new and has to learn lots of new things in her marriage institution.

A new bride is faced with many problems that she does not know how to handle. The rivers in the first stanza are a symbol of the various problems that a bride experiences in her marriage. The word 'ixube' in this context represents the various efforts by the bride to be accepted in her new family.

A marriage can be a success or a failure. As she is now in this new family, she looks at those women who have been married for a longer period, for strength. Lines 6 and 7 in this context refer to the bride's acceptance that she no longer belongs to her family but to the new family. Like in all the institutions that have been counted above marriage also has severe problems that can make a woman go mad. What also keeps a young woman to persevere in her marriage, is the encouragement and the inspiration from the older married women.

Dlamini (1994:90) confirms the above statement when she says:

In Swati society, marriage is considered to be a very serious undertaking, especially for the woman. That is why the old women start preparing the woman about to be married long before the time. She is told that in marriage she will encounter many problems, and is expected to exercise a lot of patience in order to make a success of it. The many warnings given by the experienced old women create a pessimistic attitude towards marriage in the woman who is about to get married.

In the second stanza the powerful sea waves are taken to represent the marital problems, that even make the bride fear for failure in her marriage. Sometimes it is so difficult in such a way that a woman can give up her marriage. What keeps a woman's perseverance stronger are the advices from the old women.

Eventually a newly wedded bride grows in her marriage and feels accepted as a grown matured woman. Some do not even reach this stage because of the roughness of the road. This is a very painful experience for most women. A woman who is able to stay longer in her marriage is congratulated for it.

***Fifth interpretation: Strengthening of warriors for warfare***

'Ukunqwambisa', according to Doke *et al.* (1990:597), also means to undergo charm medication against dangers especially in times of war. It was a usual procedure in KwaZulu that warriors were strengthened before they went to war. It was believed that if this was not done, the warriors would be easily conquered by the enemy. Various charm medications were used by a royal kraal's witch-doctor to strengthen the warriors. Msimang (1975:339) who seems to be our only source, has written a lot about the Zulu culture and its traditions says:

Sekuthathwa amacwiyo ale nkunzi exutshwa nomuthi wokuncinda.  
Sekufakwa odengezini kubekwe kulo mlilo. Asezoncinda onke  
amabutho ehlomile, ege udengezi lolo. Njengoba beqa njalo,  
inyanga ibachela ngentelezi isebenzisa umshanelo. Isiphethile-ke  
inyanga, isizodedela induna yempi. Konke lokhu kwenzelwa  
esikhungweni sempi.

(They take the small pieces of meat and mix them with charm medication for sipping, by using the method of sucking the medicine from their finger tips. All these are put in a potsherd and placed in the fire. All the warriors will sip, using their finger tips, and also jump across the potsherd. As they are jumping, the witch-doctor using a broom, sprinkles them with charm medication. When



the witch-doctor has finished, he hands over to the chief of the army. All these are performed in the battlefields.)

This is a different meaning that we do not find from the other levels of interpretations. It does not, however, exclude the meaning of being festooned over the shoulders with something. Both meanings are applicable in this context. It was also a Zulu custom that the warriors who came back from war were welcomed with festoons. These festoons were made out of the willow tree branches. These were made in a form of a large round bandolier that would be placed around the hero's neck. Msimang (1975:340) says:

Izothi ingalanda induna, bese benikwa izibongo labo abahlabene.  
Izingwazi seziyaxoshiswa njalo. Sezethweswa iminyezane.

(After the narration by the chief of the army, those who have conquered are given praise names. The heroes then receive rewards from the king. They are also presented with the bandoliers made out of willow tree branches.)

Warriors did not consist of only experienced men in warfare but also of new warriors. The old warriors were usually placed in the middle position which was called 'isifuba' (the chest) of the army, and the young ones were positioned in front, and they were called 'izimpondo' (the horns). This was due to the fact that

young warriors had more power and strength than the old warriors. Even though this was a fact, the young warriors, whom we can also call 'amathwasa', were not well equipped in war tricks than their co-fighters. The word 'ixube' refers to the real fighting and the various efforts by the warriors to conquer the enemy. Some warriors survive, some die. Those who are lucky to survive enjoy their fruits of bravery, and are called the conquerors for their nation.

**Sixth interpretation: Consecration of a priest**

This is the last interpretation of the poem. 'Ukunqwambisa' can also have a religious meaning of a consecration of a priest. The new priest-to-be goes to a theological college as an 'ithwasa', someone who is still to learn how to preach and how to spread the word of God. As a human being the learner-priest is faced with many temptations.

In his short story entitled 'Bafanele ukugcotshwa' (They must be ordained) in *Uthingo Lwenkosazana* (1978:14), D.B.Z. Ntuli confirms this when he says:

Bayakhumbula ukuthi kukhona ababenabo abalingeka, kokunye  
baphumela elokishini lapho abahlwitha kalula khona uSathane,  
kanti uzobuye angabavikeli baxoshwe.

(They remember that there are those who came with them and were tempted, they might have gone out to the township where Satan easily got hold of them, while Satan would not protect them and they were chased away.)

The above extract is indicative of such difficult problems. The sermons the learner-priest gives during his learning period are the tests that will make him a successful priest, at the end of his education. This can be represented by the 'ixube' in this poem. Like in all education institutions it is not all who succeed. Some in this institution are indeed captured by the devil and cannot complete their courses. The word 'ukunqwambisa' in this context refers to a day of ordination, a day of taking the vows with God. The white stiff collar given to the priest indicates 'ukunqwambisa' since it is also worn around the neck. It is a sign of priesthood for those who have finished their priesthood course.

It is evident in the analysis of the three paragraphs that a meaning of a poem cannot be pinned down in exact terms. In other words it cannot be said that a poem has a definite unalterable meaning. A word can be interpreted in many ways that can exhibit various meanings as it has been illustrated in the above interpretations. This indicates that meaning emerges from context and connectedness.

It must, however, be pointed out that the meanings or the interpretations arrived at in this research project are not final. Deconstruction as a theory gives more freedom to its readers to read texts without any constraints and to discover as many meanings as they can. A poem or a text then, can have an infinity of meanings. Other readers can arrive at different interpretations that are missing here.

### 2.3 CONCLUSION

We shall conclude the discussion on multiplicity of meaning by quoting Ellis (1989:125) who reiterates that:

"a poem really means whatever any reader seriously believes it to mean" or that "there is no limit to these meanings since the mind finds in the text whatever it is looking for" is through the numerical terminology of many, unlimited meanings, as opposed to one meaning.

Ray (1984:3) compliments Ellis' point by saying:

At the same time, however, meaning is vested in its event: what I mean is for me to decide, just as the 'author's meaning' is his to determine. Meaning is from this perspective a function of the intention that casts it.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE ROLE OF INFLUENCE IN POETRY

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## CHAPTER 3

### THE ROLE OF INFLUENCE IN POETRY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Influence in poetry is our main focus of study in this chapter. The purpose here is to discuss the influences that are noticeable in Buthelezi's poetry and to show how these influences have been assimilated into his work.

Taking into consideration the particular historical circumstances surrounding the emergence of modern African writing, it is really necessary to put one's foot down one way or the other over an issue like influence. There are several factors that encroach upon the writer's mind during the writing process. This does not mean that a work of art grows out of its influences, but it is also equally true that various influences have given shape and meaning to poetry or to literature as we have it today.

Bu Buakei Jabbi (1979:112) compares African literature to a tree and asks the following question:

Are we not just looking for the roots that fed and still feed this newly grown tree, or is it supposed to have only one root?

Would it not be more fruitful perhaps, for tree and question alike, merely to try and assess the nature and extent of the ways in which all historically valid backgrounds to African writing have respectively helped, or can still help, to shape the new literature?

Literary critics should not only identify the similarities between the roots and the newly grown tree, but should also interpret the work so as to show how, and maybe why, the new tree differs from the former. Jabbi's question requires a critic to look at influence on a wider scale.

It is also important to look at the statement made by Palmer, who is of the opinion that African literature grew out of the Western influence as he says:

A reasonably fair statement of the position would seem to be that the African novel grew out of the western novel ... (1982:2)

Palmer is also perceived by Moleleki (1988) as regarding influence as a causative factor instead of seeing it as a contributory factor to the emergence of African literature. Palmer's statement seems to suggest that a literary work of art would not be, if it were not for influence. His statement seems premature and unacceptable with regard to the various literary genres that we have. His suggestion might, however, be true for the emergence of an African novel.



For a number of reasons that cannot be counted here, the novel unlike poetry and drama, is not an indigenous African genre; the African novel grew out of the Western novel. Critics subscribe to various doctrines. A critic better informed in Western literatures than in traditional African forms may see modern African writing as emerging mainly from Western forms, another critic more informed in African tradition may alternatively see this the other way round (Jabbi, 1979:112).

Jabbi (1979) continues his argument further by acknowledging the fact that there are other generative forces and factors in the rise of African literature beyond the forms of African traditional expression and the Western novel. According to him, we cannot put aside the fact that there is usually a wider ferment of culture and of history to be brought into the reckoning as well. Rosenberg (1982:91) in an article on 'Literature and Folklore' is quoted by Moleleki (1988:15) saying:

Writers mature within a culture; they learn their skills and their craft within that culture; and so inevitably reflect some aspects of that culture in their writing.

Considering Palmer's and Jabbi's statements it seems a fair statement to say that Western influence and African traditions, which form part and parcel of our historical background, are all contributory factors and forms that have given shape to our literature. Their relative ratios of influence vary too much from one writer to another. Influence is itself then, seen as a matter of degree.

There are other influential factors like the social environment in which the poets find themselves everyday. The emergence of protest, philosophical and satirical poetry can be counted as few examples in support of this statement. Ngara's (1979:16) comment elucidates the above statement, when he says:

The understanding of poetry requires an understanding of and appreciation of historical and social conditions, ideological factors, literary forms and devices and, of course a sufficient mastery of the language in which the poetry is written.

Ngara's comment does not only highlight the importance of social conditions as another kind of influence, but, it also brings to light the expected input from the side of the literary critic as well. After recognising the various types of influences the reader must develop an understanding, in his analysis of the work of what such an influence has contributed to the vision of the African writer.

One need not claim therefore, that the whole work of art or a particular type of genre has grown out of a specified influence. It may be said that the influences that have been brought to bear upon Modern African writing emanate from the traditional, the Western, as well as from non-African and non-Western sources.

The influences discernible in Buthelezi's poetry belong to two broad categories namely: the traditional and the Biblical influences. Various poems from Buthelezi's works will be used as a base of extraction when exposing and

indicating the various influences. It will also be indicated how these influences have contributed to his poetry.

For the purpose of this study traditional influences refer to those influences that reflect the African tradition and, Biblical influences refer to those elements that show more ties with the Old and the New Testament.

### 3.2 TRADITIONAL INFLUENCES

This category looks at the various forms of verbal art as an influence in African literature. Only the oral forms which have been identified as a source of influence in Buthelezi's poetry will be dealt with in this instance. Traditional influences will be divided into three categories. The first category is stylized prose which will include the proverb (isaga) as a source of influence. The second category consists of oral poetry under which the influence of praise poems (izibongo) will be treated. In the third category reference will be made to the use of prose narratives (izinganekwane).

It is important at this point to acknowledge Ntuli's (1984:15) observation, when he said:

It is common knowledge that an artist cannot work in a vacuum.

For an artist to produce anything a number of influences work on

him. These influences are his experiences which he expresses in the medium of his choice.

Ntuli's emphasis is on the fact that some of these influences are the models of expression that an artist finds in his cultural and artistic environment. Each of us as human beings is thus shaped in the non-biological portion of our being by the culture into which we are born. We are shaped by a culture transmitted to us by the adults in our life. As a result people are regarded as culture-shaped and culture-transmitting beings. We cannot, therefore, separate ourselves from culture. Our mental behaviour is extensively influenced by it. Cultural influence should not be seen as a one way process. We are not only shaped by, and participate in, the transmission of culture; we also influence it and contribute to its reshaping. Kraft (1979:103) also asserts that:

As far as anthropology can tell there is not now, nor ever has been, a human being who is not totally immersed in and pervasively affected by some culture.

It is evident from the above definitions that human beings cannot escape the influence of culture, since it is humans who originally created culture. It is the aim of this chapter to establish the extent to which tradition or culture has influenced our poetry. It will also be indicated how the poet has combined his originality with some elements from the works that have influenced his writing.

Msimang's (1986:08) statement is more relevant to this when he says:

... influence may be defined as the presence of certain elements in a latter work to those found in a former work. The similar elements must be such that it can reasonably be inferred that the author of the latter work was — consciously or subconsciously — induced by the former work to produce such elements. Where the author of the former work is consciously under the power of the earlier author — as is the case with emulation or downright adaptations — the influence will be very overt and readily identifiable. On the other hand, influence might be covert, like for instance where the author of the latter work was only subconsciously stimulated by the former work or where he has infused certain elements in the former work with his own ingenuity.

### 3.2.1 The proverb as a source of influence

According to Nyembezi (1954:xi), proverbs may be called "aphoristic expressions which the Zulus call *izaga*". In Southern Sotho Guma (1967:65) says a proverb is called *leele*, with the plural *maele*. There is a tendency to use the plural form in Southern Sotho.

In their wide range and scope, proverbs are perceived as a collection of the experiences of a people, experiences some of which have been learned the hard

way. Those experiences are stored in this special manner, and from generation to generation they are passed on, ever fresh and ever true.

Nyembezi goes further to say that these proverbs become a useful means of studying a people, in that they show how observant the people are. They reveal what the people adore, and what it is they hate; what they respect and despise. Proverbs also reveal what the people's outlook on life is. They, however, cover a wide field. They extend over all the areas of the community's activities and daily pursuits (Nyembezi, 1954:xii).

It may be because of the above reasons that Guma (1967:65) defines a proverb as:

A pithy sentence with a general bearing on life. It serves to express 'some homely truth' or moral lesson in such an appropriate manner as to make one feel that no better words could have been used to describe the particular situation.

Krappe (1930) in Nyembezi (1954:xi) says:

A proverb represents, in its essential form, some homely truth expressed in a concise and terse manner so as to recommend itself to a more or less extended circle.

It is gathered from the above definitions that a proverb in most cases, is a short sentence that contains some acknowledged truth that is well known to the people. Proverbs in Buthelezi's poetry appear in various forms.

### 3.2.1.1 The original form of the proverb is retained

When we speak of an original form of the proverb we are referring to the external physical shape of the proverb. The form of the proverb refers to its internal constituency which is the lexical items which make up the proverb.

Regarding the form of a proverb Finnegan (1976:393) says:

A proverb is a saying in more or less fixed form ...

Guma (1967:65) compliments Finnegan's description by saying that proverbs have a fixed and rigid form to which they adhere to at all times and which is not changeable. It is the syntactic arrangement of the constituent parts we are concerned with here. Buthelezi does use the original form of a proverb as it is in his poetry. Let us examine the following examples.

(2) **IZINSUNGULO: 69**

- (1) Kwaze kwamzukuzuku zidlana  
Imilala enkundleni yosiba;

Nezibukeli zithi:

**Kazi iyoza nkomonî?**

There is difficult competition

In the field of writing;

And the spectators say:

What calf (sex) is it going to give birth to?

This proverb emphasizes a dilemma, an expression of doubt where people cannot exactly determine the outcome of a certain situation. There is very stiff competition among writers. The poet presents the struggle and the difficulties of attaining success in the field of writing. He also warns the spectators who are outside this competition and who would one day try their luck in this field. In order to survive one should be firm enough to withstand the competition. It is the survival of the fittest. The poet has ingeniously employed this relevant proverb to put his message across.

IZAGILA ZEPHISI: 61

(2) Wo, **akulahlwa mbeleko ngakufelwa**

Hleze ikusasa lingiphathele enethezekile

Esengoya kwagoqanyawo ngeneme.

Ngifisa enjalo impilo.



Oh, the child's carrying-skin is not thrown away because of death

Maybe tomorrow will bring me comfortable life

That I will take along when I die happily.

I wish that kind of life.

The skin that is used for carrying a child on the back is called *imbeleko* in Zulu. If a child dies, the child's carrying-skin is not thrown away because there is always hope that another child may be coming. The expression is an encouragement that there is no reason why disappointment should make one lose hope. It alludes to the problems that endanger life. The poet has used the proverb to reveal the everyday mishaps that people come across in life. He is encouraging people not to lose hope because of death. He explicitly conveys this message with the line that follows directly after the proverb.

#### ISANDLWANA: 54

(3) Akusekho muzi ongakaya

Imindeni isimtshingo ubethwa ngubani,

*Inxeba lendoda alihlekwa*

Nawe zamcolo *uyoze ulutheze olunenkume!*

The many homes are no longer there

Families are left stranded,

A man's wound is not laughed at

And the floods will also one day gather firewood with centipedes.

The poet has used two proverbs in the same stanza to express different messages. The first proverb is used in the expression of any ill luck. The message is, it was and still is unwise, for those who are lucky to make fun of those who experience misfortunes, because their fortunes may be reversed.

### 3.2.1.2 The employment of hyperbaton in proverbs

The poem is about the 1987 floods that destroyed many homes and left some graves open in the areas around Durban. Many people died in those floods. The poet has employed the proverb to let other people know that this disaster can happen to anyone and anywhere. In his distress he curses the floods by using the second proverb which means that the floods will one day experience difficult problems too.

The proverbs are a source from which any poet can withdraw from at any given time. Although the proverbs used in the above illustrations are used with their original form unchanged, this does not indicate a mere transcription. Such images concretize the fact that proverbs are models of expression that a poet finds in his immediate cultural environment. These expressions serve as communication tools rather than a causation of poetry writing. Buthelezi transports home different and significant messages through a vehicle of expression that is familiar and understandable to most of his people, educated

and illiterate. Iyasere (1975:107) comments as follows regarding the inspirational power of tradition among African writers. He says:

The modern African writer is to his indigenous oral tradition as a snail is to its shell. Even in a foreign habitat, a snail never leaves its shell behind.

### 3.2.1.2 The employment of hyperbaton in proverbs

Geldenhuys (1990:28) talks about two processes that affect the syntax of a sentence. The first process is inversion. According to him inversion refers to the process whereby the normal word order of a sentence is changed. The second process is called hyperbaton. In hyperbaton reference is made to a process whereby an inversion or transposition of idiomatic word order is found. Hyperbaton, therefore, concerns itself with the changing of word order in idiomatic expressions.

In the previous discussion it was mentioned that the structure of the proverb is syntactically fixed. Poets do in many instances tamper with this fixed form. A poet bends and twists the syntax of the proverb to suit his own purpose. He may introduce a new word, or move around the semantic materials of the proverb from their original positions. In this way he introduces the defamiliarization process whereby order sequences that are rare in the ordinary form of a proverb

are used to convey messages. Defamiliarization carries with it additional meanings. Commenting on syntactic deviation Mulaudzi *et al.* (1992:29) points out that:

Syntactic deviation should be regarded as an essential ingredient of poetry. First and foremost it creates in the audience the immediate response that they are not listening to prose. In this way language is invested with dignity and solemnity over and above common speech although this poetic language can be understood when contextually placed.

Defamiliarization is one important characteristic feature that sets poetry apart from the ordinary prosaic language. Eikhenbaum (1965:136) quoted by Lemon and Reis (1965) buttresses this opinion when he says:

As words get into verse they are, as it were, taken out of ordinary speech. They are surrounded by a new aura of meaning. One may say that the concept of defamiliarization of that which is familiar is brought about by the use of literary devices such as symbols, similes, personification and metaphors. By the use of these poetic devices we no longer regard the objects of day to day experience as being typical and familiar.

Buthelezi like other poets too, uses syntactic deviation in proverbs as a poetic device. He changes the original structural pattern of Zulu proverbs for various reasons.

#### IZINGQUNQULU ZOSIBA: 17

(4) *Umthente othe usamila wahlatshwa,*

Ib' imithent' ihlaba isamila,

Uhlatshwe yizingqwele zosiba,

- (5) The course grass that has been pricked while it was still growing,  
While the course grass pricks whilst it is still growing,  
It is pricked by the great writers,

*Kungqwele zosiba*

Original form of the proverb: *Umthente uhlaba usamila*

(The umthente (kind of course grass) pricks whilst still young)

This saying is used of a precocious child. It generally means that children may show in childhood what they are likely to be in old age. This poem is about E.J. Mhlanga whom Buthelezi regards as a young talented poet. Mhlanga is faced with some difficulties that are posed to him by the old poets, who see him as a threat.

Original form of the proverb: *Umthente uhlaba usamila*

The alteration of the verb stem -hlaba into a passive stem -hlatshwa is of great significance. It creates a shift in meaning. The word *umthente* is associated with a young person or a child. The proverb in its original form states that it is the child that pricks when it is still young. The changing of the verb stem goes with the change in meaning, for the proverb now says the child is pricked when it is still young. It is no longer the young child that pricks, but the action in the altered proverb is carried upon the child.

IZINGQUNQULU ZOSIBA: 55

(5) Ube nomusa ovusa amadlingozi.

Makwedlule

*Ukubuyela emuva akukho.*

*Kungemgqigqo akukho,*

Kuphumelela umtakabani.

He had a kindness that evoked enthusiasm.

Let it pass

Going back is not possible.

It is not an umgqigqo dance it isn't possible,

Whose child becomes successful.

Original form of the proverb: *Akuphindelwa emuva kungemgqigqo.*

(There is no going back as in an umgqigqo dance)

The umgqigqo is a type of a Zulu dance in which the dancers go forward, and return in a backward movement. The proverb means that one cannot go back in years. It may also be used in the case of a person who has committed himself in such a way that a withdrawal is quite out of the question.

The poet relates about death in this poem. He is consoling a person who finds it difficult to accept death. He persuades the bereaved to understand that the dead person will not come back, hence he employed the proverb. The poet generally conveys the fact that no one escapes death.

The alteration in this proverb has been effected by means of a double insertion of the word *akukho*. This word, however, stresses the impossibility of the dead coming back to life again. It has been inserted in the proverb for emphasis reasons.

#### IZINGQUNQULU ZOSIBA: 28

(6) *Esithungela injobo ebandla*

Esishiyela ubuchopho

Nezi Nzululwazi.

One that sew a loin-skin in front of men

3.2.1. One that exchange ideas

With the great-thinkers.

Original proverb: *Injob' enhle ithungelwa ebandla.*

(A good loin-skin is one sewn in front of men)

The saying means that it does not pay to act single-handed instead of soliciting advice from other people. The poem is about a warrior who has fought many wars in his life. Fighting in many wars exposed the warriors in various life threatening situations. Experience has, however, taught the warrior in this poem, that a man who shares his shortcomings with another man, is able to get help than the one who keeps everything to himself. The proverb stresses that getting advice from those who know is not to belittle oneself.

The poet emphasizes the action *esithungela*, an action of sharing. The rearrangement of the word order of the proverb highlights the overriding importance of action. The sharing of ideas is the central issue and the poet finds it necessary to move the verb from its position, to the beginning of the sentence. Mulaudzi *et al.* (1992:26) observes that the rearrangement of syntactic structure is of crucial importance in poetry as he states that:

In some languages it might be a light but definite violation of the natural languages rules. In languages like Shona, Sotho and Zulu, for example, the occurrence of the adjective before the noun is rare, but it is not uncommon in poetic language.



### 3.2.1.3 Ellipsis in Zulu proverbs

It is important to observe the operation of elision in Zulu proverbs. The poet creates short and compact art. He has to rely on certain techniques with words which will enable the success of his communication. Ellipsis is one of the techniques that promotes word economy in poetry. Literary scholars define this concept in various ways. Nyembezi (1954:12) says elision is:

An absolute necessity which, if unobserved, may go a long way towards destroying the effect of the proverb. First of all, we observe that whole words may be left out, and the prosaic form changed, to allow of the more poetic proverbial form ...

Cohen (1973:184) agrees with Nyembezi that this technique involves the omission of some of the words from the proverb and puts it this way:

Ellipsis is the omission of words or syntactical elements — either natural or deliberate. In literature, emphasis is achieved through this technique when the reader can easily supply the missing elements.

Ellipsis in proverbs is one of the prominent features that Buthelezi uses in his poetry, especially in relation to the way in which he uses the proverb. The form of the proverb in Zulu offers a number of interesting structural features. It has been already illustrated that proverbs are full sentences in their own right. It has

also been shown how the poets alter the syntactic structure to suit their own purposes.

Ellipsis is one other form of deviation from the usual norm, in that, when this technique is used the poet leaves out portions for the reader to fill in. People who are not familiar with the full form of the original proverb are then faced with a jigsaw puzzle to complete. Mathumba (1979:04) argues that the features of a proverb can be divided into two groups, the implicit and explicit structural feature. Elision according to this classification falls under the explicit features. He states this briefly by saying:

By explicit feature we shall here be referring to those features which are clearly discernible in the written form of the proverb. These will include elision, parallelism, alliteration, reduplication and others.

For the purpose of this research project we shall confine ourselves only to those proverbs where a single word or more words have been left out from the proverb. There is also the elision of vowels, which affects the final vowel or the initial vowel in a word but these will not form part of our discussion.

#### AMAQABUNGA ENTOMBE: 19

(7) Ngiyamazi uMaNyambose

Iqesheqeshe lakwabo.

**Elikwazi ukuzikhotha emhlane;**

I know MaNyambose

An outspoken person.

Who can lick her back

Full proverb: **Akukho qili** lazikhoth' emhlane

(There is no cunning person who ever licked his own back)

Two words; **akukho** and **iqili** have been omitted in the proverb. The omission brings about condensation in the whole proverb, but this also highlights a difference between the two proverbs. The full form of the proverb expresses a negation. The poet leaves out the word **akukho** which expresses the negation to suit his specific purpose.

MaNyambose a woman whom the poet relates about in this poem is depicted as a woman who is capable of withstanding many difficult situations that she comes across in her life. She is a woman who does not move an inch even when the bed bugs bite her. In the mieliefields she does not bother about the thorns that prick her feet. She is a type of a woman whom when a man divorces today, is lucky to get married again. The poet finds it necessary to use the proverb in a positive form to express an idea which is in contrast with that which is contained in the full form of the proverb. MaNyambose as a woman who rises above all her

difficulties is depicted as a cunning person who can lick her back. She is capable of withstanding difficulties that other women and even men cannot tolerate.

AMAQABUNGA ENTOMBE: 40

(8) Kwaye kwakhuzela inkehli yoselwa

Phezu kwetshe likaNtunjambili,

Yathi: "**Thokola themba ayewukela!**"

Even the old lady of the royal kraal shouted

On top of the Ntunjambili rock,

And said: "Tokolo cheer up, they are falling!"

(8) Kwaye kwakhuzela inkehli yoselwa

Full proverb: Thokolo themba **amathunzi** ayewukela.

(Tokolo cheer up, the shades of the evening are falling)

The condensed proverb is more forcible in expression than the full structure. The full proverb gives more clarification and a better understanding especially for a person who is not familiar with the proverb. The condensed form and the elision of the word **amathunzi** conceals the whole idea which is expressed by the full proverb. This way of using the proverb affords it to bring about literariness because it has a defamiliarizing effect on the audience. Jefferson's *et al.* (1987:38) opinion holds our attention when he says:

The devices of poetry are studied not for themselves, but for their defamiliarizing capacity.

This proverb is an expression that is used to cheer up an individual with the promise that his wish is about to materialise. The poet has used the expression in relation to the deeds of Dr Gatsha Buthelezi. Buthelezi has been fighting for the abolition of apartheid and the liberation of black people from the time when B.J. Vorster and P.W. Botha were Prime Ministers in our country. The poet uses this proverb to encourage Dr Buthelezi that his wish will be realised one day.

IZAGILA ZEPHISI: 36

(9) Ha! nangu uNgayiyana,

"Emva mzikulu nasisihlonti nansi indlela,"

Ha! **Akukho silima sindlebende kwabo**

Oh! here is Ngayiyana,

"Go back my grandchild, here is the light, here is the way,"

Oh! No fool is long-eared at his home.

Full form: Akekho umuntu oke abizwe ngokuthi uyisilima esindlebende

ekhaya kwabo.

(There is no person who is called by a fool who has long ears at his home)

Many words have been omitted in this proverb to change its prosaic form to a more poetic proverbial form. The proverb means that with parents, all children have a place in their hearts. The proverb relates to emotional matters. The poet in this poem narrates a story of how the ventriloquists have brought misery and confusion in his life. His mother, Hawukile kaNohofu, died because of these evil doers. His father, Mtitinywa, is also about to follow his mother. He has sought help from various witch-doctors but in vain. Ngayiyana, whom we can say is the poet's grandparent, comes to his rescue. The poet then employs the proverb to bring home the idea that people of the same blood feel pain for one another. It is for this reason that Ngayiyana helps the poet.

Buthelezi has used the proverb as a vehicle of communication in various ways. We must commend him for this. Finnegan (1976:389) states that for the poet today, or indeed for the speaker who is some sort of an artist in the use of words, the proverb is a model of compressed forceful language. There is, therefore, a slim chance for poets to eliminate the use of proverbs in their poetry. Poetry is a short compact art. Unlike the other forms of written art, it should be economic in its use of words.

The poetic qualities like ellipsis, hyperbaton and defamiliarization are some of the features that put the idiomatic expressions on a higher level than that of ordinary

language. On the importance of proverbs Finnegan (1976:145) quotes Nyembezi (1954) who sees proverbs and life as inseparable twins and says:

Without them the language would be but a skeleton without flesh,  
and a body without soul.

### 3.2.2 Use of oral poetry

In oral poetry we will look at oral literature such as praise poetry (izibongo) and assess how this type of poetry has been used by Buthelezi. Izibongo is called oral or traditional poetry for various reasons. The most important reason is that it is oral in nature. It was passed down from generation to generation through the word of mouth. Oral poetry like all kinds of literature arises from society, and being oral, has the extra facet of often involving more direct interplay between composer and audience. It is because of this reason that it was looked at as a communal possession and it was familiar to all in the community. In certain instances the whole community participated in the deliverance of this word art. In explaining some of the characteristics of traditional African literature, Kunene has this to say:

Zulu literature, like most African literatures, is communal. This has fundamental stylistic and philosophical implications. The communal organisation in Africa is not just a matter of individuals clinging together to eke out an existence, as some have claimed, nor is it comparable to the rural communities of Europe. It is a communal

organisation which has evolved its own ethic, its own philosophical system, its own forms of projecting and interpreting its realities and experiences (Ngara, 1990:77-78).

Kunene's comment classifies African poetry as a different type from the Western type. Among other things it is set aside by its communal and cultural features. We can also add that it originates from a traditional way of life of a people in which such poetry had a definite place and function. Finnegan (1976:25) in support of this says:

Oral literature is only one type of literature, a type characterised by particular features to do with performance ...

This does not mean that praise poetry, or oral literature as such, is no longer created in South Africa. It is still created, but its oral features no longer carry as much force and power as it had in the past. Finnegan (1976:19) substantiates this and says:

Even in a society apparently dominated by the printed word the oral aspect is not entirely lost.



### 3.2.2.1 Is speech superior over writing?

Various questionable assumptions about the nature and status of oral tradition and the so-called folk art among non-literature people, have not made matters any easier.

The point of argument was that oral unwritten literature was relatively undeveloped and primitive. This derogatory assumption was applied to oral literature in completely non-literate societies, when oral literature coexisted with written literary forms in civilized cultures. These assumptions undermined the literary status of oral African unwritten literature to such an extent that various scholars debated the issue of superiority between speech and writing. Various positions have been taken up on this question. N.K. Chadwick in *Finnegan* is explicit on this point and asserts that:

In civilized countries we are inclined to associate literature with writing; but such an association is accidental .... Millions of people throughout Asia, Polynesia, Africa and even Europe who practise the art of literature have no knowledge of letters. Writing is unessential to either the composition or the preservation of literature. The two arts are wholly distinct (1976:15-16).

In Chadwick's statement it is made clear that writing does not necessarily ensure the presence of literature nor its preservation. Even in countries where a written letter was unknown, literature existed in a form of unwritten oral nature.

This argument takes us back to the basic assumptions between structuralism and the deconstructionists. Although Derrida's conception of language is basically informed by the Saussurean principle that language consists of a differential network of arbitrary signification, he raises a number of points of criticism against Saussure's language theory (Gräbe, 1991:124).

The structuralists clearly rank speech above writing. Speech is considered as of primary importance and writing secondary. The whole argument concerns the relationship between speech and writing. The argument focuses on the question of the priority of one over the other and what that priority means for language in general and meaning in particular. Saussure opposed the ethnocentrism of Western linguists who had always paid too much attention to text and manuscripts of written languages, to the detriment of speech.

The first point disputed by Derrida is Saussure's premise that writing exists purely as a means of conveying speech, which derives in turn from the assumption that speech is represented by the written symbol.

The Western thought has developed innumerable terms which operate as centring principles. Derrida combats the desire for a centre referred to as logocentrism in the Saussurean approach by developing a term known as phonocentrism. Phonocentrism treats writing as a contaminated form of speech. Writing threatens to contaminate speech with its materiality.

Gräbe (1991:125) also observes that:

In his exposition of his grammatology or science of writing and textuality Derrida observed the general rule of reversing the traditional hierarchic order of speech and writing on the grounds that writing or the written word is the source of language — and not vice versa — and that writing must, therefore, precede and be a precondition of speech or the spoken word.

Speech seems nearer to originating thought and it also ensures the 'presence' of the speaker, which is lacking in writing. Derrida, however, stresses that even when speech is subjected to interpretation it is usually in written form. Writing does not require the writer's presence and speech always requires an immediate presence. Derrida's reversal of the hierarchy implies that speech is a species of writing.

In conclusion Derrida, in contrast to Saussure, holds that all signifying terms, i.e. signifieds (speech) as well as signifiers (writing), are of secondary significance.

He further stresses that there is no essential difference between signifier and signified because both bear traces of all the other signifying elements with which they are associated.

Derrida's assumption of equality with regard to the importance of speech and writing fits perfectly well in our study of oral literature. The relationship between oral and written literature is to be seen as a difference of degree and not of kind. The presence of writing can coexist with an emphasis on the significance of performance as one of the main means of the effective transmission of a literary work. Finnegan (1976) points out that throughout much of antiquity even written works were normally read aloud rather than silently. One means of transmitting it, as it were, was to deliver it aloud to a group of listeners.

Finnegan (1976:20) notes that:

It is already widely accepted that these two media can each draw on the products of the other, for orally transmitted forms have frequently been adopted or adapted in written literature, and oral literature too is prepared to draw on any source, including the written word.

Derrida's and Finnegan's suggestions seem to agree on the point of equal status between oral and written literature. In the case of our oral praise poems it is true that this type of literature was at first more oral in nature than now. It could not

be cognitively preserved any more. The only means for its preservation is by writing it down. Speech and writing are not only interrelated but also interdependent. The mind is not a durable storer of knowledge and writing is beyond any doubt durable.

### 3.2.2.2 Use of praise poems

The praise poems commonly known as *izibongo* in Zulu, play the most important influential role with regard to our modern poets. Two main types of traditional poetry in Zulu are distinguished, i.e. *izibongo* (praises of chiefs) and *imilolozelo* (lullabies). This research will only pay more attention to the use of *izibongo* and try to evaluate how these have been ingested in Buthelezi's works.

Lenake (1992:39) defines praise poetry as:

oral compositions of chiefs and warriors whose main purpose was to praise these chiefs and heroes for deeds of bravery they displayed in war.

Praise poems were and are not only confined to good deeds. They have the power to expose hidden personality traits about the person being praised. Cope (1968:26) with regard to this says:

Praise poems are naturally inclined to be in praise of a person, but they may just as well be in criticism of him.

Many a time praise poems present the chief as an object of admiration. In many instances they do as well reveal his weaknesses such as obstinacy, aggressiveness and shrewdness. They inform us about his physical qualities and his attractiveness to, and interest in women. Praises serve as a data-base where the nation can get information to know their chief well.

Praises have been in the past extended to a diversity of objects like animals, birds, cars, divining bones and many other objects. It is the praises of the Zulu chiefs and kings that are of great significance to us. Very few if any of our prominent modern poets have escaped the influence of oral poetry. The composers of these poems are no longer known. Like any other verbal art, they were carried down to the younger generation by the word of mouth. The free movement of the material enabled most poets to use these compositions in their works too.

Ntuli (1984:8) observes that once a traditional poem has been composed, it becomes a fund from which anyone can draw whatever sounds impressive or is applicable to his personality or deeds or circumstances.

Buthelezi, like many of his colleagues, has also borrowed freely from these well-known praises. In some instances Buthelezi uses the borrowed material as it is without any changes. Some of his poems are written in the izibongo style, while

in some instances there is allusion to some of the well-known Zulu praise poems. An illustration to show the above mentioned facts will be made.

### 3.2.2.3 Use of the recital style of Izibongo

When deriving his praises the praiser recites at the top of his voice. Cope (1968:28-29) says:

These conventions of praise-poem recitation which is high in pitch, and loud in volume, fast in speed, create an emotional excitement in the audience as well as the praiser himself ...

Buthelezi has employed the praise-poem recitation style to address a large crowd of people in the poem *Gqim-gqebele*.

#### AMAQABUNGA ENTOMBE: 53

(10) Zulu kaMalandela ngokulandela

Izinkomo zamadoda!

kuseOrlando Stadium lapha

Zulu of Malandela who followed

The cattle of other men!

It is at Orlando Stadium here

The opening lines are of a recitation style. When reciting these lines the voice as Cope puts it, is high in pitch, loud in volume and also creates some emotional excitement in the audience. The praise-poem recitation style eliminates the normal down drift intonation. Use of a low tone would not fit the type and nature of the occasion.

The poet narrates about the once famous Radio Zulu football sport announcer Elijah Thetha Masombuka. The radio announcer addresses a number of people and the poet also uses the same technique to draw our attention. The first two lines are used as an introduction of the poem. Elijah Masombuka was widely known for his ear capturing voice when announcing football. The poet laments that it is difficult to find a suitable replacement for his post. Thetha Masombuka left Radio Zulu for the KwaNdebele Parliament.

Announcing football is a sense of seriousness and occasion, it, therefore, cannot be recited smoothly and quietly, but has to be shouted in great gusto, so that the accompaniment to the sense of seriousness and occasion creates emotional uplift and excitement. This type of opening fits perfectly well with the person who is being praised.



### 3.2.2.4 Use of parallelism as a praise-poem style

Parallelism is defined by Bamgbose in Olatunji (1984:26) as a traditional technique used in poetry which involves:

... a juxtaposition of sentences having similar structure, a matching of at least two lexical items in each structure, a comparison between juxtaposed sentences and a central idea is expressed through complementary statements in the sentence (Mulaudzi *et al.*, 1992:31).

Parallelism is used with the purpose of achieving rhythm in poetry. It, therefore, according to the above description, refers to the use of the identical or similar construction, or patterns carrying the identical items or similar ideas in successive lines or lines close to one another. The lines indicate similarity in meaning and construction.

At times parallelism is plain monotonous repetition that serves to emphasize an important point. Let us examine the following example:

#### AMAQABUNGA ENTOMBE: 37

(11) Imamba ekhafula igijima

Ikhafule imihosha nemihoshana

**Waxhoshwa** uMathanzima!

**Waxhoshwa** uMangope!

**Waxhoshwa** uMphephu!

Amathe agcwala ulimi kuSebe!

The mamba that spits out while running

It spits out valleys and small valleys

Matanzima is dazzled!

Mangope is dazzled!

Mphephu is dazzled!

The saliva fills Sebe's tongue!

Parallelism is achieved by means of the repeated structural patterns in this praise poem. The significant lexical items 'waxhoshwa' occur in identical positions in the structure of the sentences that display the structural repetition. The central idea expressed by the repeated words is fear. Repetition as a poetic technique has a specific function and that is to emphasize a specific idea. Buthelezi tells us that neither Sebe who is the youngest of the mentioned Chief Ministers or Mphephu as the eldest, could look Gatsha in the eye. They all would not face him when he was angry.

The very same stanza provides us with a tonal counterpoint. The subject concord 'wa-' that recurs at the beginning of the three successive sentences creates a

pleasant sound to the ear, but also emphasises the main idea as far as this poem is concerned. We also cannot afford to disregard the fact that these lines also create a sound rhythm. If one reads this stanza, one is compelled to raise one's tone to stress strongly the first syllable of the verb stem 'waxhoshwa', so that the idea of the poem is effectively carried out.

(12) *Sengata ngawafanisa neLanibe*

The poet has also employed the metaphor in the first line. Buthelezi has carefully chosen his metaphor to concretize his central idea. Gatsha is called an 'imamba' which is a deadly venomous snake. The metaphor expresses fierceness, roughness, storminess and strength. Gatsha is associated with an imamba, and this draws our attention to the conventional royal images of powerful animals like the bull, a lion and an elephant, which are widely used in the praise poems of chiefs and kings. The employment of parallelism brings dignity to a poet's work, in that it renders various impressive poetic techniques such as repetition, rhyme and rhythm.

*among his friends.*

### 3.2.2.5 Allocation of well-known praises of chiefs to other people

*The poet does not mean that his metaphor is the Snake. He associated the*

Buthelezi uses some lines from well-known old praises in his own composition. These praises are not used for the people they were originally composed for. There is a transference of some sort which accompanies what the poet aims to emphasise. The well-known portions are used for other people, who, in some

instances, are not even chiefs or kings. Buthelezi does this in his poem 'Ungabe usanyakaza' (Do not move).

AMAQABUNGA ENTOMBE: 56

(12) Sengake ngakufanisa neLembe

*Elathi lisadla ezinye labuye*

*Ladla ezinye!*

I once associated you with an axe

That devoured others and

Devoured others too!

In this poem the poet narrates about a person who viciously kills people for no apparent reason. The killer described by the poet kills innocent people for fame among his friends.

The poet does not mean that this murderer is like Shaka. He associates the actions of these two men. There is likeness in their bravery. This is exactly how Shaka is praised in Cope (1968:97). The killer is a hero among his friends. The poet, therefore, sees it necessary to equate the killers heroism to that of the great Zulu hero, Shaka.

Buthelezi does also transfer praises of one king to another king. Shaka is known and regarded as the first Zulu king. He is also the most famous and powerful king that ever existed in the Zulu history and in the history of the African people. It is, therefore, not surprising to find poets allocating most of his praises to his successive kings. The poem 'UGuqabadele iNhlambamasoka' relates about the last Zulu king Cetshwayo. He is known for his well-known warriors USUTHU that fought in the battle of Isandlwana. The poet relates about the difficulties that Cetshwayo experienced during his reign as king. It was during his reign when the female group known as iNgcugce defied his word and they were all killed. During Cetshwayo's time there were large numbers of white people in KwaZulu, hence the battle of Isandlwana between Cetshwayo and British people was unavoidable. Some people in the Zulu tribe never guaranteed Cetshwayo's reign as they did to Shaka. To convey this message Buthelezi uses the gossip that the women of Nomgabi said to Shaka.

### 3.2.2.5 Praises of a King | ISANDLWANA: 102

- (13) Umamatheke kanti umamatheke nje  
Untela noTeku lwabafazi bakwaNomgabi,  
Betekula behlezi eMlovini,  
Bethi uShaka akayikubusa akayikuba nkosi  
Kanti yilapho eyonethezeka.

You smiled and while you smiled  
You are joking with the joke of the women of Nomgabi,  
Joking as they sat in a sheltered spot  
Saying that Shaka would not rule, he would not become king  
Whereas he was about to prosper.

These praises are used to associate Cetshwayo's difficulties with those of Shaka. Shaka was at the beginning of his reign despised by many people, including the women of Nomgabi, because of his mother Nandi's royal scandal. Cetshwayo, too, like Shaka, was not his father's favourite. His mother, Ngqumbazi, was also an ostracised woman in Mpande's royal kraal. Like Shaka, Cetshwayo was ostracised and had to fight for his kingship. The poet has successfully transferred Shaka's praises to Cetshwayo because of the similarities in the life history of these two kings.

### 3.2.2.6 Praises of a single person allotted to a large crowd

In his poem 'Khala Nkomo kaZulu' (Bellow you cow of the Zulus) commonly translated as 'Cry you beloved country' which is a type of political protest about the situation in which the Black people found themselves during the apartheid period. The poet expresses his displeasure about the unfair segregation of Black people. Literature is an expression of one's experiences. Many writers put these experiences on paper so that other people may also share them.

Ntuli (1984:134) comments on protest poetry and says:

By committed poetry we usually understand the works which are written with the main aim of conveying strong convictions about some issue or situation. These may be didactic, aiming at reprimanding or sermonising. But along this continuum of didacticism one may move to the other extreme of poems which protest against some order.

In this poem Buthelezi narrates about how the black person was stripped off all his possessions by the white people. Black people were stripped off their land. Whites still possess their guns and the blacks are not allowed to carry their traditional weapons. The poet says:

(14) Sigoba mkhonto.

Awusikwa mahawu,  
Awushukelwa sidwaba (Amagagasi, p 30).

You bend your spear  
You no longer cut shields,  
You no longer make your skin dress.

Black people were and even today no longer wear their skin clothes since they were stripped off their cattle by white men. The poet then employs Shaka's praises to refer to the large cry of the nation.

*Wama kaQangeni...Phala abakhozi*

*Zika nkhale phazu kama* AMAGAGASI: 30

*Zaligwa kama lamahle tshingwa zama khosi*

(15) Ukhalisa sakulingisa inkomo ekhale Emthonjaneni.

You bellow like a cow that bellowed at Mthonjaneni.

*You ka Qangeni...Phala abakhozi*

This is how Shaka is praised in Cope (1968:91). The poet associates Shaka's cry when he died with the dissatisfaction that the black nation finds itself in today. Shaka's curse fell upon all the black people. It is, therefore, appropriate for the poet to relate Shaka's praises to the whole black nation.

The poem 'Amabutho kwaKhangalamankengane' (The warriors of Khangalamankengane) the poet wishes King Goodwill Zwelithini a good life. He gives credit to the warriors who safeguard his life at his kraal, called Khangalamankengane. In his address to the warriors the poet uses Senzangakhona's praises found in Cope (1968:77).

*Senzangakhona's praises who is who from amabutho...phala abakhozi*

*and the father of the most powerful Khosi...Phala abakhozi*

*praises. Praises are inherited from father to son...Phala abakhozi*

*inherited from the ancestors to the younger generation.*



ISANDLWANA: 41

(16) Wena we Ndlovu!

**Wena kaQangabhodiya woMkabayi!**

Zulu elidlale phezu kwezingelengele

ZeNgwavuma lazithatha izihlangu zamadoda.

You of an elephant!

You of Qangabhodiya of Mkabayi!

The lightning that struck on top of the mountains

Of Ngwavuma and took the shield of men.

There are two views that can be ascribed to the above praises. In the first instance this can be related to the king himself. King Zwelithini is Senzangakhona's descendent. This reveals the genealogical history of the king. In the second instance the praises can be related to the warriors of Zwelithini's kraal. Warriors do not fight for themselves, but for their king. It is for this reason, then, that the poet uses Senzangakhona's praises in his address of the king's warriors. These warriors protect the Zulu king and they deserve to be praised in Senzangakhona's praises who is also their ancestor, one of the great Zulu chiefs and the father of the most powerful King Shaka. This line is also used in Shaka's praises. Praises are inherited from father to son and, therefore, they can also be inherited from the ancestors to the younger generation.

### 3.2.2.7 Use of corresponding portions from izibongo

In some of his poems Buthelezi borrows some portions from well-known praises and uses them for the very same person. Throughout the Zulu history it is Cetshwayo who is praised as the Black Jininindi, who is like the clotted blood of leopards and lions.

He who is intent upon aiming never free of aiming.

He who shelters falls ISANDLWANA: 101

So that they do not stab him

(17) UJininindi omnyama ongabubende

Buthelezi: Bezingwe nezingonyama ...!

Buthelezi also used his own lexical items. Instead of using the same word 'abizakab'.

Buthelezi: Black Jininindi who is like clotted blood

Of leopards and lions ...!

stem, but has a stronger meaning than 'izibongo' it means to hold on to one's

These praises reveal Cetshwayo's skin colour. He was a very dark skinned person. The use of well-known praises for the same person reveal the poet's knowledge about his cultural history.

degree of authenticity and acceptance among the readers.

When praising Zibhebhu kaMaphitha, who was one of the Mandlakazi chiefs, Buthelezi employs some of the old existing praises from izibongo. Zibhebhu is called:

UGUBHU: 47

(18) Umababala ahlom' akadinwa ukuhloma;

USima ngaludonga

Bangamhlabi.

He who is intent upon arming never tires of arming;

He who shelters behind a wall

So that they do not stab him.

Buthelezi has ingeniously mixed these praises with his own composition. He has also used his own lexical items. Instead of using the same word 'sibanda', Buthelezi has used its synonym 'sima'. 'Sibanda' is a personal noun constructed from the verbal stem -banda which means to hide oneself. 'Sima' is also a verbal stem, but has a stronger meaning than hiding. It means to hold on firmly to something.

The use of some known portions for the same person from izibongo confirms the degree of authenticity and acceptance among the readers.

### 3.2.2.8 Allusion to known historical events

Here we will have a brief look at the allusion to historical events that are historically known to have happened. Abrams (1981:8) says:

Allusion in a work of literature is a reference, explicit or indirect, to a person, place, event, or to another literary work or passage.

Buthelezi mentions the names of these historical places so that it is easy for the readers to remember the incidents. This can be said to be deliberate allusiveness. It is possible, and it is of an advantage to the poet to make deliberate and calculated allusiveness, when the reader has some literary knowledge about what the poet is talking about. In the poem 'Undunankulu kaZulu' Buthelezi alludes to the battle of Maqongqo. This was a historical battle between the Voortrekkers under the leadership of Andries Pretorius and the Zulus under Dingaan. The Zulus under Dingaan were defeated at Maqongqo in February, 1840. Dingaan fled north, where he was killed (Muller, 1981:167). The poet's reference to this battle between the Zulus and the Boers is of great significance since he is warning Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi who was fighting against the apartheid system that the Boers are dangerous. In his warning he says:

AMAQABUNGA ENTOMBE: 35

(19) Vimbani ngezindlela zonke

Lenkunzi ingayi eMaqongqo

Kuvalwe ngemigoqo yomdlebe

Suka lapha wena vaka ndini!

Close all the ways

This bull should not go to Maqongqo

It is closed with the woods of a deadly tree there

Go away you coward!

In this poem there is an explicit allusion to the battle of Maqongqo. The poem tells us about Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi when he was the Chief Minister of KwaZulu. He is called a bull which is a young, powerful and a brave beast. This metaphor conveys the message that Chief Buthelezi is a person who holds a bull by its horns when he is dealing with problems. The poet mentions people like William Tolbert, as well as B.J. Vorster and P.W. Botha, who were once Prime Ministers in South Africa. Buthelezi is known to have opposed the apartheid system that was very strong during Vorster's and Botha's ministerial periods. With the formation of Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe, which was a very strong liberation movement formed by Mangosuthu himself, his white counterparts could not stand

his power. It is for this reason that the poet refers to him as a bull that never retreats.

The battle of Isandlwana has been discussed in this section. It shall not be discussed in further details now. This we all know to be a historical battle between our forefathers and a British army. The Zulus, in this battle, were under the leadership of King Cetshwayo. The imposition of British laws upon the king and his subjects started the war. Buthelezi reminds us of this war when he writes:

IZINGQUNQULU ZOSIBA: 20

(20) Ngibuye ngikhumbule eSandlwana

Okhokho beyibamba ishisa

Besho nokusho

"Uyadela wena osulapho."

I am reminded of iSandlwana

Our forefathers had it tough

When they said

"Happy are those who are there."

The mere mentioning of the place iSandlwana reminds us of the bravery of the Zulu warriors. They only carried shields and spears, while the British soldiers had those big machine guns. As the Zulu warriors fell down in numbers, those who were at the back never retreated but came forward with much vigour and shouted the saying, 'Uyadela wena osulapho' (Happy are those who are there).

This stanza not only reminds us about the battle of Isandlwana. It also compels us to appreciate the courage the Zulu warriors had. The meaning of patriotism is also conveyed through this poem. Praise poems are not only about conquering nations and deeds of warriors and chiefs in war, but these poems also convey meaningful human values such as patriotism, solidarity, bravery and a sense of belonging.

The above definition suggests that an izibongo is written by a narrator who has been illustrated how Buthelezi has used izibongo in his compositions. The reader must appreciate the depth of knowledge that he has displayed in this type of poetry. His allocation of Shaka's well known izibongo to an ordinary person. His skill of applying praises of one person to a large number of people is also of significant importance, and it shows creativity on the part of the poet.

### **3.2.3 Traditional prose narratives influence in poetry**

Traditional narratives generally known as 'izinganekwane' in Zulu, form part of our verbal art. These stories can be referred to as bedtime-stories as these were

never told during the day. It is rare to find a child relating a bedtime-story to another child. In the narration of izinganekwane too, it is an adult who performs the narration role. In this research we will align ourselves with Scheub's (1975) definition of the Zulu folktale which he calls izinganekwane. This is an old term that is generally used by the Zulus themselves.

Scheub (1975:3) defines an inganekwane as:

a performing art which has, as its mainspring, a core cliché (a song, chant or saying) which is, during a performance, developed, expanded, and dramatized before an audience ... (Msimang, 1986:21).

The above definition suggests that an inganekwane consists of a narrator who is also a performer, who carries out the performing part during the narration of the story, and the listeners. Folktales encompass all the traditional folk stories. These prose narratives are classified by Bascom into three types, namely: myth, legend and folktale. Buthelezi does not relate these folktales in his poetry but he only alludes to these stories.

### 3.2.3.1 Fables

In Zulu we have a well known tale of Imbila (a rock-rabbit) which is an animal that doesn't have a tail. The tale tells us how did it come that a rock-rabbit does



not have a tail. In his poem 'Imbila' (the rock-rabbit) Buthelezi reminds us of this tragic incident.

ISANDLWANA: 85

(21) Mbila

Noma walibala ukulayezela

Wafika ngokade elapha

Kodwa uyasazi isitha

Rock-rabbit

Though you always requested others

When you arrived you got nothing

But you know the enemy

The rock-rabbit made requests to other animals to choose a tail for it. The lion, who is king of all the animals had made a call to all animals to come to a specific place, where each animal would choose its own favourite tail. All the animals hurried to obtain their tails but the dassie as usual requested other animals to bring along a tail for it. The animals were forbidden by the king to carry the tail for the imbila. Even today this animal does not have a tail.

The term folktale is used here as an umbrella term for what is generally known as *izinganekwane*. These folktales in Makhambeni (1986:5-20) are classified into three main types. There are those folktales that relate about the origin of a certain phenomenon and have a didactic lesson. The second sub-category consists of legends or historical tales. The last category is where we find animals behaving like people and those that show cunning characters.

If we are to consider the above classification, the rock-rabbit folktale would be considered what Guma calls a fable, which is the third category in Makhambeni's suggestion.

Guma (1967:11) says

In fables, as well as in the rest of the Sotho folk-lore where they occur, animals speak and act like human beings. Human actions and passions are attributed to them for purposes of moral instruction. Such instructions flow from the particular story usually takes a form of a proverb. As a result, there is a close connection between certain fables and proverbs, the latter being a summary or condensed form of the former.

The poet has used this tale with a didactic purpose, that is to discourage laziness among people. It is used to encourage people to do things for themselves and not to ask people to do things on their behalf. As Guma suggested the story of

imbila is best presented by the popular Zulu proverb: 'Imbila yaswela umsila ngokulayezela' (The dassie lacked a tail by sending others).

### 3.2.3.2 Folktales

Buthelezi misses the absence of folktales. These tales disappear with the change of time. When expressing his nostalgia for these personality moulding stories, Buthelezi asks:

ISANDLWANA: 31

- (22) Nayaphi Bhekinsimbi noMandaka  
Engabe senisixoxela ezoDemana noDemazana  
UDemana owadatshulwa esihlahleni,  
uDemazana owadatshulwa ohlangeni,

Where have you gone to Bhekinsimbi and Mandaka

You would be telling us about Demana and Demazana

Demana who was cut off from a tree,

Demazana who was cut off from a reed,

The tale of Demana and Demazane can be classified into what Guma calls a folktale. Guma (1967:13) in connection with folktales states that:

there are a number of popular stories that seem to have been told for no purpose other than that of telling a story to provide amusement. These are folk-tales, popular imaginary inventions of the story-tellers of old.

Guma's explanation does provide for the amusing features of a folktale. It seems to limit itself to the amusement function only. This is, however, not the only important feature of a folktale. In this research we will align ourselves with Bascom's (1965:4) definition, which says:

Folktales are prose narratives which are regarded as fiction. They are not considered as dogma or history, they may or may not have happened, and they are not to be taken seriously. Nevertheless, although it is often said that they are told only for amusement, they have their important functions, as the class of moral folktales should have suggested ... (Msimang, 1986:26).

Bascom's definition, in contrast to Guma's, acknowledges the moral function of folktales. Folktales do not only amuse us but also contribute to the reshaping and moulding of our human character. UDemana noDemazana is a good example because it contains a moral lesson. In this folktale, the parents of Demana and Demazana have found themselves a miraculous bird that defecates 'amasi' (sour milk). This bird is kept in a secret place since the children should not be aware

of its presence. The parents enjoy their delicious curdled milk when the children are asleep.

The children are given an instruction that they should not open the closed clay-pot. After the parents have gone to the fields the curious children opened the pot. They helped themselves to their parents' food. While they are busy eating, the bird escapes. They could not get hold of the wonder bird and replaced it with an ordinary one that defecates ordinary excrement. The parents punish Demana and Demazana by piercing them with red-hot awls through the head, from one ear to the other.

In 'Ziphi izingedla ezinkulu' the poet describes his fruitless remembrance of the great heroes of the Zulu Nation. He is referring to the well known witch doctors like Manembe, Jeqe and Khondlo. He also refers to the great warriors like Ndlela kaSompisi, Bhambatha kaMancinza and many others. This reminds him of his own grand parents Bhekinsimbi and Mandaka who would narrate these folktales to rebuild the children in their wicked ways. Perhaps it might help in the maintenance of good values in our society. The moral lesson in this tale is that bad deeds, such as disobedience, should be discouraged by meting out punishment. It also warns parents that the punishment should equal the offence committed by the child.

In the case of Demana and Demazana, the punishment was too severe. This resulted in the two children running away from home. The amusing part of it is that though they are pierced with awls through their skulls they do not die. They run and plunge themselves in a pool where the awls cool off and slip out. These children leave the pool and find refuge in the rock of two-holes (itshe likaNtunjambili). The decision taken by Demana and Demazana is more relevant to our situation today. Children fear punishment. This results in them running away from home. Itshe likaNtunjambili is no longer there to provide safe shelter. Today, the road bridges and the city streets are the best places to find children like Demana and Demazana. The poet warns parents that too strict a life and punishment scares children away from home.

### 3.2.3.3 Use of traditional narratives formulas

All folktales have a distinctive opening formula, they are not narrated in an ordinary manner. Msimang and Ntuli (1991:29) say:

Inganekwane ixoxwa ngosikothi lwakhona. Awuqali nje yinoma kanjani. Kuhle ukuba banele bangathi shaye abalaleli bese uthi: "Kwesukasukela!". Yifomula yokwethula inganekwane ke leyo ... Kulefomula yokwethula kukhona isiphendulo esizovela kubalaleli. Bona bazokwenanela ngokuthi: "Cosu!". Umxoxi usezoqhubeka athi: "Kwakukhona .... Kanjalo futhi uma eseyophetha, kunefomula

yakhona. Uvame ukuthi "Cosu! Cosu! Iyaphela-ke!" Yifomula yokuphetha-ke leyo.

Ayanganisa izivivakho.

The folktale is narrated in a specific manner. You do not just start anyhow. It is appreciated that when the audience is quiet you start by saying: "Kwasukesukela!". This is a formula used when introducing your folktale. Together with this formula there is a reply from the audience. They will reply by saying: "Cosu!". The narrator will then continue and say: "Kwakukhona ..." ("There was once ...").

The p And when he is about to conclude the narration, there is another poor formula. He usually says "Cosu! Cosu! It is the end!" This is then a concluding formula.

It is interesting to note that Buthelezi has employed these prose narrative formulas in some of his poetry. In the Anthology book 'Amathambo Ekhandu', Buthelezi has used the opening formula of prose narrative as a title of his poem. It goes like:

#### AMATHAMBO EKHANDA: 59

(23) Kwesukasukela!

Kwakunendoda ezweni elithile

In the Eyedlula emazingeni aphezulu  
nama Yake yanyathela phezu kwameva  
Ayangahlina, ayangahlehla.

The p There was once a man in a certain land  
Who passed through high degrees  
He once walked over some thorns  
He didn't feel pain; he didn't go back.

(24) Ma ngaba bekuyiye-...

The poet has used the prose narrative opening formula as an introduction to his poem. The formula attracts our attention to listen to a folktale. It just tells the readers that the poet is going to talk about something miraculous.

If it were a fairy tale

In this poem Buthelezi is telling us about an extraordinary man who walked over thorns and never felt any pain. He says this man cannot be equated with a warrior, nor can his intelligence be equated with the great seas. This man is too superior and cannot be described so easily. In his first paragraph the poet started with the word "Kwaku-" (There was ...) which is also a starting formula used when someone starts with the narration of a folktale. We must commend the poet for using these prose narrative formulas, firstly, because it is an unusual technique in poetry and secondly, it is related to the content that he wants to deliver.



In the poem 'Kodwa ngakona ngani' (But what wrong did I do to you) the poet narrates about his beloved one who no longer wants to see him. This break-up creates problems for the poet. It confuses him and he states that love does not cease to be a mystery. When love is over it sounds like a dream, like a fairy tale. The poet then says:

### AMAQABUNGA ENTOMBE: 33

#### 3.3 CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE

(24) Ma ngabe bekuyingane kwane

Bebezozwakala sebeqhumā phezulu!

"Cosi cosi"

If it were a fairy tale

They would be heard shouting loudly!

"Cosi cosi"

The poet uses the closing formula of a folktale because he takes all that has happened as the end of a fairy tale. It is true that when love between two people is over, it is not believable, hence the poet employs the fairy tale formula as a concluding statement. The poet has put the folktale formula in quotation marks to indicate that it is not his own composition.

Buthelezi has a special and unique way of using the material from traditional narratives. He does not narrate these stories, he only alludes to them since he knows that these are generally known by many readers. In expressing miraculous experiences in his poetry he finds it necessary to make use of the traditional narrative narration formulas. He has borrowed the material from these traditional narratives and has handled it with great imagination and originality.

### 3.3 CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE

There are very few poets that have not been influenced by Christianity. It was indicated at the beginning of this research project how Buthelezi is closely associated with Christianity in his life. It would, therefore, be impossible to expect no influence of Christianity in his work.

There are various reasons why poets involve Christianity in their writings. The main reason may be that human beings do not only consist of biological components. There are other important non-biological components of humanness, such as the spiritual component. Kraft (1979:45) comments on this aspect and says:

Such debates within the Western culture have often centred around whether a human being is properly regarded as consisting of two parts (body and soul) or of three (body, soul and spirit).

3.3.1 Theologians, in addition have given attention to the relationship between the non-corporeal part(s) of human beings and the 'image of God' in which we were created (Gen. 1:26). That a human consists of more than merely a physical body and that it is this 'moreness' that distinguishes the human from the animals has seldom been disputed.

It is the relationship with God that according to Kraft makes poets to acknowledge the Christian part in themselves. An additional point to the spread of Christian influence among the Zulu writers can be ascribed to the arrival of the missionaries in South Africa. Ntuli (1984:47) says:

During the early stages of modern education among the Zulu, missionaries played an important part. In the school much emphasis was laid on the reading and study of the Bible. This accounts for the abundance of Biblical stories and excerpts in Zulu poetry.

Most of our writers, especially the first Zulu poets, could not avoid such an influence. It touched their lives and they wrote about it. Christianity is, therefore, one of the roots that nurture and propel Buthelezi's creativity. We shall have a look at the various ways in which Buthelezi's works reveal Christian influence.

### 3.3.1 Christian titles

It is the many Christian overt titles of some of Buthelezi's poems that expose his association with Christianity. The following are some of the most overt:

(25) 'Pontius Pilatu' — **Pontius Pilate** (Amaqabunga Entombe: 22)

which obviously refers to Pontius Pilate the governor of Judea at the time of Jesus' crucifixion.

(26) 'Namhla ngu-Good Friday' — **Today is Good Friday** (Izinsungulo: 67)

The title refers to the day of Jesus' crucifixion.

(27) 'Intaba yase Sinayi' — **The mountain of Sinai** (Amathambo Ekhandu: 75)

This is the mountain where Moses communicated with God where, God gave the Holy laws to Moses.

(28) 'Mana njalo Zayoni' — **Stand for ever Zion** (Izingqungqulu zosiba: 63)

This is a direct reference to Mount Zion.

(29) 'Ume njalo ngelosi enamandla' — **Stand for ever you powerful angel**

(Ugubhu: 53)

The poet refers to the heavenly bodies, the angels.

- (30) 'Ngifane nezingelosi' — *I wish to be like angels* (Isandlwana: 67)

It is also a reference to the heavenly bodies.

- (31) 'NgoKhisimuzi' — *On Christmas day* (Izagila Zephisi: 18)

This refers to the day when Jesus Christ was born.

- (32) 'Shumayela Mfundisi' — *Preach reverend* (Amaqabunga entombe: 21)

This title communicates with the reverend who is told to preach the word of God.

- (33) 'Baba mfundisi' — *Father (Preacher) reverend* (Amathambo ekhanda: 56)

A direct reference to the priest.

- (34) 'uZayoni engimkhumbulayo' — *The Zionist that I remember* (Ithunga likaNondlini: 22)

It refers to a member of the Zionist Church that the poet remembers.

All the above titles reveal Buthelezi's indulgence in religion. The religious atmosphere in which the poet grew up, finds expression in his poetry. His involvement with a theological school classifies him and situate him in the religious category in life. Consciously or unconsciously these Christian titles expose the poet's Christian doctrine.

### 3.3.2 Use of isolated lines from the Bible

Buthelezi borrows some lines that have impressed him from the Bible and uses these to enrich his own compositions.

In his poem 'Pontius Pilatu' the poet narrates about the events surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. It is this governor of Judea who did not find any wrong deeds committed by Jesus Christ. In the Bible it is said that he washed his hands as an illustration that he did not want anything to do with the crucifixion of Jesus. Buthelezi uses these words and writes:

#### AMAQABUNGA ENTOMBE: 23

- (35) "Letha amanzi ngigeze  
Angiliboni icala kulomuntu kaNkulunkulu.  
Negazi lakhe ze lingabuzwa kimi"

These lines are extracted from the Book of Matthew, 27:24, where it reads thus:

When Pilate saw that it was no use to go on, but that a riot might break out, he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd, and said, "I am not responsible for the death of this man! This is your doing!" (*Good News Bible*).

The poet has used these lines to bring seriousness and authenticity to his theme.

In the Bible:

Jesus was then ridiculed by the Pharisees. He was made to carry his own cross to Mount Gethsemane where he was crucified. To describe Jesus's death on the cross, the poet borrows again from the Bible. In this poem 'Namhla ngu-Good Friday' the poet regards himself as also responsible for the death of Jesus. The poet uses the words we find in the Bible in:

#### IZINSUNGULO: 68

(36) "Baba ezandleni zakho yamukela umoya"

These words were pronounced by Jesus when he died. They are written as follows in the Book of Luke 23:46:

"Father! In your hands I place my spirit!" (*Good News Bible*).

The poet uses these words to remind us that Jesus died for our sins, for all the people on earth. To bring us closer to the situation he uses the exact line from the Bible.

There are many instances where Buthelezi has used extracts from the Bible. It will not be possible to write all of them. Besides extracting lines from the Bible,

he also makes reference to some important Biblical stories and incidents found in the Bible.

### 3.3.3 Allusion to Biblical stories

In this section we shall look at the direct or indirect reference that the poet makes to stories and events or situations found in the Bible. The mentioning of certain names and places found in the Bible makes it clear that the poet is referring to events and information that can be traced from the Bible.

In the poem 'Kwabo-Thobile' the poet narrates about Thobile's home. This is a sorrowful poem. Thobile is a girl from a poverty stricken family. She and her family members are as poor as church mice. When the poet looks at this situation his eyes are filled with tears. The mother makes a living by cultivating the lands. Thobile's home is very small, like a shack. People around throw all the filthy rubbish near her home. Buthelezi associates the size of this house with the place where Jesus Christ was born and writes:

(37) Indodana yomuntu

Njengasindiso AMAQABUNGA ENTOMBE: 25

Naye ngokuya kakhulu kakhulu

(37) Kodwa ngeliny'ilanga

Wake wabek' inkosi

**Endlin' encane eBethlehema.**



The use of the place name Bethlehem reminds us of the town where Jesus was born. It is written in Matthew 2:1 that:

Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea, during the time when Herod was king (*Good News Bible*).

The purpose of the poet for this association is that people should not look down upon poor people and those who live in small shanty houses. Jesus was born in a stable, unlike most rulers and kings. This means that as human beings are created in the image of God, people must praise and respect all that God has created.

In his poem 'Zasuka zajubalala' Buthelezi makes reference to the Biblical story when Jesus fell asleep on the boat with his disciples. It is referred to in the following manner:

AMAQABUNGA ENTOMBE: 29

(38) Indodana yomuntu

3.3.4 ***Njengasendulo yakuza isivunguvungu***

Naya ngokuya nishweza naze nathi

Cababa — kwakhuzwa izulu kwadunyiswa

Ubukhulu bukaSomandla

The story is in Luke 8:23-24. It is written as follows:

23. As they were sailing, Jesus fell asleep. Suddenly a strong wind blew down on the lake, and the boat began to fill with water, so that they were all in great danger. 24. The disciples went to Jesus and woke him up, saying, "Master, Master! We are about to die!" Jesus got up and gave an order to the wind and the stormy water; they died down and there was a great calm (*Good News Bible*).

The poet does not just relate to this story for the sake of reminding us about it. It is used to encourage people to have strong faith on their own, even when Jesus is not with them. It is faith that makes people conquer difficult situations. In this poem the poet narrates about the unpredictable journey to the moon, taken some time ago by three American men: Neil Armstrong, Edwin Aldrin and Mike Collins. This was a deadly experiment. The poet uses this Biblical story to refer to this situation. Those men went up the sky without the presence of Jesus in their midst. The poet may be expressing that the presence of Jesus was with them. It is, therefore, appropriate to allude to this incident.

### 3.3.4 Images of Biblical origin

Literary critics define imagery in various ways. The commonest type of image is the usual one, and some writers tend to confine the term to the presentation of

visible objects and scenes. This is limited, in a way, because it is easy to find poems whose images arise from senses other than sight.

Some writers limit the application of imagery to figurative language only. Images for them are similes and metaphors. Heese and Lawton fall in this category as they describe imagery as:

... a reference to or a description of something concrete by means of which the writer wishes to tell you about something else. Concrete in this sense means that it can be perceived by one or more of the senses. The 'something else' may be abstract, or it may be concrete too (1978:62).

Heese and Lawton further goes on to distinguish four types of images namely: simile, metaphor, personification and symbolism.

Another common use of the term imagery is its association with the five senses. The use of the term in this regard represents the shift of emphasis from associating imagery with vision only. Imagery is perceived as a communication device that appeals to other senses as well. This category is all encompassing, since it refuses to leave out of account the possibility that an image may be created by direct description, as well as by means of simile and metaphor.

C.D. Lewis, in Murray (1978:60), is quoted saying that:

A poetic image is 'a picture made out of words'.

'An epithet, a metaphor, a simile may create an image; or an image may be presented to us in a phrase or passage on the face of it purely descriptive'

The term is to be understood in this broad sense. Imagery in a poem can be taken to include literal objects, to include much more than rhetorical figures, iterative words or even direct reference to objects. This broad meaning of imagery goes well with the way in which Abrams (1981:78) defines imagery when he says:

Imagery is used to signify all the objects and qualities of sense perception referred to in a poem or other work of literature, whether by literal description, by allusion, or in the analogues used in its similes and metaphors.

The use of the term should then not be confined to a visual reproduction of the object referred to. Imagery also refers to our senses of smell, sight, touch, hearing and taste.

While it is clear that image can be conveyed in non-figurative language, what C.D. Lewis, in Murray (1978:62), says, remains true:

... trends come and go, diction alters, metrical fashions change, even the elemental subject-matter may change almost out of

recognition; but metaphor remains, the life-principle of poetry, the poet's chief test and glory.

In our discussion of imagery here, we shall pay attention to the use of figures of speech listed by Heese and Lawton (1978) namely: simile, personification, metaphor and symbolism. This choice is solely because of the literal approach that is adopted in this research project. Poetic knowledge in Bloom (1979:15) is seen by the deconstructionists as necessarily a knowledge of tropes, an experience of emotion as trope, and an expression of knowledge and emotion by a revisionary further troping.

There is a strong relationship between deconstruction and the use of figurative language. The deconstructionists see meaning as contested, especially when using the figures of speech which create ambiguity and, therefore, result in the multiplicity or plurality of meaning. Meaning is more important to the deconstructionists than the structure or form of a poem.

Paul de Man, an American deconstructionist, believes that figuration is the element in language that allows for the reiteration of meaning by substitution; the process as at least two fold, and this plurality is naturally illustrated by optical icons of peculiarity.

Norris' (1982:59) quotation of Nietzsche and Derrida confirms the importance of figuration in the creation of multiple meanings. In his quotation he says:

Both Nietzsche and Derrida hold that there is no alternative for figurative language as a medium of logical discourse, but rather that there is an open plurality of discourse where all such priorities dissolve into the disconcerting 'free play of signs'.

When dealing with meaning for example, the deconstruction approach is to focus immediately upon the simple belief that words refer directly to things. This notion is made available to the deconstructionists by the use of figurative language. Words according to the deconstructionists do not refer to things in the real world, but only signify other words. It is in the use of imagery or figurative language where a sign serves as a substitute for a referent. In Derrida's conception the material part of the sign, the signifier, is a substitute for its ideal content, the signified.

The signified concept is never present in itself. Every concept is necessarily and essentially inscribed in a chain or a system, within which it refers to another and to other concepts, by the systematic play of differences. This is, however, contradictory to Ferdinand de Saussure's premise that a text has a particular meaning. The free play of signs means that texts do not have a specific meaning that can be investigated, but are limitless in their meaning.

Deconstruction employs concepts developed by Ferdinand de Saussure. Derrida reverses every concept brought forward by Saussure, in order to undermine the grounds of both Saussure's system and structuralism itself. Derrida's coinage of the term *différance* is against Saussure's term *difference*. The term *difference* is seen by the structuralists as a characteristic of relations that are considered essential for the constitution of meaning. *Différance* is used by Derrida to imply the systematic play of differences and temporalization. *Différance* makes all conceptualization and, thus, all representation possible, because signs have meaning only by virtue of differences. The signified is continually deferred.

*Différance* is a term that brings together the senses of difference and deferment. *Différance* is the opposite of logocentrism, a Saussurean term which posits the existence of a fixed meaning. *Différance* sees meaning as permanently deferred, always subject to, and produced by, its difference from other meanings and, thus, volatile and unstable.

#### **3.3.4.1 Symbolism and Metaphor**

Murray (1978:157) says:

Symbolism may be described as the art of expressing emotions not only by describing them directly nor by defining them through overt comparisons with concrete images, but by suggesting what these

ideas and emotions are by re-creating them in the mind of the reader through the use of unexplained symbols.

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Murray's definition puts it explicitly that symbolism does not contain any comparison but uses words to represent these symbols in the mind of the reader.

Abrams (1981:195) definition is more explicit when he says:

A symbol, in the broadest sense, is anything which signifies something else; in this sense all words are symbols. In discussing literature, however, the term symbol is applied only to a word or phrase that signifies an object or event which in turn signifies something, or has a range of reference, beyond itself.

From Abrams definition one is able to detect that words themselves are symbolic, in that they stand for something other than themselves. Literary symbolism, then comes about when the objects signified by the words stand for things other than themselves.

It is also to be understood from Abrams definition that the symbol, on the other hand, has only one fixed meaning: its literal one. We are free to suggest a range of references for a symbol, provided that we bear in mind that what we suggest can only be part of its meaning, or one of its possible meanings. A symbol can often be so flexible that it can have almost any meaning that a reader chooses to read into it in its context. Their meanings tend to expand almost indefinitely.



In his poem 'UBABA LO', Buthelezi says to death:

IZINSUNGULO: 74

(39) "Kufa uyisithutha, sithutha ndini."

Luphi udosi lwakho na?

Kuphi ukunqoba kwakho na?

"Death you are a fool, a damn fool."

Where is your sting?

Where is your victory?

These are the questions asked by St Paul in 1st Corinthians 15:55. Buthelezi uses these very same questions to ask death about his father's death. The word 'udosi' (sting) contains symbolism. It can be literally taken to refer to the word itself, a sting, but in this instance it also signifies the pain that death creates in a person's life. The poet also gives us a picture of a mere blank. Death is supposed to have a sting, but the sting is not there anymore because people have come to accept the fact that death exists. It means that it no longer have the sting, or the pain and the sorrow that it is supposed to.

In the very same stanza the poet has used a metaphor. According to Murray (1978:83), who quotes *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, a metaphor is defined as:

a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea used in place of another by way of suggesting a likeness or analogy between them. A term or expression is carried over from its common usage to another, uncommon, one, or some qualities or attributes of one object are carried over to another, in such a way that the second object is then referred to as if it were the first.

The line,

"Kufa uyisithutha, sithutha ndini"

"Death you are a fool, a damn fool"

contains a metaphor. The words 'uyisithutha' and 'sithutha' are metaphors. It is commonly a person that is called a fool. In this instance a non-living object is given human attributes. Death as a second object is humanized. The poet suggests a likeness between death and a fool. Death is seen as a fool because it still believes in its sting, in its pain, when it has killed someone. It is a fool because it does not realise that its sting does not sting hard any more, so it acts like a fool that does not evaluate things. It keeps on killing people without evaluating the strength of its sting. This is the reason why the poet associates it with a fool.

Metaphor then differs from symbolism in that it suggests a likeness between the compared items and symbolism doesn't contain any kind of comparison whatsoever. In symbolism words stand for something else other than themselves.

### 3.3.4.2 Simile

A simile is defined by Shipley (1970:304) as:

The comparison of two things of different categories ... because of a point of resemblance and because the association emphasizes, clarifies or in some way enhances the original ...

Two aspects of a simile may be singled out from this definition. First is the comparison, the vehicles must be from dissimilar categories. Secondly the vehicle must serve to clarify the tenor. In our Zulu language this comparison is introduced by comparative aspects like njenga-, nganga-, kuhle kwe-, okwe-, and other similar formatives.

Similes should not be confused with metaphors. Metaphors in Zulu do not make use of these comparative formatives found in the simile. In both the metaphor and the simile there is transference or carrying over of an aspect of one object to another object. In the case of each, the making of a comparison is the fundamental point, but in the case of the simile, the comparison is openly

proclaimed through the use of comparative formatives, whereas in the case of a metaphor the comparison is implied.

Murray (1981:88) says

In his rhetoric, Aristotle suggested that the simile is a metaphor with explanation. Every metaphor presupposes a simile, and every simile may be compressed into a metaphor.

What this suggests is that there is an interrelatedness between these two concepts, but, readers should know that they do not mean the same thing.

In his poem 'Izinto zimana ukwenzeka' the poet relates about his success in education. He associates the sweetness of success with honey. He then associates all this beauty with the kingdom of heaven.

#### AMAQABUNGA ENTOMBE: 1

(40) Ngibona ukuthi  
Kunjengombuso weParadise.

I see that  
It is like Paradise.

The poet draws likeness between the happiness that one experiences when one is successful and the happiness that is in heaven. In this simile, although comparison is made, one is conscious of the differences between the objects from different categories. Their separateness is taken into cognizance. This is a comparison of two abstract objects, but there is likeness between them. Both entail everlasting happiness, both involve an exaltation of one's emotions. Comparison is brought by the comparative formative 'njenga-'.

The signified concept 'heaven', as Derrida suggests, is never present, just as in our previous example 'pain', too, is never present as a concept in the poem, but it is referred to by the other words. It is the systematic play of differences in these words that bring about these concepts. If one operates with the distinction between signifier and signified then the emphasis is put on the play of differences among the signifiers.

In the above examples the words 'weParadise' and 'udosi' are signifiers of the absent concepts which are the signified. The signified in this instance is everlasting happiness and pain respectively. It must, however, be noted that the play of the differences amongst the signifiers, also means that there are no final meanings to arrest. It cannot for example be taken for granted that a sting signifies pain. Meaning, according to the deconstructionists, is said to be determinable in a context but it does not permit saturation.

According to Culler (1982:123) "meaning is context-bound but the context is boundless". This means that the two words, 'weParadise' and 'udosi', can signify other things if used in other contexts. It also means that various readers can come up with various interpretations of the words, but these interpretations will depend on the context in which they are used.

### 3.3.4.3 Personification

Personification will be our last example under biblical images. According to Heese and Lawton (1978:63) personification is:

... that kind of image where the 'something concrete' relates to human beings, while the 'something else' is not human.

This definition implies that personification animates the inanimate and also transfers human attributes to other animate but non-human objects like animals.

In his poem 'Pontius Pilatu' Buthelezi used the following personification:

#### AMAQABUNGA ENTOMBE: 24

(41) Ngosuku lwesithathu

Kwaba buviyoviyo phezulu

Zagiya izingelosi

In the third day

There was happiness in heaven

The angels danced

In this example the poet gives human attributes to angels. The something concrete is the human being but the angels cannot be confirmed as human beings since no one knows their form. It is only people or human beings who are capable of dancing. In this instance, we know that angels are heavenly bodies, but we are not sure whether they have the form of a human being. Personification here is being applied to other animate objects, not to inanimate objects. In this example too, the word or the sign 'giya' (to dance) signifies happiness. Happiness is the signified concept which is not present in the sentence.

It is for this reason that meaning is said to be a product of a play of differences in a context, but one should keep in mind that "neither text nor context is ever an unproblematic given. Both must be defined, delimited, read and interpreted. Hence, each always poses broader 'textual' problems, whether or not one chooses to recognise them" (Henning, 1982:170).

### 3.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter it has been illustrated how Buthelezi used various sources to form his poetry. The poet borrows from these sources with great success. We have also seen that he does not only borrow the material as it is, but, in many instances, he has introduced his own individuality and modifications to the borrowed material, so that it should suit his own writing.

The introduction of inversion in the Zulu proverbs where the poet changes the fixed structure of the proverbs is one striking feature. The greatness of Buthelezi as a poet lies in his depth of knowledge of izibongo. He has written some of izibongo that does not occur in the other Zulu books such as: Izibongo zikaShingana kaMpande (The praises of Shingana the son of Mpande), izibongo Zenkosi uPhungashe (the praises of King Phungashe), izibongo zikaKlwana kaKhoboyela (the praises of Klwana son of Khoboyela). It is rare to find these praises in other poetry books. Most poets have written about the well known Zulu chiefs.

Buthelezi does not pay much attention to the formal techniques in poetry. During our interview, he highlighted the fact that he does not consider the use of these formal techniques as an essential feature in African poetry. This indicates clearly that he is aware of such techniques but disregards their use deliberately. This is



not to say that he disregards it throughout his poetry as Msimang (1984:112) says:

Yet where Buthelezi has employed poetic techniques his style becomes very impressive. This is particularly the case where he makes use of the traditional structural patterns found in Izibongo or praise poetry.

The skilful use of repetition and parallelism proves beyond doubt that these are the most fundamental characteristic features of oral literature. The use of elision in Zulu proverbs, alliteration and parallelism in izibongo as literary devices, reflect upon the poet's ability to achieve literariness in his poetry. These devices and his poetic diction have a defamiliarizing effect, and these qualities qualifies his poetry as good poetry, which is not of lesser status than of those who concentrate on the formal techniques in their poetry. Selden (1988:10) comments on poetic diction and says:

The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception, because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged.

Buthelezi is one of the Zulu great poets who must be commended for the great contribution in the literature of IsiZulu. The use of the oral literary devices does not only give a touch of beauty or attractiveness to a piece of oral expression,

but also serves certain practical purposes in the overall organisation of his poetry.

#### THE POET'S PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Introduction to a literary tradition
  - 4.2.1 Addressed language in P. W. Michael
  - 4.2.2 Introduction
  - 4.2.3 Introduction to a literary tradition
- 4.3 Conclusion

## CHAPTER 4

### BUTHELEZI FEEDING ON VILAKAZI: AN INTERTEXTUAL RELATIONSHIP

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Intertextuality as a literary approach
  - 4.2.1 Buthelezi feeding on B.W. Vilakazi
  - 4.2.2 Thematic affinity
  - 4.2.3 Transfer of isolated lines
- 4.3 Conclusion

### 4.2 INTERTEXTUALITY AS A LITERARY APPROACH

Intertextuality is a term coined by Julia Kristeva which alludes to every text that draws its meaning from other texts. It is a writer's response to other texts and a reader's response to a writer's text. It is an absorption and transformation of another text or texts.

Wolcott and Bell (1999: 1) have the following to say about intertextuality:

## CHAPTER 4

### BUTHELEZI FEEDING ON VILAKAZI: AN INTERTEXTUAL RELATIONSHIP

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we shall highlight a different type of literary influence of a text upon another text. It is not only the African tradition and the Bible that has left indelible marks of influence on our poets. Works of earlier writers like B.W. Vilakazi, D.B.Z. Ntuli have influenced many of the present poets, both in style and in content. Intertextuality as a literary text which deals with influence between literary texts form an important part of our study.

#### 4.2 INTERTEXTUALITY AS A LITERARY APPROACH

'Intertextuality' is a term coined by Julia Kristeva which alludes to every text, building itself as a mosaic of quotations, where it is an absorption and transformation of another text or texts.

Worton and Still (1990:1) have the following to say about intertextuality:

The theory of intertextuality insists that a text cannot exist as a hermetic or self-sufficient whole, and so does not function as a closed system.

They further continue to state that the writer is a reader of texts before s/he is a creator of texts and, therefore, the work of art is inevitably shot through with references, quotations and influences of every kind.

The above definition suggests that a text is not free of influences. It is, therefore, not whole as the structuralist approach suggests. Traces of past texts in one way or the other are found in later texts. The starting point, therefore, in this subsection, is the deconstructional belief that a text does not have a storable meaning. It is because of this reason that intertextuality is treated as a subsection of deconstruction. Intertextuality embraces references to other texts. It, therefore, takes us back to the aspect of double or multiple meanings because one has to look at the meaning of an earlier text and that of a later text.

Hirsch (1991:04) confirms the above facts when he says:

A text must constantly be read in its relationship with other texts, of which it must be seen as an arrangement, adaptation or continuation.

Hirsch claims that there are relationships between texts, as some of these texts are seen as developments, or continuations of prior texts. This in itself is a demanding challenge to literary critics who must have a wide knowledge of literary works, so as to be able to identify works that are adaptations of already existing works.

Bloom in supplementing this, states that deconstruction finds in the text it interprets the double antithetical, for example the relationship of the parasite and the host signifying the interrelationship between texts or writers (Bloom, 1986:252).

The question of host and parasite will not be dealt with in detail in this project, but we cannot ignore the fact that these two terms are to be explained because they are linked to intertextuality.

Abrams in Lodge (1988:280) explains the concept 'parasite' as coming from the Greek name 'parasitos' which means beside the grain. *Para* means beside and *sitos* means grain or food. Parasite was originally something positive and referred to a fellow guest, someone sharing the food with you, there with you, beside the grain.

Abrams also highlights the fact that later on parasite came to mean a professional dinner guest, someone expert at cadging invitations without ever

giving dinners in return. From this then, developed the two main modern meanings in English, the biological and the social.

The relationship then between the host who is assumed to be a precursor writer, and the parasite whom we can say is a new writer, is viewed as a relationship of dependency, a sort of a parasitical type of relationship. The parasite cannot live without the host and the life of the host is made complete by the parasite. The parasite, in other words, complements its host's life. The parasite revives the life of the host thereby making it new in the minds of those readers who have forgotten about it.

In practical terms this means that, as Manyaka (1992:2) puts it:

A parasite will be any writer or critic who uses another as a source or any new writer who 'feeds' on the precursor writer, because he sucks what would make his work look good and survive.

It is, however, doubtful that there is any writer who can claim to be totally original and independent. Ntuli (1984:15) mentions Garrison (1952:576) who questions the idea of originality when he says:

If originality were defined as the creation of entirely new products or ideas, without dependence upon the work of others, few if any of the world's masterpieces could be termed original.

Influence in literature seems to be an inescapable process. It is, however, expected of the new writer to display his own originality in the existing piece of work he is borrowing from, so that it should not be viewed as plagiarism. The old literary work from which the new writer borrows should only serve as a source that guides and shapes the new work. Influence, be it good or bad, should not conceal the originality of a young writer. His creative inputs should be clearly visible from the precursor's work. The old writer's ideas are indelible and cannot be totally concealed, because it has gone through the many eyes of the literary critics, before its renovation by the new writer, as Plottel (1978:xvi) puts it:

... criticism has recognised that each text implies other texts. As William Carlos Williams puts it: Let it be granted that whatever is new in literature the germs of it will be found somewhere in the writing of other times ...

Intertextuality is a term that is generally understood to deal with influences between texts and writers. Literary scholars, however, hold different views about what intertextuality is. Julia Kristeva (1980; 36) in Hawthorn (1992:86), when dealing with intertextuality, describes a text as:

a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances taken from other texts, intersect and neutralise with one another.



Kristeva's definition of a text implies an alteration of texts, which at this stage claims an alteration of the old text by a new one. It also suggests that a text is full of various utterances from other texts. These utterances, Kristeva claims, merge with one another to create a sum total of meaning. According to Kristeva, intertextuality is presented as a process whereby the meaning of a text is obtained through the absorption and transformation of the existing text, where the new text is dependent upon the old text for its meaning.

Leon Roudiez in Hawthorn (1992:86) holds a totally different idea from Kristeva. According to him, intertextuality has nothing to do with matters of influence of one writer upon another, or with the source of a literary work.

In his argument he quotes Kristeva (1980:15) saying the following about intertextuality:

it does, on the other hand, involve the components of a textual system such as the novel, for instance. It is defined in (Kristeva's) *La Révolution du Langage Poétique* as the transportation of one another, accompanied by a new articulation of the enunciative and denotative position.

Roudiez emphasizes the transportation of some elements from one text to the other. He also stresses the fact that this transportation is not just plain borrowing of signs, but that it is accompanied by the creativity of the new writer. It is this

point that makes him differ from Kristeva's view. To him intertextuality is not just influence without creativity, especially on the part of the new writer.

Roland Barthes (1981:39) seems partly in agreement with this position as described by Roudiez, in at least as far as the distinction between intertextuality and influence is concerned. According to him any text is an intertext for he says:

Any text is a new tissue of past citations. Bits of code, formulae, rhythmic, models, fragments of social languages, etc. pass into the text and are distributed within it, for there is always language before and around the text. Inter-textuality, the condition of any text whatsoever, cannot, of course be reduced to a problem of sources of influences; the intertext is a general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located; of unconscious or automatic quotations, given without quotation-marks.

Except bringing out the distinction between influence and intertextuality, Barthes' explanation of intertextuality is more diffuse and all-embracing than Kristeva's. It highlights the fact that intertextuality does not only deal with the transportation of signs from one text to another. Intertextuality also concerns itself with anonymous formulae whose origins cannot be traced back. It also deals with codes whose origins are lost and these lost codes, or the quotations without quotation-marks are used by writers in their texts. According to Barthes intertextuality should not be confined to a problem of sources or of influences.

Literary scholars like Bu-Buakei Jabbi believe that a discussion of influence upon a certain work or author, must ultimately consider to what extent the basic influences have been ingested into the work, or the writer's outlook, and also how they have been transcended by the writer, in order to find out a distinct originality of voice and aesthetic effect.

Jabbi suggests that literary critics must have a sharp eye to enable them to identify the extent to which new texts use a code, a fragment or a phrase from an old text so that such an influence should not be misunderstood and conceal the originality of the latter voice.

It is also important to note that there are two types of intertextuality. Laurent Jenny, in Culler (1981:104), states that the notion of intertextuality poses a delicate problem of identification. Jenny poses the question: at what point can one start to speak of the presence of one text in another as an instance of intertextuality? Jenny distinguishes between intertextuality proper, and what he calls simple allusion or reminiscence.

Allusion or reminiscence refers to a case where a text repeats an element from a prior text without using its meaning, whereas intertextuality proper occurs when a text alludes to or redeploys an entire structure, a pattern of form and meaning from a prior text.

This research project shall not concern itself with the differences between the two types of intertextuality. All types of influences at this phase, be it allusion, imitation or adaptation, will be treated as aspects of intertextuality.

It is evident from the above discussion as it has been stated earlier, that no artist can claim to be completely original and independent. Most writers in one way or the other have been influenced by the literary works of prior writers. This does not mean that the work of the writer, who has borrowed phrases and fragments from a precursor writer is to be given inferior status, hence Fowler says:

An intertextual text has never been considered strictly creative, but at most recreative (1987:48).

One must also remember that when pointing to influences upon a work of literary art, one is merely highlighting some of those factors which seem to have helped in shaping the character of that work of literature as we have it today. Intertextuality embraces things like influences and references to other texts and even to anonymous texts. In this study intertextuality will include the identification of common elements between texts as well as writers,

#### **4.2.1 Buthelezi feeding on B.W. Vilakazi**

Before we can illustrate how Buthelezi's poem 'Lapho imihla yami' (Amaqabu, p 14) shows common similarities with Vilakazi's poem 'Uma Ngificwa Ukufa'

(Inkondlo kaZulu, p 37) it is important to note the following remarks made by Bloom, in Culler (1981:108-109), when he says:

The text is the intertextual construct, comprehensible only in terms of other texts which it prolongs, completes, transforms and sublimates; but when we ask what these other texts are, they turn out to be the central poems of a single great precursor ...

The precursor is the great original, the intertextual authority.

Bloom's statement is of more significance to this study as we are going to look at intertextuality from a poetical point of view. As critics we should, however, be able to identify the influenced writer's artistic creativity in his work, because despite the precursor's influence, the influenced writer's work must be seen as a re-creation, or as an exaltation of the old work.

When looking at the two poems mentioned above, an attempt will be made to identify the powers of intertextuality, and the creativeness on the part of the new writer, will also be looked at.

#### **4.2.2 Thematic affinity**

'Ma Ngificwa ukufa' (When death overcomes me) is, as Ntuli (1984) puts it, one of Vilakazi's most popular poems. At the beginning of the poem Vilakazi made

an acknowledgement that this poem is an adaptation of Paul Dunbar's poem called 'A death song!

It is important to note that L.B.Z. Buthelezi has adapted Vilakazi's poem but without any acknowledgement whatsoever. He gives his poem the title 'Lapho imihla yami' (My last days).

Msimang (1986:133), in his *Folktale influence of the Zulu Novel*, defines theme as: the central idea in a story. He emphasizes that it is the subject of discourse.

Looking at both poems one's attention is captured by the same ideas that are delivered in these poems. In both poems the central idea is death. Both poets give orders as to what is to be done when they have passed away.

In the first stanza both poets relate about the localities where they are to be buried. Vilakazi wants to be buried beneath the grass near the willow trees, where the green leaves will whisper nicely above him.

MA NGIFICWA UKUFA

(Lesisosha siyisihumusho esithe ukuguquququlwa sesosha esithi: A death song esaqanjwa nguPaul Laurence Dunbar, imbongi yomNigilose yaseMelika)

Ngimbeleni ngaphansi kotshani  
Duze nezihlahla zomnyezane,  
Lapho amagatsh' eyongembesa  
Ngamaqabung' agcwel' ubuhlaza.  
Ngozwa nami ngilele ngaphansi  
Utshani ngaphezulu buhleba:  
"Lala sithandwa, lal' uphumule."

Ngimbeleni phezu kwamadamu  
Laph' amanz' ethul' enganyakazi,  
Nalaph' izinyon' ezincanyana  
Zihlabelela zisho ngephimbo  
Zenanel' ukwethwasa kwehlobo,  
Zehle ziphuz' amanz' apholile  
Laph' ilanga lingenakushisa.

Ngiyeke ngifel' ezindleleni  
Zabantwan' abafund' isikole  
Njengob' amahlomb' esehluleka  
Yimithwal' ebengisindwa yiyo.  
Iyona misindo yabantwana  
Eduduza imiphefumulo  
Elel' ukulal' okuphakade.

Ngimbeleni endawen' enjena:

Laph' izinsungulo zezilimi

Zenkathazo zingenakuthola

Sango lokwahlukanis' umhlaba,

Zingivus' ebuthongweni obuhle.

Uma wen' ofunda lemigqana

Ungifica, ungimbele lapho

Utshani ngaphezulu buyothi:

"Lala sithandwa, la' uphumule."

#### LAPHO IMIHILA YAMI

Ngimbeleni ngaphakathi

Kwezikhonkwane zomuzi.

Makube kwinjiko yempunzi.

Phezu kwenkaba yomhlaba.

Ngicameliseni ezingalweni

Zenyumbakazi engasiswa

Uvuma ovalweni

Umfula omuka

Nezikhukhula zawo!

Mangizwe ukuthunduzelwa



Zingalo zakho

Kulawaya madlelo amahlungu aluhlaza

Ngiholeni ngenkondlo

Engenza ngiqumbelane

Usikisiki lobuqhawe!

Vimbezelani ngengila;

Nisuthise umphefumulo wami

Okokugcina.

Yenzani ngilangazelele

Ukuya phambili.

Nanka namalandakazi

Asezulwini

Ekhongozele,

Ngibekeni ezandleni zawo.

Sengathi kungabe

Kusentwasahlobo,

Imvelo ikhephuzela

Ngasezinkwazini zemifula;

Lapho kushweza khona uthingo lwenkosazana

Makube sezibuya

Inhlazane

Sezibhonsa kamnandi

Kuthi cosololo

Kube ngesikhathi

Izinsizwa zikaZulu

Nezintombi zikaZulu

Zibuya emithonjeni

Yonwele olude zithi "gci gci!"

Zingigcobe ngemijuluko

Kuphela ingilolozela

"Lala nkonjane emaphikophiko"

Ngibekeni ngasemthangaleni

Khona ngothi

Mangesese

Ngibona niphangelana

Ngamabhongendlini

Ngibona nemikhonzo yogqozi

Laphaya ezikoleni

Ngiyindaba egudwini

Ngothi qoshosho

Esithangamini samathongo kaZulu

Ngizwe ubumnandi besicelu

Siwohloza amazolo etshanini,

Nawo amazolo athi



Contrary to Vilakazi, Buthelezi wants to be buried at his home, between the pegs of the homestead. He states clearly that it should be right at the centre of the cattle kraal.

Buthelezi says:

Ngimbeleni ngaphakathi

Kwezikhonkwane zomuzi.

Makube kwinjiko yempunzi

(Amaqab, p 14)

(Bury me in the middle

Of the pegs of the homestead

Let it be at the centre of it.)

Buthelezi points out that his head should be laid on a barren cow's arms, a cow that is not given to someone else to produce more cattle. This is not found in Vilakazi's poem. Buthelezi seems to be more of a cultural man than Vilakazi. According to Zulu custom the head of the family was buried in a place that he had chosen while still alive. The most customary place is inside the cattle kraal.

Msimang (1975:141) says:

Uma unnumzane esegulela ukufa ...

Ngaphambi kokuba kuphume umphefumulo uyabacela

ukuba baze bamgoqe ngesikhumba senkabi yakhe ethile.

Asho futhi nalapho afuna bamngcwabe khona.

(When the head of the family is about to die ...

Before his soul goes out he requests that he

be rolled by a skin of his particular ox.

He also specifies where he is to be buried.)

Buthelezi chooses to be rolled by a barren female cow's skin. In so doing he reverses the usual custom of using an ox. This might be for a good purpose. It might be because he sees such a cow as pure, because it has never given birth in its entire life, and it has never been taken to someone else (*engasiswa*) for more cattle production. 'Ukusisa' is a Zulu custom whereby a female cow is loaned out to someone else for producing more cattle or for milking, with an aim of helping that person.

In the second stanza Vilakazi elaborates on the locality where he is to be buried. He wants to be buried on top of water dams, where the waters are still. It is not clear whether Vilakazi wanted to say beside the water dams or not. It is, however, not usual in the African culture for a person to be buried on top of water. This may be due to the fact that Vilakazi adapted this poem from a European culture which is not applicable to our situation.

To bring about variety Buthelezi uses Vilakazi's idea of being buried in spring in the third stanza and not in the second stanza. To this idea Buthelezi adds his own ideas. He mentions the angels of heaven that will welcome him. He also wishes that if it could be at the time when there is a sign of a rainbow. It should be when the cows come back from the veld in the morning for milking. These ideas make Buthelezi's poem unique, since they cannot be found in Vilakazi's poem. This stanza has got about twenty three lines which cannot be deduced from Vilakazi's poem at all. As he (Vilakazi) has added more lines which cannot be deduced from Dunbar's poem in his last stanza, Buthelezi does the same with his third stanza. It is also noticeable that Buthelezi makes use of very short lines in this stanza. This is in agreement with the mood of the poem. It expresses sad and serious ideas about death.

Vilakazi makes the school the kernel of the whole poem. He expresses his wish to devote his life to the service of the school child (Ntuli, 1984:42). Like Dunbar, Buthelezi mentions the school in passing. He mentions it with a different idea from Vilakazi's. He states that he would be happy to hear the schools talking about him, in other words, reading and appreciating his literary works. The idea of school children is not mentioned elsewhere in the other paragraphs. This does not conceal Vilakazi's influence on Buthelezi. It also does not conceal Buthelezi's creativity.

On a closer look at the choice of words used by these poets, one must commend Buthelezi for his creativity. Vilakazi starts three of his stanzas with the word 'Ngimbeleni ...' (bury me) while Buthelezi used it only once. In his last stanza Buthelezi starts his first verse with the word 'Ngibekeni ...' (place me). 'Ngibekeni ...' is more of a euphemistic word than 'Ngimbeleni ...' which can be literally translated as 'Dig me in'. 'Ngibekeni' implies placing something that will be of use in future when it is needed. This also agrees with the Christian belief that dead people are not just dead, but are sleeping and will rise up again.

The second stanza in Buthelezi's poem displays more originality. It consists of ideas that do not appear in Vilakazi's poem at all. Buthelezi conveys the wish that he wants to be comforted by his ancestors and that during his burial day he must be led out of his home by a praise poem so that his soul can rest in peace. The influence of culture and acculturation accounts for the evident differences in the ideas of these two poets.

#### 4.3.3 Transfer of isolated lines

Ntuli (1984:35) says:

A poet may also be so highly impressed with a striking expressive line in a poem that he cannot resist using that line to enrich his own composition.

In this case it is clear that Buthelezi, as a poet who wrote later than Vilakazi, has used some expressions from Vilakazi's poem. Vilakazi's poem 'Ma Ngificwa ukufa', in the first and the last stanzas end with the line:

"Lala sithandwa, lal' uphumule" (Ink. 37-38)

("Sleep darling, sleep and rest")

A line similar to Vilakazi's is found in Buthelezi's poem in the third and the fourth stanzas. It appears as:

"Lala nkonjane emaphikophiko" Stanza 3

("Sleep you swallow with large wings")

"Lala ... Ndab' omkhulu

Lala ... Sokwalisa!"

("Sleep ... you great Ndaba

Sleep ... Sokwalisa")

(Amaqab, p 15).

Although Buthelezi has used his own words in these lines they show close links with Vilakazi's poem. It is commendable that Buthelezi has used some italics to show that these lines are borrowed from another source.



### 4.3 CONCLUSION

The above discussion indicates clearly that intertextuality is an ongoing process. It confirms Ntuli's point (1984:15) when he says:

It is common knowledge that an artist cannot work in a vacuum.

For him to produce anything a number of influences work on him.

Influence by an earlier writer as it has been stated earlier, should not conceal the originality of the new writer. It has been illustrated in this discussion how Buthelezi has added his own views, his own words in his poem. This makes his creativity explicit to the eyes of the critic. Intertextuality, as a type of influence of a text upon another, or of writers by other writers, is not the only type of influence in literature. It has been specifically discussed in this study because it also deals with multiple meanings, i.e. the meaning of the precursor writer and that of the new writer. There are other influences that play a great role in a poet's life like: the social, environmental and the political influences. The onus rests upon the literary critics to expose such influences.

## CHAPTER 5

### CULTURAL WORLD VIEWS IN BUTHELEZI'S POETRY

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## CHAPTER 5

### CULTURAL WORLD VIEWS IN BUTHELEZI'S POETRY

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The content and context of literature, and the way literary activity is organised are closely correlated with the institutions of the society in which it is situated. Writers live among individual societies and write extensively on them. It is not new to find writings or poetry that relate to specific social groupings in any society, or to its social occasions and activities. It is clear too, that the organisation of poetic activity plays a wider part in society.

Finnegan (1977:244) states that:

The existence of specialist or expert poets, for one thing, is a part of the division of labour in that society, and when there is a distinct class of influential poets this provokes one powerful group in society and perhaps a channel of mobility.

Poetry is regarded as a communication vehicle between members of a society. Different messages are communicated through poetry to its society. Society is represented by the poet who is able to spread its messages to other societies.

The literary work is the child of an author's creative life, and it expresses the author's essential self. It, therefore, serves as the place where we enter into communication with an author's thoughts and feelings.

Selden (1989:51) adds to this, by saying that: "another fundamental assumption which readers often make is that a good book tells us the truth about human life". We can also add that the same applies to good poetry. It is the aim of this chapter to highlight the connection between poetry and human experiences, particularly with culture. This chapter sees the relationship between culture and human beings in many respects, similar to that between water and fish. Each human being is born into a particular socio-cultural context. It is also known that people are conditioned by the members of their society in countless, largely unconscious ways to accept as natural and to follow uncritically the cultural patterns of that society.

The structuralists have tried to persuade us that the author is 'dead' and that literary discourse has no truth functions. In an essay Roland Barthes put the structuralist view very powerfully and argued that:

Writers only have the power to mix already existing writings, to reassemble or redeploy them; writers cannot use writing to 'express' themselves, but only to draw upon that immense dictionary of language and culture which is always already written (Selden, 1989:51).

Barthe's statement is not entirely correct. It proclaims that all types of literature consist of the already written language and culture, therefore, literature is not an expression of an author. It is also not true that writers only have the power to reassemble the already existing material. This statement, correctly interpreted, means that writers do not exist at all. The question that arises from Barthe's statement is: Where do all the written texts come from?

It is due to this anti-humanist spirit that structuralism, as well as New Criticism was not widely accepted by the French rulers. It does not recognise the relationship between literature and society. Human beings are understood to be totally immersed in culture. A text according to the deconstructionists is seen as being a carrier of unfolding meaning. Culture is meaningful to human beings and it is only transmitted properly through a text. It is for this reason that Hirsela says that "meaning is that which is represented in a text, it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence" (1967:8).

Davis (1986:448) summarises the relationship between a text and society as follows:

The concept of text as ideologeme determines the very procedure of a semiotics that, by studying the text as intertextuality, considers it as such within (the text of) society and history.

The most important in this regard, is the treatment of a text as a meaningful means of communication in society. A text is written in a language that the society involved understands. Culture depends largely on environment. The vocabulary, which describes this environment, is a useful way of assessing the cultural side of a people. It is our main objective in this chapter to focus our attention on the treatment of meaning and culture which is transmitted through a language, which is poetry.

## 5.2 WHAT IS CULTURE?

Culture is a very broad concept. It is defined in various ways by different scholars. According to Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952:357) in Kraft (1990:46):

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values, culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action.

Odetola *et al.* (1983:1), who quotes Broom and Selznick, defines culture and says:

Culture is a man's entire social heritage — all the knowledge, beliefs, customs and skills acquired as a member of society.

According to the above definitions culture is that in terms of which our life is organised. It may be taken to imply norms or standards that may apply to thought, speech and other actions, as well as material objects. Culture is also conceived as shared patterns of learned belief and behaviour constituting the total lifestyle of a people. Culture may in general be looked at as the rules guiding our lives, or as rules developed from millions of agreements between the members of our society. Culture, therefore, provides the models of reality that govern our perception, thought and behaviour, although we are likely to be unaware of its influence upon us.

The fact that culture regulates the conduct of an individual does not mean that it is static. We must also stress that not all individuals submit to the regulation of their lives by their culture especially in these changing times. Culture is looked down upon these days. Kraft says:

Unless we have been exposed to such information from other cultures and have learned to appreciate the fact that they view reality through very different cultural glasses than our own, we tend (unconsciously) to look down our noses at their behaviour.

To view other peoples' way of life in terms of our own cultural glasses is very common. This action, however, is subjective and conceals the beauty of culture. Each culture is characteristic of a particular people. Keesing and Keesing (1971:21) say:

... becoming conscious of, and analytical about, our own cultural glasses is a painful business. We do it best by learning about other people's glasses. Although we can never take our glasses off to find out what the world is 'really like', or try looking through anyone else's without ours as well, we can at least learn a good deal about our own prescription. (Kraft, 1990:48)

What Keesing and Keesing suggest is that if we as individuals could bracket our prejudice we can learn a great deal from our own cultures rather than being copy cats of cultures other than our own. Culture was, and is even today, used to solve the most complicated problems in our society. An endeavour will be made to illustrate the role of culture, by selecting some of Buthelezi's poetry that deals with culture as a social aspect. Cultures vary widely, it is important to state it clearly that, we will limit ourselves to those Zulu cultures eminent in Shenge's poetry.



### 5.3 CULTURAL FORMS IN BUTHELEZI'S POETRY

Culture manifests itself in various ways through Buthelezi's poetry. A relevant example will be given under each form as an example of the cultural aspect under discussion. The forms of a culture will be considered as the observable parts of which it is made up. Many cultural forms are conceptualizations of material items such as: axes, hoes, clothing and non-material items such as: marriage customs, family structures, singing, dancing and speaking.

In this section we shall look at cultural forms as the customs arranged in patterns.

#### 5.3.1 The sororate marriage

There are many different forms of marriage in the Zulu custom. The most common one is polygamy or polygyny where one man may be united with two or more recognised wives at one time. There are other many forms of other marriages, but we shall not discuss them for the purpose of this chapter. Before I can embark on the details of the sororate marriage, I think it is important to briefly explain levirate marriage since these two marriages are almost the same. Odetola *et al.* (1983:33) when describing leviratic marriage says: "This is the rule according to which a man may, or must, marry the widow of his elder brother or other kinsman". In a true levirate, exemplified by the customs of the Zulus and

other peoples, when a man dies and his wife has not passed the age of child bearing, it is the duty of the man's brother to cohabit with the widow in order to raise children which will be counted, not as his, but as children of the deceased. The widow remains the wife of the dead man. This custom is known as 'ukuvusa' (to raise up seed) in Zulu.

The opposite of the leviratic marriage is the sororate marriage. In some societies the sororate custom is a mechanism for the continuation of a marriage relationship between groups, even after the death of the original wife. When a woman dies, her kin group (a group organised on the basis of consanguinity or affinal kinship or common descent) replaces her with another female as spouse for the widower. It is also said that the new wife is often a sister, but may as well, be any female from the same kin group. The children that are born to the second wife are also regarded as children of the deceased.

The poem, *Hawukile kaNohofu*, to many readers appears to be a complicated poem where the poet is telling us about his family affairs or history. This poem is not just about the history of the poet's family, there is more to it than that. The poet has used his family to let us know about the sororate custom or *isiko lokuvusa* (the custom of raising up the seed) as it is commonly known in Zulu.

The title of the poem contains names of two women: *Hawukile kaNohofu* (1924) and *Nomasiliva kaMnukwa* (1927). According to the poem, the poet's mother is

Hawukile kaNohofu who died in 1924, before the birth of the poet. Hawukile died in 1924 while she was giving birth to a baby girl, Tholakele. There is confusion created by the use of the verb 'ukuqhetha' in the first stanza.

IZINSUNGULO: 63

- (1) Lapha kuqhetha uHawukile kaNohofu,  
Lapha kuqhetha uNomasiliva kaMnukwa.  
Duze nalemifuce kuqhetha  
uTholakele uMafungwase.

Here Hawukile kaNohofu is seated,  
Here Nomsiliva kaMnukwa is seated.  
Near these trees  
Tholakale the first born is seated.

The poet has used the verb 'kuqhetha', which means 'to be seated', repeatedly in the poem. According to our theory, the deconstruction theory, we now know that a word does not have a fixed meaning. It is the play of the sign that yields a different meaning in a work of art. 'Ukuqhetha' means to sit with one's feet spread out, in Zulu it is called 'ukwenaba'. In Hawukile and Tholakele's case the verb simply refers to their death. It is known that in kwaZulu when people were buried, they were placed down there in a sitting position. The verb then means

that, they are sitting with ease and comfort, as we often hear people saying that dead people are not dead, but they are resting. When people are tired in most cases they sit with their feet spread (bayenaba). In the case of Nomasiliva kaMnukwa the verb is used with a different meaning altogether. Nomasiliva, as the second wife, is there to raise up the seed for Hawukile kaNohofu. She is legally married to Mtitinywa according to Zulu custom. 'Ukuqhetha' in her case means acceptance. It means that she is sitting with ease at Hawukile's home because she is there to fulfil and complete Hawukile's function. The poet confirms this when he says:

(2) Wesiliva lika Mnukwa, elabe

Lishiyelwe uHawukile kaNohofu (Izinsungulo: 64)

You silver daughter of Mnukwa, whom

Hawukile, daughter of Nohofu, left for you.

The poet puts it as if Hawukile left the space in her marriage purposely for Nomasiliva to occupy. Nomasiliva is then comfortably and customarily married to the poet's father. It is, therefore, appropriate for the poet to describe her stay there as 'ukuqhetha'.

Another important point to be clarified in the poem is who is the poet's real mother. Hawukile died in 1924 before Lizwi (the poet) was born. Nomasiliva

kaMnukwa was born in 1927 and gave birth to the poet in 1950. This is, however, confusing because the poet refers to Hawukile as his mother throughout the poem as he says:

(3) Wazibula ngendlalifa eyinkonjane ngobuchopho.

lyingqalabutho eSifuleni (Izinsungulo: 63)

You first gave birth to an heir who is a swallow in the mind.

Who is the first hero at Sifuleni.

We know that Hawukile died, and her first born baby too. In the 'ukuvusa' (levirate or sororate) custom the children borne by the second wife are referred to as the children of the first wife. It is because of this reason that Lizwi regards himself as Hawukile's first born, yet his biological mother is Nomasiliva kaMnukwa. Buthelezi also regards himself as a hero at eSifuleni because he was the first person by then to obtain his matriculation at this area of Msinga.

Another confusing point in the very same poem is that the poet calls Tholakale the first born in the first stanza, and he also refers to himself as an heir of Hawukile kanoHofu.

(4) Duze nalemifuce kuqhetha

Lines 4 & 5 UTholakele uMafungwase (Izinsu: 63).

Near these trees

Tholakele the first born is seated.

Lines 11-12 Wazibula ngendlalifa eyinkonjane ngobuchopho.

lyingqalabutho eSifuleni (Izinsu: 63).

You first gave birth to an heir who is a swallow in the mind.

The first hero at Sifuleni.

Tholakele is, by birth, the first born daughter of Hawukile kaNohofu and, according to the sororate (ukuvusa) custom, Lizwi, the poet, is the son and an heir for Hawukile kaNohofu not for Nomasiliva kaMnukwa. It is also appropriate for the poet to regard and call Tholakele his own sister. Both are, according to this custom, Hawukile kaNohofu's children. According to the custom the poet has two mothers: Hawukile kaNohofu and Nomasiliva kaMnukwa. It is the death of Hawukile that has afforded the poet an opportunity of being born in the Buthelezi's royal family. If Hawukile did not die this would not have been possible. This may be the reason why the poet seems to pay more respect to Hawukile than his biological mother, Nomasiliva.

This is not the only poem in which Buthelezi tells us about Hawukile. The repetition of this event in other poems really reveals that it is difficult to understand why people die while giving birth or life to another human being. This

is beyond human comprehension. In 'izinsungulo' the poet states explicitly that Hawukile died during the delivery of a baby. It is also explicitly repeated in:

IZINGQUNQULU: 71

- (5) Efe olwembiza ngoHawukile,  
Inyanda yemuke nesibopho.

He died like a crack in an earthenware pot about Hawukile,  
The bundle of wood went away with its tie.

The proverb is used when a woman, giving birth, dies together with the child during the delivery process. The poet retells this incident again in:

ISANDLWANA: 65

- (6) uHawukile kaNohofu  
Wayebeletha kungabeletheki,  
Wajuluka ezehhashi egqiha kabi!  
Ngokugabadelwa umhlaba omubi!  
Isivuvu sekhoza lomlilo  
Samshisa eyobayoba kukubi!

Hawukile daughter of Nohofu

She was giving birth and it was impossible,

She perspired like a horse breathing badly!

She was overcome by this filthy earth!

The heat from the fire

Burnt her and she was wriggling in pain!

The beauty of these customs is that people adhered to them to solve major problems in their lives. In the case of a woman in the levirate custom where the brother of the deceased was supposed to 'ngena' his deceased brother's wife — this custom was a means of preventing the home from being broken up should the widow decide to marry outside the family. In the case of women, too, it prevented the coming in of step-fathers who would not treat the children with enough love and care. The deceased man's brother carries the same surname and practices the same culture. There also would be no segregation among the children in the case of a new wife if the dead wife has left children behind, since all the children she gives birth to are regarded as those of the deceased wife. Above all the mentioned reasons it used to be a social security for the older wife in the traditional family system. It is difficult for a woman with, for example four children, to find a suitable marriage partner to look after her children.

These cultures are dying out, not only in South Africa, but in the most parts of the world. This is due to the coming in of civilization, urbanization and the



establishment of women's liberal organisations. The widow inheritance custom was and is still perceived by most women as a kind of some oppression of the women's right. Traditionally, the woman had no choice but to observe this custom. It is, therefore, conceived today as a violation of human rights, since a widow has the right to choose a man of her own choice. Our customs were good and they really prevented us from experiencing the harshness of life such as, the child abuse by their fathers, and the appearance of the many street children we are faced with today.

### **5.3.2 The rain-making 'Princess of Heaven' — uNomkhubulwana**

Buthelezi is aware that most of the Zulu modern poets of his age have tried to write poetry after being brought up in the tradition of English poetry. He is also aware that many poets who were greatly influenced by the English poets faced immeasurable problems both in content and form.

For Buthelezi, use of the Zulu traditional customs involves a thorough knowledge of these customs. His cultural poems are based on Zulu thought and life patterns. He uses these Zulu customs to assert his own view of life and to express his African-ness and not to promote ethnicity as such. In these poems Buthelezi explores the cosmology of the Zulu people, their attitude to moral issues, social relations, death and other issues. In his cultural poems he uses creatures that are not alien to the Zulu culture such as uNomkhubulwana.

In his poems 'Angesheli wena Nomkhubulwana' in *Ithunga likaNondlini* (p. 9-11) and 'Imvunge yezinyandezulu' in *Izagila zephisi* (p. 4-6) Buthelezi reminds us about this mythical creature: uNomkhubulwana. Doke *et al.* (1990:584) in their English-Zulu, Zulu-English Dictionary describe Nomkhubulwana as a

Zulu Female deity, a Native 'Ceres', believed to affect the planting of corn and harvest. She is also known as uNomdede or uNomhhoyi.

Krige (1950:197) says

Nomkhubulwana is believed to be Inkosazana yaseZulwini or Princess of Heaven. She seems to be a kind of goddess of the corn, virtually a Zulu Ceres presiding over the growth of the grain, and from her, it is said, the people learnt how to make beer. It is she, too, who has the power of bringing about rain.

Nomkhubulwana was conceived to be a female Zulu deity who controls the growing of crops and the falling of rain. The Zulus believed that if the crops were bad, and there was drought, Nomkhubulwana did not bless them. Buthelezi reminds us of this cultural belief when he writes:

#### IZAGILA ZEPHISI: 4-5

(7) Kube lapho amakhosikazi eyiyiza

Ehaya ingoma yokuyokwendulela  
Emlimeleni kaNomkhubulwana;  
Kube lapho ungadakwe iphunga lamaselwa  
Nekhaba lihawukisa sengathi  
Ungasina uzibethele Mzulu  
Kulapho abanumzane besutha umusi  
Wethumbu bedakwa ukuqhilika  
Kwengwebu;

It is then that the women ululate  
Singing the song for the pre-ploughing  
In the field of Nomkhubulwana;  
By then you are not drunk from the smell of the calabash  
And the maize is so beautiful as if  
You can eat up to your satisfaction you Zulu nation  
It is when the men are filled up with the smoke  
Of intestines and are drunk by the falling  
Beer foam.

In this extract the poet reminds us about the time of spring when the women used to sing songs for Nomkhubulwana was due for her visit. It was believed that she visited the earth every year during the month of October. The poet also reminds us about the field that was ploughed particularly for Nokhubulwana. She

is also perceived as the daughter of uNkulunkulu in Krige (1950:282) and in Myburgh (1942: para. 1251). Krige (1950:198) has the following to say about Nomkhubulwana's field:

Little pots of beer are put in it (her mealie-field) for her to drink

when she goes on her rounds, and sometimes the mealies and

corn are sprinkled with some of the beer for luck to the harvest.

The crop sown for Nomkhubulwana is never reaped or eaten but is severely left alone.

The Nomkhubulwana celebrations have died out not only in the parts of Zululand but also among the Northern Sothos usually called the Pedi people. Their Nomkhubulwana, the queen of rain, was called Modjadji. These ceremonies differ greatly from one occasion to another. They varied according to the needs and fears of the people. People communicated with Nomkhubulwana for various reasons. They approached her for relief from their hardships, such as drought or the top-grub in the mealies, and sometimes for fortification against an epidemic disease. It was believed that she would answer their prayers.

The poet reminds us of this culture with a specific purpose. It questions our belief today. It questions our appreciation for the food we eat and the water that we drink. The poet appeals to us through this culture that we should be thankful to God for what he has given us. The people, during the Nomkhubulwana ceremonies, sang songs in her honour, and it is said that rain would fall in sheets

and the beer would be diluted in rain water. This conveys the theme of water conservation and the importance of water in peoples lives. The poet does not request us to go back to our customs, but we are reminded that there is a good reason why various things exist on earth.

It was also believed that when Nomkhubukwana did not reply to the nation's request that they had not asked her well. Buthelezi conveys this message and says:

ITHUNGA LIKANONDLINI: 10

(8) Angesheli wena Nomkhubulwana,

Kepha ngikhumbula

Olulodwa usuku

Phezu kweziningi zamangwevu.

Loluya owake wabhimbisa ngalo

uPhezu komkhono wathi

"Phezu komkhono"

Kanti ingoma engiyisinelayo

Ngeyamahobhe "AMDOKWE!"

I am not in courtship with you, Nomkhubulwana,

But I remember

One day

Among the many rebellious days.

That day when you turned things around

The bird (called Phezukomkhono) that tells us to start ploughing said

"Up your sleeves"

And a song I would dance for

Is that of the doves "THE KAFIR CORN IS RIPE!"

The poet reminds us that when things go wrong, not according to our expectations we are quick to blame others in life.

This extract also tells us that we do not always get what we ask for in life. These poems teach us the value of thanking people who do good things for us, by doing good things for them in return. People who ask things with no hope do not receive anything at all, instead the opposite happens. The message is that although we cannot go back to practise our cultures because of the changing times as human beings, and as a Zulu or a Black nation, but we need to have a direction and a basis from which we work from.

### 5.3.3 Communication with the ancestral world

There are numerous poems written by Buthelezi which not only employ the proverb or use the praise poems, but that also, in their very subject matter, exemplify his interest in Zulu philosophy and culture. He does not only use the Zulu traditional way of thinking to articulate his own philosophy of life and his own view of the world, but he uses images taken from the Zulu cosmology. This gives some of his poems concreteness and vividness.

*Ms. ngaphakathi ntoni...*

Msimang (1984:110) in his review of Amaqabunga Entombe says:

The greatness of Buthelezi as a poet is not to be found in poetic form but in poetic diction. His language is enriched by effective images. Most of these images are culture-bound and some knowledge of Zulu traditions and culture is essential in order to understand and appreciate his choice of language fully.

*I see Gum Shid with kindness*

In his poem 'Gabi gabi' Buthelezi alludes to the communication with our ancestral world. This poem reveals the connection in spirit between those who are still alive and their forefathers who have long passed away. He writes his poem and says:

*With this small pot of beer*

The real, vital religion of the Zulus is the ancestor worship. For most Zulus the  
long common practice when a person could, relates with his ancestors commonly

AMAQABUNGA ENTOMBE: 9

(9) Mangishoshela emsamo,  
Nalesisiphohlohlwana  
Ngisondela ukuchitha igazi  
Ngibabona begcwala umusa.

Ma ngishoshela emsamo  
Nalesisicathulwana,  
Ngiyabazi ubunzulu benu.

When I move with my knees towards the back of the hut,  
With this small he-goat  
I am coming nearer to spill some blood  
I see them filled with kindness.

When I move towards the back of the hut  
With this small pot of beer,

The real, vital religion of the Zulus is the ancestor worship. To most Zulus this is a common practice when a person communicates with his ancestors commonly



known as 'ukuthetha amadlozi' (communication with the ancestors) in Zulu. A goat or a bullock is slaughtered not any other animal. Everything is performed in a selected back corner of the hut. Msimang clarifies this further by saying that the back part of the hut is the traditional Zulu altar where sacrifice and offertory to the ancestral spirits is made, and that the goat or ox must be used as a sacrifice and beer as offertory.

The use of the images 'isiphohlhlwana' (a he-goat) and 'isicathulwana' (a small beer pot) immediately remind us about our culture of 'ukuhlabela amadlozi' (the slaughtering for our ancestors). A goat is, in many instances, associated with witch-doctors and 'sangomas', who are nearer to the ancestors.

The ancestors are feared and respected. As a sign of respect one does not move anyhow to -emsamo but one crawls with one's knees — shoshela to the sacred place. The element of humbleness as one is talking to his elders is expected.

There is an important reason why the poet reminds us of our ancestral world. It is to question our sense of belonging. It opens questions about our identity. The message is that if we know our identity we shall then know how to communicate, not only with our younger generation, but, we will be able to develop in them a sense of identity and a sense of appreciation for their cultures. It is because of cultures like these that Professor Mazisi Kunene, in a speech, once said: "Spiritual experience is embodied in the culture of the people."

Culture reminds us of who we are. It reminds us of our roots and our UBUNTU, a very important doctrine in the African people. It sets us aside from the other nations of the world. Buthelezi conveys a multi belief among our people that ancestral communication exists. In his poem 'Nezinyandezulu' he expresses this explicitly and points out that:

IZAGILA ZEPHISI: 32

(10) Izinyandezulu ziyangizwa  
Zingizwa ngaphakathi ekuzindleni  
Zingizwa sengiphahluka.

The ancestors hear me  
They hear me in my deep thoughts  
They hear me when I talk loudly.

The image of 'izinyandezulu' implies communication with the forefathers. 'Inyandezulu' is an ancestral snake which is harmless and is not killed. It is representative of an 'iDlozi' who might be a chief or village head who turns into a green mamba iNyandezulu. This snake is respected by all particularly the daughters-in-law. Ancestor worship has not died out in South Africa like the other customs among our people. We still hear of people who still practice the ancestor worship. All prosperity is ascribed to the favour of the ancestors, misfortune to

their anger. These people believe that the amadlozi know and can give solution to their difficulties as Buthelezi puts it in his poem. Culture is our heritage. Culture is but life and people are in turn defined by life itself.

#### **5.3.4 Religion in cultural context**

It is important to mention briefly that the Zulus and the other African people were not atheists from the beginning. No culture is devoid of religion. Our religious lives differed from one culture to the next. Religious beliefs and customs are universal and belong to the religious aspect of culture. Myburgh (1981:111) says:

Religion serves to explain what is found inexplicable, strange and uncanny. It is concerned with supernatural and seeks to allay helplessness towards phenomena the human being is unable to control.

The importance of religion is still recognised alongside with that of culture in many societies. Most people find it difficult to choose between these two practices. The religious aspect of culture deals with a system of beliefs and practices of supernaturalism. The practices of Nomkhubulwana and uMvelinqangi are treated separately because these are two separate supernatural beings. The Zulus believed in uMvelinqangi as the creator of all things. Myburgh (1981:116) writes:

The Zulu use various names for their high god such as uNkulunkulu (the old one), uMvelinqangi (the first comer out) and uMsondo. The etymology meaning of the last-mentioned name is obscure ...

Rev. A.M. Dlamini, in his *Customs, traditions, etc, of the Zulus* (p. 3), says:

Sizwa ngabadala ukuthi uNkulunkulu wayebizwa ngaleligama elingenhla: uMvelinqangi phakathi kwesizwe sakithi ngezikhathi zamandulo. Leligama lisho ukuthi owavela kuqala umDALI, kanti futhi lalikhona nelithi — nguSimakade, okwakusho ukuthi ngumuntu ongagugiyi nongafiyi kepha ohlala njalo kuze kube nini nanini.

We hear from the old people that God was called by the above name: **uMvelinqangi** among our nation in the olden times. This name means the one who came first THE CREATOR, and there was another name -**u Simakade**, which meant that it is a person who never grows old, who never dies but who lives for ever and ever.

Buthelezi knows that uMvelinqangi was the supernatural being that his ancestors appealed to in times of difficult problems. In his protest poem against the injustices of apartheid towards the black people Buthelezi laments to uMvelinqangi and says:

UGUBHU: 12

(11) Noma umongoziya ugxaza,  
Noma sisakazwa ngomphezulu,  
Akukho chilo sibanga IQINISIO  
SIYABONGA MVELINQANGI WOKHOKHO.  
Sibonga khona kunjalo.

Even when nasal haemorrhage falls out,  
Even when we are destroyed by the lightening,  
There is no scandal we are quarrelling for the TRUTH.  
WE THANK YOU MVELINQANGI OF OUR FOREFATHERS.  
We thank you even when it is like this.

This is a protest poem in which the poet laments about those who have left their children and wives and died for the truth. He associates the difficulties that blacks are experiencing with the burning hell. The poet emphasizes the fact that even in deadly circumstances we should acknowledge and thank our CREATOR. Zulu (1988:103) in his review of *ugubhu* states some important points regarding the use of metaphors in Buthelezi's poetry. He says:

A few metaphors which occur in this collection have, through repeated use in Buthelezi's poetry, attained the status of symbolism in the body of his poetry as a whole. For example *umongoziya*

(nasal haemorrhage) in Buthelezi's poetry symbolizes disorder and/or distress ...

Buthelezi has used the very same concept in this poem. It is the disorder and the distress of his black people he is talking about. The selection of the concept uMvelinqangi has some significant purposes too. This concept relates back to the original concept used by our forebears than the other concepts of uNkulunkulu and uSomandla. As he is talking to the creator of his own ancestors he finds it appropriate to use this concept. On the other hand it reveals and evokes the memories and the deep laid mental thoughts about the god of our ancestors. By using this name the poet believes that his cry will not only reach uMvelinqangi, but, it will also be heard by his ancestors. The voice of anger becomes evident in this poem. The poet is unable to relieve his people from the harshness and evils of apartheid, he, therefore, requests uMvelinqangi to intervene and save his people.

### **5.3.5 Courtship cultures**

It is interesting to observe that Buthelezi does not confine himself to serious cultures that refer to religion and cultural beliefs only. He is aware of love matters and writes about ways of courtship during those days when life was still free and interesting. In some of his poems he conveys to our young generation the different styles of courtship. According to the Zulu custom, a girl who has

reached maidenhood (ubuntombi) was not just passed by an *insizwa* (a boy who has reached manhood) without uttering some nice words of courtship to show some appreciation, whether that maiden was ugly or beautiful. It was very discourteous for a young man to show a girl that he was not impressed by her. He should at least indicate that he was aware of her presence not just ignore her completely.

In his poem 'Dudlu' in *Amathambo ekhanda* (p. 71) Buthelezi reminds us about some of these courtship habits. Even the title of the poem: 'Dudlu' is a saying which is still used even today in courtship. Msimang (1975:224) in *Kusadliwa ngoludala* says:

Ziningi izaga zokukhuzela, nazi ezinye:

"Dudlu mtanethu! *Zala abantu ziye ebantwini, akukho ntombi yagana inyamazane.*" Ngokusho njalo insizwa isuke izibika kakhulukazi entombini eliqhikiza ithi, nayo ingumuntu njengesoka layo.

... ..

"*Gegelagege, ntaba zonke ziyangigegela.*" Leyo nsizwa isuke icela ukuba leyo ntombi iyithole ngoba zonke izinto ziyihambela kabi, ziyayigegela.

(12) *Gega ngaga ntaba ziyangigegela.*

Msimang (1975:224)

There are many proverbs that are used in courtship, here are some: "Dudlu, child of my nation! They (girls) reject people and go to people, no girl will ever marry a wild beast." By so saying the man is usually courting a maiden who is in charge of the other young maidens saying, he is also a person like her boyfriend.

.....

"Slant and slant, all the mountains are slanting for me." That man is requesting that girl to feel pity for him because all things seem to go wrong for him, they are slanting. The first proverb 'Zal' abantu ziye ebantwini, akukho ntombi yagan' inyamazane' is one of the proverbs that are usually shouted by young men when they see girls. It actually means all men are the same, a girl rejects a man and marries another man. Even older man shout at a beautiful lady these days using the very same proverbs as a sign of appreciation.

Buthelezi is very nostalgic about these habits. He writes again and say:

AMATHAMBO EKHANDA: 71

Dudlu!

(12) Gege lagege ntaba ziyangigegela!

Nkosazana emhlophe



Egeze ngenhla ngaphuza ngezansi.

Slant and slant all the mountains are slanting for me!

You beautiful lady

When you wash at the top (of the river) I drink at its bottom.

The poet woos his maiden this way. He goes on in the poem to talk about love. He says love comes from within a person. He also points out that when a man proposes love using these proverbs, people look down upon him as uncivilized and still backwards.

(13) Abantu uma uthamunda lezindaba,

Bakubabaza ukusala emuva

Sengathi ushiywe yibhasi eyakwa Nocomboshe (Amathambo: 73).

When you talk about these stories people are,

Astonished by your backwardness

As if you've been left behind by the bus that goes to

Nocomboshe.

Today in many parts of South Africa anything that reveals our cultural strings is regarded as backward. Although this might be the case it is true that in the Zulu culture all maidens were respected as human beings. No man would utter an

insult to any maiden because this would mean that he has insulted all the maidens in that area. According to culture such a person should cleanse all the maidens by giving out an ox to cleanse their name. Culture gave maidens and women dignity. It is not like today where women are looked down upon in many ways.

In this poem, too, Buthelezi touches on a courtship skill that was used by a male when he was tired of courting a maiden who would not give him her love. This is called 'ukukomndela' which means to confiscate something. In this trick a man takes away something, it might be beads, but anything that belongs to the/a maiden he is courting by force, and shows it to the 'iqhikiza' (a fully grown-up woman) who is in charge of that maiden, as proof of her love for him. He says:

(14) Qha *kangikukomundeli* neze

Ngilandela izinkambiso zesintu, (Amathambo: 72)

No I am not confiscating by force no

I am following in the footsteps of culture,

Msimang (1975:233) explains this trick and says:

(15) Enye insizwa ingahle idinwe yilokhu kubanjiswa udonga ngalolu hlobo, bese iyithathela into ethile eyimpahla yayo intombi,

iyoyikhombisa amaqhikiza ithi ngumbambanhliziyo, esalinde ngawo ucu lwayo Sekofuneka intombi ibhukule ngempela ukuze yenelise amaqhikiza ukuthi yona ayimqomanga umlisa, lowo kuphela ihiliwe.

Other men becomes tired of these delaying tricks, and confiscate something which is an object that belongs to the maiden, and show it to the grown up maidens in charge of the maiden he is courting, as a proof of her love for him, while he is still waiting for his string of beads. The maiden must then come out boldly that she did not fall in love with this man but she was caught up craftily in his talk.

In the poem 'Nongenankomo Uyayidla Inyama (Amathambo: 73) (even a person who does not have cattle eats the meat) the poet has also used a popular proverb which is mostly used in courtship.

Buthelezi displays a lot of knowledge about his Zulu culture. In his poem 'Njonji guqele' he is happy that his beloved maiden gives him nice beer to drink and he says:

UGUBHU: 15

(15) Ngichichima ngaphakathi

Inhliziyo ithi kla ...!

Njonji ngiyakunjonjisa.

I am full within

My heart is happy ...

Drink I am giving you this beer to drink.

A person who is not familiar with Zulu customs will be upset by this and will not understand at all. When a maiden has fallen in love with a man of a particular area, it was custom to give this man some beer when he has visited her area in a wedding or any type of celebration as a sign of love and care for him. This is called 'ukunjonjisa' in Zulu. Doke *et al.* (1990:573) explain this custom and say:

'njonjo' (umnjonjo/iminjono) is beer given by girls at a feast to their lovers who may be present.

Buthelezi's poetry on culture reveals that human beings are totally immersed in culture. Although we no longer perform such things as 'ukunjonjisa' these have come to be replaced by some modern techniques of dining out in hotels or restaurants in our modern times, but it is traceable to this custom. It is in this way that culture is said to govern the models of reality, although we are likely to be unaware of its influence upon us. The poet shows a tremendous ingenuity in employing the traditional modes of expression, the proverb to portray a modern theme.

Greater emphasis is on showing hospitality and affection for the people we love by doing good things for them. It is not just the portrayal of culture as such, but the message is that we nurture love because it is hard to find.

### 5.3.6 The throwing away of a tooth

There are many habits that we still practise today, without even questioning their origin. The throwing away of a tooth is one of these habits. When a young child reaches a tooth losing stage, she is and was usually taught to utter some words when throwing it away. It was, however, believed that if these words were not uttered that tooth will never grow out again. In his poems, 'Izinyo' (Ugubhu: 2) and 'Itshe lesikhumbuzo' (Isandlwana: 74), the poet alludes to this custom.

#### UGUBHU: 2

(16) Izinyo,

Gogo, gogo, nanti elakho elidala,

Letha elami elisha.

The tooth

Grandmother, grandmother, here is your old one (tooth),

Bring my new one.

There are very few Zulu people who do not know this custom. Although we did not know why we were doing it, it was done. It is clear that the old people wanted to instill hope in the young ones, that if they request their grannies for a new tooth it will definitely grow back again. It was done to scare away fear from the little ones that they will not remain toothless like their grannies. The selection of grannies is also important and convincing. Most grannies have lost almost all their teeth. To the young ones, it was said that these teeth were somewhere to be renewed. It is because of this reason that the little ones were taught to request new teeth from their grannies, who are no longer in need of new teeth. In Itshe Lesikhumbuzo the poet says:

ISANDLWANA: 74

- (17) Ngithi gogo gogo nanti  
Elakho elidala  
Letha elami elisha.  
Engiyoluma ngalo

I say grandmother, grandmother, here is  
Your old one (tooth)  
Bring me a new one.  
That I will bite with

Young children still have long life ahead of them. They also still need strong teeth to bite meat, and the elders had to provide the new teeth. This custom also reveals the significant roles played by the grandmothers in a family system. Grannies cared for the little ones and taught them quite a number of values about life. It also highlights the strong relationship that existed and still exists between the grannies and the little children irrespective whether the child is a boy or a girl. The grannies told us folktales and so we trust anything they say and by this they have won the hearts of the little ones.

Dlamini (p. 92) comments on this culture:

Kwakungumkhuba wakithi ukuthi uma ingane seyikhumuka amazinyo itshelwe ukuthi izinyo elikhumukile uma isiyolintshinga, iphume iye ekupheleni kwebala, lapho-ke seiyofika ifulathele izinyo lelo ilintshinge nyovane. Ingakalintshingi isho lamazwi, "Nhloyile Nhloyile, ngiphe elisha mina ngikunike elidala!" Bese ilintshinga-ke. Uma isilintshingile ihambe ibheke phambili njalo ingabheki emuva.

It was our usual habit that when a child has reached the teeth losing stage he was informed that the lost tooth is thrown at the end of the yard, but when he is there he is to face backward from where he comes from and throw it away. Before he throws it away he must say these words: "Nhoyile, Nhloyile, give me a new tooth

"I will give you my old one!" He then throws it away. After he has thrown it he must look forward and must not look back.

This culture was practised with variety in many parts. The new tooth is requested from Nhloyile according to Dlamini's explanation. The ideophone nhlo- means coming into existence or the coming up of life. Nhloyile, according to Doke *et al.* (1990:569), is a Zulu lunar month commencing about the middle of July which is called uNcwaba (August). During this month it is when the first fresh grass appears after field-burning. The explanation fits perfectly well with the above described custom. The child asks Nhloyile to bring back his new tooth at the time when all nature grows again in August.

These various cultures show that we are not as free as we may imagine ourselves to be. The influence of cultural patterns upon our lives is pervasive.

### 5.3.7 The memorial heap of stones – Isivivane

According to Doke's *Dictionary* (1990:836), 'Isivivane' is described as an accumulated heap of stones, a memorial collection of stones, 'lucky heap' (on which Natives throw stones as they pass at cross roads or some outstanding place, the action being believed to bring good luck).



This might sound like a joke to other people who are not acquainted with some of the Zulu customs. 'Isivivane' was believed to bring people some luck if they threw some stones on it when passing by. A disregard of this custom was believed to bring bad luck to those who did not throw the stone. One important reason was that it taught people the responsibility of working together. The gatherers of those stones were not known, and so everyone who passed by added his good will by throwing an additional stone on to the heap. An idiom was also developed out of this custom which says: 'Ukuphosa itshe esivivaneni' which means to make a valuable contribution towards an achievement of something which is of great significance.

Buthelezi alludes to this custom in his poem when he says:

AMATHAMBO EKHANDA: 65

(18) Nomkhubulwane

Angikhedamisile phambi kwakho,

Njengenkedama yezwe

Ngifumbethe ikhuba

Ngenxa yelima lakho

**Nesivivane ngiphosile kuso,**

Princess of Heaven

I am not standing with my head down in front of you,

Like an orphan of the world.

I am holding a hoe

Because of your invitation for communal cultivation.

I have also contributed to the memorial heap of stones

The poet has also used the idiom of 'ukuphosa esivivaneni' (throwing into the memorial heap) as a sign of working in unity. It promotes communal responsibility among a nation. Dlamini (p. 15) writes about this custom and says:

Lelotshe nje lokuqala kwakuba ngelesikhumbuzo ...

Okuyikona-ke kwakushiwo isivivane iloku, ukubonga isikhumbuzo,

ukucela inhlanhla nokucelela uhambo olusasele indlela emhlophe.

Njalo-ke lapho kwakukhona inqwathshana yamatshe, isivivane,

umuntu odlula ngalapho wayeye aphonse itshe naye anduba adlule

...

The first stone was for a memorial ...

What the heap of stones meant was to give thanks to the memorial, to request a safe and a lucky journey for the distance

that was still left. From then where there was a heap of rocks, a

memorial heap, a person who passed by took a stone and threw it

before he could pass ...

People in the olden days walked long journeys on foot, and when they reached a resting place they would leave a heap of stones as a memorial monument. This custom is in agreement with the communal life style of the African people. The concept of lending a hand is old in the African people. It is true that we remain unconscious of the origin of most of our actions and habits. Even in these changing times we remain influenced by our traditional communal ways of doing things. We even look down upon those who seclude themselves from these activities, the activities that reveal our communal UBUNTU and often refer to their actions as too civilized or too sophisticated.

Culture is important for all people. Even if we deny this, it shows in many ways that culture shapes both our actions and our thoughts. Our mental behaviour is likewise pervasively influenced by culture. Buthelezi in his poetry has tried in various forms of culture to remind us about the beauty and importance of our culture.

#### **5.4 CULTURE-BOUND IMAGES**

In this section of imagery we will concentrate only on those images that exhibit cultural links. These images were purposely left out so that they should be discussed under this appropriate sub-heading. In this instance we shall not give too much detail on the images as figurative language. Although the terms suggested by Heese and Lawton of simile, metaphor, personification and

symbolism will be used for identification purposes. Imagery in this section will be used in a different manner to include all the objects or qualities which make an impression on any of the five senses: sight, taste, smell, touch and hearing and to those that may be created by direct description. It will also be indicated that an image may appeal to more than one sense at once.

C.D. Lewis, in Murray, suggests that:

an image may be presented to us in a phrase or passage on the face of it purely descriptive (1978:60).

He goes on to say that if one understands the term in this broad sense, one will then take imagery in a poem to include even the literal objects found in it. The poet chooses certain words for their suggestive power and their ability to convey a particular meaning. Gurrey (1968:38) says:

Actually a good poem is a close combination of words and content, and this closely related and compact whole forms a clean ring of meaning which keeps out intrusive and irrelevant associations. This is, in part, the value of great literature, for the words have an exact meaning; their connotations are determined by the whole context they do not annul or weaken one another's bright clarity of content

...

Gurrey's comment is true in that it is the combination of words that brings about clarity to its content. So imagery is all important. The poet has at his disposal imagery belonging to diverse fields of experience, and the greater the poet is, possibly the more fields in the affairs of life will be at his immediate disposal from which to draw his imagery. Buthelezi draws his imagery from different natural phenomena. In this chapter we shall concentrate on the culture-bound images which are based on his broad and rich background of the Zulu culture. Zulu like Msimang acknowledges the fact that Buthelezi makes use of traditional images when he says:

Most of Buthelezi's metaphors are taken from the traditional rural world of the Zulu rather than the modern and urban (1988:103).

This type of imagery is noticeable in most of Buthelezi's poetry. We will illustrate this type of imagery by a brief reference to his poetry.

#### **5.4.1 Culture bound metaphor**

In his poem 'Inqola yenkosi uCetshwayo' Buthelezi narrates about the wagon of King Cetshwayo. This is a historical wagon. It is now placed in the historical museum at Ulundi. The poet expresses his disappointment in white people, who prohibited the Black people from seeing the wagon when it was in Pietermaritzburg. This wagon reminds him of his King Cetshwayo and he says:

UGUBHU: 10

(19) Namhla ngizizwa *ngithwele isicoco*

Ngokuba isitho somkhandlu wezikhumbuzo ZakwaZulu

Today I feel I am wearing a headring

For being a member of the kwaZulu Monument Council.

A headring, among the Zulus, was worn by old men who had survived many wars. The headring was then seen and respected as a token of bravery, heroism and great experience in warfare. The headring 'isicoco' is a traditional head gear. The poet feels honoured, like an old warrior who is given a headring, for being elected as a member of the kwaZulu Monument Council.

#### 5.4.2 Culture bound similes

Buthlezi has a tendency to use extended similes, and the extended form of similes gives a scene of some kind. It elaborates the picture that the poet wants to convey. This type of simile adds more clarity and beauty to the poem. It, above all, shows great ingenuity on the part of the poet.

In his poem 'Mntanethu, Mntakwethu' the poet deals with a theme of love. The poet draws our attention to the fact that love is fragile. If we do not hold tight onto

it, it slips through our fingers within a twinkle of an eye. He, therefore, requests his loved one to hold him tightly and he says

UGUBHU: 34

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| (20) Ungibambe ungiqinise;            | Hold me tight;                                  |
| Ungangiyekeleli buchule               | Do not let go of me for prowess                 |
| <b><i>Njengembiza yamanzi</i></b>     | Like a water-pot                                |
| <b><i>Iyekelelwe okhakhayini,</i></b> | While it is balanced on the centre of the head, |
| .....                                 | .....   |
| Ngibambe ungiqinise,                  | Hold me tight,                                  |
| Funa ngiphaphe emoyeni                | Do not let me fly with the wind                 |
| <b><i>Njengamahlolamvula</i></b>      | Like the first rains                            |
| <b><i>Evunywa intwasahlobo</i></b>    | At the beginning of Spring.                     |

The poet has chosen the images of the water-pot and of the first summer rains respectively. A water-pot is a traditional and a cultural pot made out of clay. It gives us a more visual image of a woman balancing a water-pot on her head. This simile is highly effective and evocative. The second simile appeals to two senses. It appeals to our visual as well as our sense of touch. Rain falls on our skin. It, therefore, touches us in some way. Both similes are realised as extended similes, the extension being in the next line that succeeds the simile.

### 5.4.3 Culture bound personification

Buthelezi uses personification a lot in his poetry as a communication vehicle. His skill lies in using his personification in a traditional way as in:

UGUBHU: 14

(21) Umphefumulo wami

*Ucokeme esigqikini,*

My soul

Stands on a wooden stool,

The soul, a non-living thing is given human attributes. It is said to be standing on a tip-toe position on top of a wooden stool. The poet does not just choose an ordinary chair but 'isigqiki'. This is a wooden stool made at home from a very broad trunk of a tree. It was used in the olden days as a chair. This type of chair is not common in urban areas. It is mostly used in the rural areas where people are still hooked in using traditional objects.



#### 5.4.4 Non-figurative images

Besides conveying images by means of figurative language and the imagery that appeal to our senses, Buthelezi creates imagery by a mere description. He makes use of this technique in:

#### UGUBHU: 1

(22) Kube sengathi ngifunza wena

*Amasi kaNondlini,*

*Esikleza kuye sobabili*

*Khathi ungibambele ithunga.*

It is like I am feeding you

The curdled milk of Nondlini

From whom we both spit milk into our mouths

When you are holding the pail for me.

The above stanza refers to four senses. The curdled milk refers to our sense of taste and smell, 'ukukleza' (to spit milk into one's mouth from a cows teat) to our senses of touch and hearing and 'ukubamba' (to touch) to the sense of touching. A person who is familiar with a milking situation is given an imagery of two people during a milking process, one milking the cow and the other holding the

pail. The above stanza creates a full picture without any figurative images. This shows us that Buthelezi does not only limit himself to the images that are conveyed through the use of figurative language only.

He also gives us this picture through description only when he says:

UGUBHU: 16

(23) Usho ukhukhumale uthi:

***Awugole isicholo senkehli***

Leyo ezicwala izibuka kuwena,

When you expand you almost

Touch the head-dress of an old female

The one who when she beautifies herself looks herself from you,

This description appeals to our sense of sight and of touch. A picture of an old woman looking at herself in river-water is given. The poet tells us about the beauty of the uMzinyathi river. This river serves as a mirror to the traditional woman who still wears a head-dress. It serves as a mirror when it is full because women look at themselves in its water, and use it as a mirror.

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

It has been illustrated in this chapter that Buthelezi is a great poet among his colleagues not only because he writes poetry like them, but for his skilful culture presentation through his poetry. Although we have discussed the poetry in its Zulu context, it does not only refer to the Culture of the Zulus only, but to the African culture in general. Modern African poetry written in indigenous languages, derives from the fusion of traditional and western forms, whose literatures exhibit distinct features in style and content. It is very common to come across features of both oral tradition and western features in most poems. In Buthelezi's case there is no doubt that he is more indebted to his traditional or cultural poetic techniques than the western ones.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUDING STATEMENT

- 6.1 Looking back
- 6.2 Suggestions for future research

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUDING STATEMENT

#### 6.1 LOOKING BACK

In our first chapter we indicated that this would be a general study on Buthelezi's poetry. We also clearly outlined the reasons behind the choice of our literary theory, which is the deconstruction approach. It has been illustrated in the foregoing chapters how Buthelezi's poetry deals more with meaning rather than form. In Msimang's review (1988) of *Amaqabunga Entombe* and E.S.Q. Zulu's review (1988) of *Ugubhu* it was explicitly stated that the beauty of Buthelezi as a poet is not to be found in poetic form but in poetic diction.

It has been our objective from the beginning of this research project to deal with meaning in poetry, multiplicity of meaning, the relationship between texts and the importance of cultural meaning as it reveals itself through Buthelezi's poetry.

In our second chapter where a layout of our theoretical framework was dealt with, it was indicated that Buthelezi's poetry yields itself to this theory. The conception of a text as having multiple meanings, and of words as signs that are interpretable because of their play in the textual context was our starting point. We have tried to show that the deconstructive theory is applicable to our

literature. It propagates that we shouldn't look at textual meaning and words as unalterable vehicles of communication like the structuralists. Buthelezi's poetry made itself available to prove some of the deconstructionist suggestions true. This says to us that theories are there to be played with until they yield some answers to our literary questions.

Our third chapter shows how Buthelezi fuses the traditional way of writing poetry, that is, the way in which he uses repetition, rhyming patterns and linking with the western way of writing poetry. He shows that he is a master of his tradition when it comes to the writing of praise poems and the conveyance of culture through his poetry.

Buthelezi has been largely influenced by Christianity and his Zulu culture. It is true that it is difficult for most of our modern African poets to write outside their culture and traditions, yet they are so immersed in western techniques of writing poetry. Most poets cannot separate themselves from their culture. Buthelezi is the founder of the Zionist movement in South Africa. It is, therefore, impossible not to find religious influence in his poetry. B.P. Mngadi (1994:28-29) in her research entitled: *'Exploiting the grammar of the possibilities': the poetry of C.T. Msimang* makes reference to a poem written by C.T. Msimang about L.B.Z. Buthelezi. In this poem Buthelezi is regarded as a poet who writes on two platforms: the religious and the cultural platforms. Mngadi quotes Msimang's poem where he says:

UNODUMEHLEZI KAMENZI: 39

Inyosi Yakwagwegwazangene

Imbongi ekubonga kubili

Ngob' ubongamabandla akwaZulu

Ngob' ubongamabandla aseZulwini

A poet of Gwegwazangene

A poet on two platforms

Because he praises the Zulus

Because he praises the Heavens.

According to Mngadi, Buthelezi has written about 200 poems in his anthologies about the Zulu nation, and many more about religion and religious practices. We have also indicated that there are about nine poems that bear religious titles. This shows his deep involvement with religion. Some of these poems reveal his involvement with the Zionist Church. These are the poems such as 'Mana njalo Zayoni' and 'uZayoni Engimkhumbulayo'. The many poems he has written about the Zulu nation reveal his broad knowledge on the historical background of the Zulus.

In his praise poems he does not only confine himself to the praises of Zulu kings. He also praises people who are heroes in the other spheres of life like: Sugarboy

Malinga, who is a boxing champion; Elijah Thetha Masombuka, who was once a famous radio Zulu sports announcer; Handel and Mozart, who were great musicians; the famous Pietermaritzburg choir, Amazwi kaZulu, and the famous musical composer and conductor, Caluza.

He also give praise to many Zulu poets like: E.J. Mhlanga, B.W. Vilakazi, D.B.Z. Ntuli, C.T. Msimang and O.E.H.M. Nxumalo. In his praises of these Zulu poets he has a tendency of recounting their literary works in their praises.

Buthelezi goes beyond the South African boundaries. In his poem 'Ababhali base Afrika' he praises all the great writers who are in the other African states. Among the great writers he mentions: Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwesi, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Wole Soyinka, Buchi Emecheta and many others. He has also written about the most well known African leaders. In his poem 'Ababusi bendabuko e-Afrika' he mentions Haile Selassie, Queen Modjadji of the Pedi, King Khama of the Tswana and King Sebasa of Venda. All these poems show his interest in African literature and the love and respect he has for our African leaders.

The relationship between deconstruction and intertextuality has also been highlighted. Intertextuality studies the interrelationship between texts, as D.B. Ntuli (1984) one of our great poets says:

It is common knowledge that an artist cannot work in a vacuum.

For him to produce anything a number of influences work on him.



The relationship between B.W. Vilakazi's well known poem 'Ma ngificwa ukufa' and Buthelezi's 'Lapho imihla yami' was indicated. Very few of our modern poets have managed to escape being influenced by the work of our earlier poets. It is upon us as literary critics to make an in depth study of poetry and reveal our new findings. Besides the above mentioned poem, Buthelezi has written another poem which also shows much resemblance with the same Vilakazi's poem. The poem 'Lapho sengiphangalele' in his *Ithunga likaNondlini* (p 3-4) bears some lines which remind us of Vilakazi's poem. There are lines such as:

Stanza 5 Ngimbeleni ezweni labo

Bury me in their land

Stanza 6 Ngimbeleni

Bury me

The moment we come across these words, we immediately notice the importance of intertextuality in poetry. It shows that Buthelezi is greatly influenced by Vilakazi's works.

Our chapter five is a very important chapter. It sets Buthelezi aside as a unique poet among his Zulu counterparts. He has an amazing skill of communicating culture through his poetry. Culture reminds us of our origin and gives direction to most of our actions and mental behaviour.

It has been illustrated that each of the various forms of culture is used by the people to serve particular functions, such as the culture of uNomkhubulwana which was practised during drought to request rain and good harvest from the Princess of Heaven. Some of these functions are general and universal, and relate to the basic human needs that every culture must meet.

The most important about these cultural forms is that we are reminded through Buthelezi's poetry how these cultures were practised and carried out. Culture is passive on its own. Its function largely depends upon the way we as people employ it. Cultures are not carried out the same way everywhere. Most people employ culture with some variations here and there. There is room for individual and subgroup variation in most customs.

The most important function of culture is the conveyance of meaning to the people involved in it. Kraft (1990:65) comments as follows:

The meaning of cultural forms consist of 'the totality of subjective associations attached to the form'. In many ways 'culture is communication'. Each cultural form, therefore, is the bearer of impressions, values, attitudes and connotations from person to person and group to group. The meaning that cultural forms conjure up in the minds of those who employ them are a crucial aspect of the way those forms function in culture.

It is evident that culture is our social heritage. As human beings we are defined by our own culture, and Buthelezi has explicitly revealed this aspect in his poetry.

## 6.2 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Researchers are not brave enough to attempt new approaches like deconstruction and intertextuality. As a result there are very few researches that have been conducted where these literary approaches were used. According to the Human Sciences Research Council there are only four Afrikaans researches on deconstruction and none from the African languages.

Most researchers write on Russian formalism and the structuralists theories. These theories promote the structure or form of a literary work to the detriment of its meaning. Their over usage seems to suggest that form is more important in poetry than meaning.

We already know that the influence of a precursor writer on the latter writer exists. This is the case between B.W. Vilakazi and L.B.Z. Buthelezi. The interrelatedness between the poems of these poets indicates a further field that still needs research. Intertextuality is there in African literature and it must be brought to the open. Some scholars like Miller (1979:225) comment on this and says:

Any poem however, is parasitical in its turn on earlier poems or contains earlier poems within itself as enclosed parasites, in another version of perpetual reversal of parasite and host. If the poem is food and poison for the critics, it must in turn have eaten. It must have been a cannibal consumer of earlier poems.

#### *Inkwenkwezi? Inkwenkwezi? Inkwenkwezi!*

It would be of great importance in future if researchers could try to implement some of these new approaches in their research works. This should not only be promoted in the field of poetry. It should also be carried out in other researches in the literary genres such as the drama and the novel.

#### *to the 2 star 1 star*

It would also be interesting to pursue literary studies to reveal the importance of culture, as it is revealed by literature.

#### *conclusion of star towards*

Buthelezi is one of our great Zulu poets, who shows great love for his language and culture. To sum it all Mngadi (1994:76) says C.T. Msimang regards Buthelezi as a star, that gives light at varying degrees and times. Msimang calls him an **Indonsa**, a star that outshines the other stars towards dawn. He also calls him **Inkwenkwezi** a star that gives light even when there are clouds in the sky. He calls him **isilimela** a star that appears seasonally and it indicates the beginning of summer, the beginning of new life. Msimang says this in his poem:

#### *conclusion in the development of Zulu literature*

UNODUMEHLEZI KAMENZI: 41

Poem: 'Inyosi yakwa Gwegwazangene'

**Indosa** kuhle kwenkwenkwezi,  
Indons' edons' umthala nesilimela,  
**Inkwenkwezi** ekhanye phansi eSifuleni  
Kuye kwenanela no Velaphi ...  
Ethi khanya Nkanyezi yokusa!

The morning Star which  
is like a bright star

The morning star which pulls  
the milky way and the seasonal  
constellation of stars towards  
ploughing time.

Even Velaphi consented to this ...

When he said, Shine you morning Star!

Msimang's poem reveals Buthelezi as a person who believes in good work, in showing a good direction for progress in life like a shining star. This in itself tells us that Buthelezi is one of the great poets who has made a tremendous contribution in the development of Zulu literature.

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