

**AN ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY ISIZULU  
PERFORMANCE POETRY**

**BY**

**GLADNESS BONGEPHIWE MYENI**

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**UNIVERSITY OF  
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**INYUVESI  
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

**AN ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY ISIZULU PERFORMANCE POETRY**

**By**

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**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in  
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**DATE SUBMITTED: 30 NOVEMBER 2019**

## DECLARATION

I, Gladness Bongephiwe Myeni declare that the thesis titled: **AN ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY ISIZULU PERFORMANCE POETRY** is my own work and has never been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university. All sources used or quoted in this thesis have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signed.....

Date.....

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## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to my family, my siblings and my late grandmother Hleziphi Mkhwanazi. May her soul rest in peace!

## **ABSTRACT**

Poetry is the most basic and profuse form of emotive expression in Africa. The African manifests feelings through an outburst of song or poem when he loves and when he hates, when he works and when he plays, when he is in peace and when he fights, when the child is born and when death takes its toll. Poetry should be understood as a part of ongoing sets of aesthetic traditions, acts of distinction, and values. These are recognizable genres of expression (in either the ways they actively align, reject, or refigure received traditions of use). This study is an analysis of thematic distribution and poetic features in isiZulu performance poetry and also seeks to explore its socio-linguistic impact in the society. An ethnographic methodological approach was employed in this study. Data collection involved use of interviews, voice recordings and observations of the performance sessions. This is informed by two complimentary theories that served as the theoretical framework. Firstly Bourne (2001) and Tolstoy's (2001) expressive theory of arts was used as a background theory to provide benchmarks to the understanding of the main aim and appreciation of performance poetry. Secondly, the study used Hymes's (1981) ethnopoetic theory, where ethnopoetics is concerned with composition in the course of performance. Ethnopoetics is the study of the ways that narratives are structured into "lines" and are thus poetic (Hymes, 1981). The findings demonstrate that most of the poems studied in this research dwelt much on the theme of love but without necessarily ignoring other issues such as women and child abuse, corruption and many other social ills. The researcher also discovered that isiZulu contemporary poetry employs unique linguistic elements in its expression of the diverse thematic issues. Code-mixing or code-switching and borrowing seem to be getting more attention in the composition of performance poems.

## IQOQA

Izinkondlo e-Afrika ziyinto elula kakhulu neyindlela ejulile yokuveza imizwa. Abantu abangama-Afrika bakhombisa imizwa ngengoma noma ngenkondlo uma bethanda, bezonda, besebenza noma bedlala, uma benokuthula noma belwa, uma kuzelwe ingane noma kuvele isifo. Kumina izinkondlo zibukeka ziyizixazululo eziwusizo, ezingabukwa njengezingxenye zezinhlanganisela zobuhle besiko, izindlela zokuhlukanisa namazingakuphila. Lezi izinhlobo ezivamile zokuveza imizwa (okungaba izindlela abazihlanganisa ngokunamandla, bazinqabe, noma baphinde bazibhekisise izindlela ezitholakele zokusebenza). Lolu cwaningo luhlaziya izinkondlo zesiZulu ezihaywa bukhoma zesimanje. Lolu cwaningo luhlose ukubuyekeza ukwabiwa kwezindikimba zezinkondlo zesiZulu ezihaywa bukhoma. Okwesibili, ukuhlaziya izici noma iminxa zobunkondlo emkhakheni omusha wezinkondlo zesiZulu, bese luphetha ngokuphenya umthelela walo mkhakha omusha wezinkondlo sesiZulu emphakathini. Kulolu cwaningo kusetshenziswe ikhwalithethivu egxile empilweni yabantu namasiko abo (*ethnographic methodological approach*) njengendlela yokuqhuba ucwaningo. Ukuqoqwa kolwazi kubandakanya, izingxoxo, amazwi aqoshiwe kanye nokuhlaziywa kokwenzeka kwezinto zinjengoba zinjalo. Lokhu kusekelwa injulalwazi ezimbili ezihambanayo njengesisekelo socwaningo. Okokuqala, injulalwazi yokuzwakalisa imizwa yobuciko (*expressive theory of arts*), eyethulwa nguBourne (2001) noTolstoy (2001) njengomgogodla oyisizinda sokwazi inhlosongqangi yezinkondlo nokuhaywa kwezinkondlo zeshashalazi. Okwesibili, injulalwazi eqopha imibhalo wezinkondlo ezihaywa ngomlomo (*ethnopoetic theory*) kaHyme (1981), lapho le njulalwazi egxile esakhiweni senkondlo ngenkathi yenziwa. I-*ethnopoetic* iyisifundo sezindlela zokuhlela okudluliswayo kube imisho kanye nobunkondlo (Hymes, 1981). Ulwazi olutholakele luveza ukuthi izinkondlo eziningi ezikulolu cwaningo zigxile kakhulu endikimbeni yothando. Ngale kwalokho, kongoti bezinkondlo, osonkondlo noma izimbongi babuka uthando njengengxenye yempilo ehluke kodwa kuya ngendlela imbongi ngayinye eqonda ngayo izindaba zothando. Umcwaningi uphinde wathola ukuthi izinkondlo zesimanje zisebenzisa izingxenye zolimi lapho ziveza okuthile ezindikimbeni ezahlu kahlu. Ukuxutshwa kolimi nokuboleka kwezinye izilimi kudla umhlanganiso uma kukhiqizwa izinkondlo zeshashalazi.



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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 General introduction**

This study analyses the poetic creativity within the context of isiZulu contemporary performance poetry. It is aimed at evaluating, amongst other things, thematic distribution and message portrayal in contemporary isiZulu performance poetry, analysing poetic or stylistic features in this new genre of contemporary poetry and exploring the impact thereof on society in general and the amaZulu society in particular. This chapter presents the introduction, the background of the research study, problem statement, the scope and the motivation of the study, the significance of the study, objectives, literature review, research methodology and the conceptual framework of the study. The chapter sums up with a summary of the chapters that this study comprises.

This study complements the efforts made by antecedent researchers who have done research on the thought-provoking issues that permeate poetry and other literary genres. The study takes place against the backdrop of performance poetry standing out prominently as one of dominant genres in the field of literature. The research took particular interest in the scholars who have researched on different poetic subgenres such as oral, praise, modern and performance poetry. Thus, the study intended to analyse isiZulu contemporary performance poetry with the aim of gaining an insight into the thematic contribution, stylistic devices, poetic techniques, linguistic dynamics in performance poetry and its contribution towards language development.

#### **1.2 Background**

Poetry is the most profound form of emotive expression in Africa. Many a time, the African manifests poetl feelings through outbursts of song or poetry to express love or hatred; when working or playing; when making peace or when fighting; when a child has been born and when death has taken its toll (Tala,1999). Therefore, poetry asserts itself as the lifeline of the African as the African individual learns and appreciates the art of poetry because he is born and bred in a society that recognises poetry as the most emotional and expressive form of the human utterances (Tala, 1999). Poetry is unequivocally one of the oldest literary genres in the

history of literature. In spite of this long tradition, it is perhaps much harder to define poetry than any other literary genre. The term poetry can be traced back to the Greek word “poieo” (to make or produce), which is suggestive of the notion that the poet is a person who “makes” verses. The poetry genre is often subdivided into the two major categories, that is, the narrative and lyrical poetry (Klarer, 2004). Poetry is an expression of powerful human feelings, emotions, thoughts and ideas through words and sounds that are arranged in the poet’s best possible poetic style. The poem is styled in the best-versed language for it to express the profound human feelings, thoughts and ideas (Miruka, 1994). “Poetry is the one writing that really did change the outlook of many people here, even the biggest gangsters...Our poems were so good that we could speak on one another and nobody gets mad because we’re telling the truth. Knowing how to write essays alone is not as effective as using our poetry to make us aware of what is going on in society” (Camangian, 2008:49).

Further, poetry has been associated with religion and the supernatural. It is used to assert power over the invisible life forces (Grant, 1985). Mlondo (1994) echoes the same sentiments and further maintains that poetry has always been at the core of African ‘imaginative’ activity. The poetic genre ranges from the single phrase filled with grunts and further developed through repetitions. It is often composed and performed for ritual purposes through the most sophisticated language phraseology and developed through an exploration of images that are relevant to the pertinent thematic issues.

Amateshe (1988) defines poetry as a form of expression, either oral or written, which acts as a form of communication between the artist and the audience; and as a kind of speech. Amateshe (ibid), emphasises the fact that poetry is synonymous with music, particularly within oral contexts. In addition, literary commentators have often described poetry as language expression on the verge of breaking into a song. Indeed, many poems can be sung and similarly, many songs are poetic. Actually, poetry is musical in so far as it displays features such as rhythm, metre, intonation and quite often, even melody. This then makes poetry as singable as it is danceable. A further insight into the definition of poetry is found in Shelly (1995) cited in Meihuizen (2011:54), who describes it as “a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted.” It enlarges the extent of human imagination by replenishing it with thoughts, which are ever new and delightful. Poetry is a faculty which embodies the moral nature of man. A poem is an image of human life expressed in its eternal truth (Shelly, 1995).

According to Meihuizen (2011), poetry is an endless source of pleasure from which the majority of the people are excluded for it represents an unfathomable mystery to them. The most immediate thing people can hope to achieve is to understand the content and perhaps a glimpse, in a very superficial way, of the theme that the poem might be expressing. Compounding this mystery is an inability to apply comprehension skills, which leaves many readers or listeners lost, as they are unable to discern the difference between theme and content.

As defined in most of the dictionaries of literary terms, poetry is a literary work presented in metrical form (also see, Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English, New Edition (1978) and Heinemann English Dictionary, New Edition (1979). It is, as distinct from the verse, not a matter of form but of substance. It is a composition expressed in vivid language expressing a high level of imagination and emotional disposition that, though most frequently found in verse, often manifests in the form of prose. Poetry has three main elements resonating from sound, sense and suggestion. These elements aid our understanding through appealing to our sense of imagination, making us perceive the poet's experiences. Poetry expresses deep feelings and thoughts, often bent on attempting to interpret the concealed meaning of life, the universal truths underlying our understanding of human existence and, above all, the experiences of humankind (Pavel, 1999).

Furthermore, poetry is undoubtedly musical because "... it should never be assumed that no meaning is conveyed through the sound of a language" (Duff, 1981:95). This feature enlivens poetry within the minds and souls of the readers or listeners, and this prevents its dissolution in time. Language is capable of imitating and illustrating sounds, and the first forms of communication are, almost undoubtedly, based on sounds. In poetry, musicality is usually achieved through the phonetic effects of some phonemes, which evoke associations with certain natural sounds.

Poetry has also been defined as a form of music that directly appeals to the emotions through the ear (Heese, 1968). The issue of poetry having to do with human emotions has also been acknowledged by Nkuzana (1988) who aptly asserts that poetry verbally expresses emotions that are based on truth and beauty. Poetry has been central in the livelihoods of traditional African societies. The family rites associated with birth, marriage, death, the installation of chiefs, religious festivals and other traditional activities provided a platform for the recitation of poetry. Poetry also reflects the richness of a given language and the culture it represents in



addition to being a means of language preservation and development. Simons and Charles (2017) describe language development as taking two distinct forms. Firstly, language development is described in terms of the acquisition of a language and secondly as the growth of a language in terms of its acquired status which makes it recognised as an official language or similarly as the growth of a language from a pidgin until it becomes a standardised language. The status of a language can be elevated through the development of a language, which involves reducing a language to writing as well as the standardisation of the language (Chabata, 2007).

In South Africa, oral literature among the amaZulu people is a very broad field that encompasses poetry, praise singing, folklore and *imilolozelo*, amongst others. Prior to reduction of languages to written form, poetry had been performed and thus, performance poetry formed the oral aspect of indigenous poetry. This study is aimed at examining this aspect. Performance poetry was created and performed for a specific audience within a specific setting, such as home and communal festivities and ritual. The advent of written languages has seen poetry being written prior to performance, or spontaneously composed as the performance is in progress. In some ways, performance poetry, sometimes known as spoken word, is directly linked to oral traditions that date back to ancient times prior to the advent of the written word. In such cases, the poetry or story telling was passed down orally from generation to generation. Performance poets then added their own twists and styles of performance into the story, thus making each particular performance unique.

With regard to isiZulu performance poetry, the dominant group of performance poets comprises both men and women. Traditionally, people who used to participate in poetry were men. The assumption is that as much as such contemporary performance poetry serves educational and communication purposes just like traditional poetry, it is inclined more to entertainment and income generation than anything else. However, both poetic genres convey a certain pertinent message to the community. The advantage brought by contemporary performance poetry is its ability to convey the message live, on the spot and immediately. For example, issues such as xenophobia and “Fees must fall” campaigns are among the issues that have been treated expeditiously through performance poetry.

In the poem “Akujikanga thina” by SimChina (Smangele Zungu), the poet has this to say:

*Akujikanga thina;  
Isikhathi esiphila kuso sijikele thina.  
Sakhula sixoxelana izinganekwane  
Kodwa manje sesabulalana sodwa.*

(It is not us who changed;  
It is the time in which we live that has changed.  
We grew up telling each other folktales  
But now we are killing each other.)

In this poem, Simchina is expressing her feeling of disapproval of the feat of xenophobic attacks which erupted in South Africa, particularly in Durban and Johannesburg where several people were murdered in cold blood. Many poets expressed their feelings in response to the occurrence of this situation. Audiences were attracted by their craft and paid attention to the message these poets were sharing with them. The oral tradition evident in these impromptu performances could hardly wait for the overdrawn writing and publishing processes, and the essence of the plight of the victims was shared with the community who went through these socio-political skirmishes. This study is specifically interested in oral poetry that spontaneously develops in response to the evolving socio-political issues in South Africa. This type of poetry is aptly referred to in this study as contemporary performance poetry. This poetic genre derives its influence from the oral poetic traditions as well as the written traditions among the amaZulu people. It is against this backdrop that it is imperative to highlight the dynamism and perpetual change that characterises society. It is therefore on this basis that this study seeks to analyse contemporary performance poetry in terms of its features and functions in society.

### **1.3 The statement of the research problem**

This study is driven by the curiosity to analyse contemporary isiZulu performance poetry as an emerging to which earlier researchers have paid little attention. The investigation has been necessitated by the need to understand techniques and stylistic devices employed in performance poetry.

The researcher’s understanding of poetry puts language at the centre of poetic expression. A close analysis of performance poetry made the researcher realise the shift in poetic language, which tends to be flouted by current scholars. Performance poetry heavily employs socio-linguistic features such as code-switching, code-mixing, borrowing and slang. This has also

prompted the researcher's desire to explore the various factors contributing to the continual shifts in poetic language. The reviewed literature revealed the research gap indicative of very little attention being paid to performance poetry in general and contemporary isiZulu performance poetry in particular.

#### **1.4 Scope of the study**

It appears an unwieldy endeavour to embark on the holistic analysis of poetry since it is a broad discipline. This study confines itself to the analysis of isiZulu performance poetry and limits itself to the analysis of the poetic features characteristic of isiZulu performance poetry as an emerging poetic genre. The researcher noticed very few new features that characterise contemporary poetry but, of course, are not found in traditional poetry. Some of the features were there in traditional poetry but the way they are being applied in performance poetry slightly differs. The examples selected for this study have been drawn from a variety of poems collected from live poetry sessions, on YouTube and the UKhozi FM's *Back to My Roots Programme*. This study also seeks to investigate the impact of isiZulu performance poetry on the broader society. This can be achieved through conducting unstructured interviews with a few selected poets who are already in the field and are generally identified as popular isiZulu poets.

#### **1.5 Motivation and significance of the study**

Contemporary isiZulu performance poetry is an interesting variety of poetry. It plays a prominent role in stimulating human imagination propagated by its phraseology and the ambience infused by performances. When the researcher embarked on the preliminary study of the available literature, she could appreciate the scale of the existing literary works on the same subject and considered it essential to hone the crux of the work on a particular aspect of poetry that, hitherto, had not been adequately explored. The researcher's primary motivation for selecting this topic stems from her fundamental and deep curiosity to study the evolution of African languages and culture as witnessed in the past few years. The study has also been motivated by the apparent lack of significant studies conducted on performance poetry in general and on particular themes or subject matter that this research seeks to explore. Undoubtedly, research on isiZulu performance poetry is scanty. The desire to contribute to the existing knowledge on African Languages and their advancement has been a source of motivation and inspiration for isiZulu poetry in particular. The study has also been motivated

by so many questions that seek to ascertain whether performance still serves its initial purpose in poetry. Furthermore, the study has been motivated by the need to unpack the alleged lack of local expertise in poetry, particularly regarding emerging performance poets through comparative analysis of existing poetic features and their dearth or prevalence in performance poetry.

The assumption of the study is that isiZulu poets have contributed immensely to the development of performance poetry and have used it extensively in numerous settings. However, their craft and performances have never been examined extensively and debriefed. Many researchers have focused on the types, structure, content, thematic distribution and other aspects of African poetry. Among these researchers are Kunene (1961), Ntuli (1987), Gule (1990), Mlondo (1994), Zulu (1994), Koopman (2005), Ngwenya (2015), Gcumisa (2009), Mtumane (2000) and Okon (2013). For instance, Mtumane (2000) discusses the use of repetition and imagery in his analysis of SM Burns-Ncamashe's poetry. Contemporary isiZulu performance poetry is apparently a new genre; hence the scanty research done on it. It then becomes imperative to conduct an in-depth study on this emerging genre and hopefully contribute immensely to the field of African languages and the Zulu culture. This is largely influenced by the belief that isiZulu speaking people tend to appreciate the significance of poetry and its contribution to the advancement of the isiZulu language in its entirety.

Many studies on poetry focus on the analysis of the poetry of the pioneer poets who made a remarkable contribution to the development of modern written poetry, particularly during colonial and apartheid eras. Notably, pioneer poets are remarkably fewer than contemporary poets who are a product of such development. Among these few, B. W Vilakazi's work has received much attention from most of the scholars, regarding his contribution to the development of this genre. Vilakazi was the first isiZulu poet to enter the literary scene when his first anthology entitled *Inkondlo kaZulu* was published in 1935. Scholars such as Koopman (1980), Ntuli (1984), Cope (1984), Kunene (1992), Ngwenya (1998), Zondi (2005), Sibisi (2001) and Zungu (2001) have unanimously applauded Vilakazi's contribution to the development of modern isiZulu poetry. For instance, Zungu (2001) explores the influence of some English Romantic poets on B.W. Vilakazi as well as evidence of other sources of inspiration in his poetry. She says that Vilakazi employs nature imagery in his poetry, which arguably inspires him to compose poetry. He uses dreams during sleep in communicating with his ancestors who give him ideals to write about. He sees dreams as aiding communication

between the living and their ancestors. He also believes that when he dies, he will eventually become an *idlozi*, capable of coming back to influence and inspire young people to write poetry. While Sibisi (2001) considers Vilakazi as the pioneer of modern isiZulu literature, Ntuli (1984) and Ngwenya (1998) argue that Vilakazi may not only be perceived as the pioneer of isiZulu modern poetry but also as a writer who is able to perform the difficult task involving the combining of two culturally and aesthetically different conceptions of poetry. Vilakazi's poetry has also succeeded in redefining the role of the poet by depicting him as an inspired interpreter of his people's collective experience and the chosen mouthpiece of the ancestors (Ntuli, 1984; Ngwenya, 1998).

The preliminary literature review has demonstrated that little research has been conducted on performance poetry as a contemporary art in local indigenous languages, including the various forms the poetry takes on and the various traditions that have informed the works of performance poets. This research therefore, intends to contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of literature, within the context of contemporary cultural dynamics and beliefs. This information is currently lacking in the studies conducted on performance poetry in African societies that have praise poetry as their treasured literary possession. Their main focus was on who performed praise poetry as well as why and where it should be performed. However, a few scholars have attempted to study performance poetry, though not necessarily in the African context. These scholars include Brown (1998), Da Laurea (2004), Barber (2007), Gräbner (2007), Gräbner (2008), Schmid (2000) and Conavergood (2002). Odendaal (2017), for example, explores the contribution of the InZync poetry sessions held in Stellenbosch to socio-cultural transformation in society. His study has shown how poetry has contributed to the socio-cultural transformation in the Stellenbosch InZync poetry sessions from 2011 to 2016. This literature is a clear indication of the little research that has been done on African performance poetry in general and contemporary isiZulu performance poetry in particular.

It is against the background of this glaring gap that the researcher opted to analyse contemporary isiZulu performance poetry in order to contribute meaningfully to the field of knowledge. This study is both helpful to the individuals who are keen on conducting research of this nature and for general knowledge acquisition, particularly in Literature and Linguistics. This demonstrates that the arts are a vital element of human life.

## **1.6 Research objectives and key questions**

The main objective of this study is to evaluate thematic distribution and the portrayal of the message in contemporary isiZulu performance poetry. The researcher seeks to analyse the poetic features employed in contemporary isiZulu performance poetry and also explore the impact of performance poetry on society. This undertaking is set to contribute greatly to the field of African languages in addition to creating more insights into the nature of poetry and its contribution to the preservation of indigenous languages and cultures. Hence, the key questions guiding this research are as follows:

- What is the nature of thematic contribution and the portrayal of message in contemporary performance poetry?
- How do poets use poetic features in contemporary isiZulu performance poetry?
- How has performance poetry impacted on society?

## **1.7 Review of literature**

Throughout the Twentieth Century, modern literature has undergone a drastic transformation, but these new trends do not seem to have been observed and scrutinised in the field of poetic literature in Africa, particularly with regard to isiZulu contemporary poetry. The available literature shows that little research has been done on isiZulu performance poetry. Precisely, scholars who have attempted to analyse isiZulu poetry have focused their attention on the nature of isiZulu written poetic texts, particularly its structure and content. Scholars such as Kunene (1961), Ntuli, (1984), Mlondo (1994), Zulu (1994), Ngwenya (1998), Zondi (2005), Koopman (2005), Ngwenya (2015) and Gcumisa (2009) admit that although most of isiZulu poets of the period between 1935 and 1975 wrote poetry which had its own shortcomings, they nevertheless significantly contributed to poetry in general and isiZulu poetry in particular. For example, Mlondo (1994) analyses D.B.Z.Ntuli's poetic contributions and examines a diversity of thematic concerns explored by Ntuli in his poetry. The main purpose of the assessment and evaluation of his poetry is to determine more closely the degree to which Ntuli succeeds in delivering meaning to his audience. This study resonates with Gräbner's (2007) investigation of similar poetry performances. The difference between this study and Gräbner's study is that it is only confined to performance poetry and its public function. Furthermore, the study focuses on the work of a diverse group of poets from Europe, Latin America and the U.S. who

take the word off the page in more than one sense of the word. She observes that poets do not replace the page with the stage. They perform the poetry to stage the words verbally in order to investigate the effect this has in a social context.

## **1.8 Research methods and approach to the study**

There are so many research methods at the researcher's disposal in conducting a study and the selection of the most suitable methods is informed by the nature of the study. The researcher employed a qualitative research paradigm in order to satisfy the objectives of the dissertation. The main characteristic of a qualitative research design is that it is appropriate for small samples and its outcomes are immeasurable and unquantifiable. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is a means by which researchers explore and therefore understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The interpretive paradigm was also used in this study. The researcher selected the sample by using purposive sampling methods. Precisely, the researcher identified a few poets who had a vested interest in performance poetry. The purposive sampling technique was considered the most appropriate for this study as it aims at identifying key informants, who are the poets bearing true testimony to the role poetry plays in society.

This study employed two theoretical frameworks that complemented each other. Firstly, Bourne (2001) identifies Tolstoy's Expressive Theory of arts as useful in providing the background and benchmarks to the understanding of the main aim of poetry in general and the recitation of performance poetry in particular. According to this theory, art portrays unique individual feelings and emotions through the artist, and good art successfully communicates the feelings and emotions, which the artist intends to express (Bourne, 2001).

Every research that a researcher intends to undertake must be informed by a suitable theoretical framework. Theories differ depending on the nature and the field of a particular study being undertaken. This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework that informs this study. The discussion in this chapter concentrates more on the Expressive and the Ethno-poetic theories. It commences with the broad definitions of the theories by different scholars and thereafter, the above-mentioned theories are discussed in greater detail under the sub-headings. This study employed two theoretical frameworks that complement each other. Firstly, Bourne (2001) identifies Tolstoy's Expressive Theory of Arts which was used as the basic theory in providing

benchmarks to the understanding of the main aim of poetry and the reciting of performance poetry. This theory stipulates that art is a means of portraying unique individual feelings and the emotions of the artist. It further asserts that good art is that which successfully communicates the feelings and emotions, which the artist intends to express (Bourne, 2001). The Expressive Theory is invaluable to this research as it assists in the interpretation of contemporary isiZulu performance poetry and its function. Complementing the Expressive Theory is the Ethnopoetics Theory, which is also discussed as a key component of the theoretical framework to this study. The Ethnopoetics Theory aids in the literary interpretation of performance poetry and the methodology of the transcription and analysis of the collected data, especially on the stylistic devices and the techniques employed by poets in the composition of their poems.

### **1.9 Conceptual framework and the location of the study**

A conceptual framework is a structure the researcher believes can clearly explain the natural progression of the phenomenon being studied (Camp, 2001). This framework is arranged in a logical structure that provides a picture or visual display of the manner in which ideas in a study relate to one another (Grant and Osanloo, 2014). Interestingly, the conceptual framework shows the series of actions the researcher intends to carry out in a research study (Dixon, Gulliver and Gibbon, 2001).

This study was conducted in South Africa, but to be more precise, most of the data was collected around Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. The researcher randomly selected the research participants from KwaZulu-Natal for them to participate in interviews basically because she resides in the same province. Therefore, it was quite easy to communicate and engage with the poets concerned. Durban was chosen as main location of the study because performance poetry is predominantly an urban phenomenon and this urban context gives this poetic genre the meaningfulness attached to it. The city affords the multicultural environment from which much of the performance poetry has emerged and the participants are coming from both the township and the rural backgrounds. In many cases, the city provides a suitable platform for the performance of this variety of poetry.

According to Middleton (2005b: 30) most poetry readings are ragged affairs taking place in venues temporarily liberated from other activities – pubs, bars, lecture rooms, art galleries,



halls, and theatres where the readers stumble over stage sets, talk above the noise of drinkers returning from the bar, or try to figure out how best to use a PA system installed for other purposes. Listening to poetry requires effort, and the audience's attentiveness is vulnerable to distractions of every kind (beer, traffic, hard chairs, comings and goings, even the distracting appearance of the poet). The space is precariously and only partially transformed from its mundane use as gallery, pub, or lecture hall, whose signs remain prominently in evidence throughout the scene of textual performance, and this transformation of the backdrop tells the participants that the everyday world, despite the way it is crowded with other activities and purposes, can still provide a space for poetry. Poetry is only ascendant for a moment during which it is still in competition with many reminders of the everyday world waiting to rush back into its borrowed space and expel it.

It is important to note that not all the poetry analysed in this study was performed by participants from Durban. Those poets who were recorded from UKhozi FM originated from various places in South Africa, such as Johannesburg, Pietermaritzburg, Mandeni and many other areas. The reason those poets were also included in the study was that this study mainly aims at analysing contemporary isiZulu performance poetry at a national scale, encompassing the whole of South Africa and not confining the study to Durban. Durban naturally became the centre of attention as the researcher currently resides there, thus making it easy to collect the data during performances around the city.

### **1.10 Analysis of data**

The data collection process generates new information or data about the world although that data require further processing. Marshall and Rossman (1999) describe data analysis as the process of organising, structuring and giving meaning to the mass of collected data. The process is considered messy, ambiguous and time-consuming, although it also features as a creative and fascinating process. Data processing involves two major operations, namely: data reduction; an operation that summarises and analyses quantitative and qualitative data. When engaging the qualitative data analysis, the researcher does not only wish to highlight the recurring features in the data, but also to indicate the different steps, procedures and processes that are at the researcher's disposal. In this regard, the first step in analysing qualitative data, according to Best and Khan (2006), involves organising the data. In this study, data were analysed qualitatively and arranged in respect of the developed themes. As Miles and

Huberman (1984) point out, qualitative data are presented in the form of words and not in the form of statistics. In this study, the researcher does not delve into the written or traditional poetry, even though some of the analytical methods can be applicable to the analysis of written or traditional poetry. However, poetry for performance and the written or traditional poetry are distinct manifestations of poetry.

### **1.11 Structure of the thesis**

This thesis comprises nine chapters. **Chapter One** is an introductory chapter to this study and it provides the background to the study and an overview of an understanding of isiZulu performance poetry. This section describes what the study involves.

**Chapter Two** details the literature review on poetry in general and isiZulu performance poetry in particular. In this chapter, the researcher reviews previously conducted research studies on oral traditions as reflected particularly in conventional poetry and performance poetry. It also discusses the fundamental theories that underpin this research. This includes Bourne (2001) Tolstoy's Expressive Theory of Art the researcher used as the basic theory set to provide benchmarks to the understanding of the main aim of poetry and the rationale for reciting performance poetry. In addition, the Ethnopoetics Theory, which takes interest in the aesthetic components and poetic structuring of oral poems, is also discussed. The inclusion of the theoretical framework in the literature review is intended to foster a better understanding of the relationship between the issues discussed in this chapter and the theoretical framework that anchors and underpins the background against which this study is constructed.

**Chapter Three** focuses on the research methodology and the research methods adopted when conducting this study. The chapter details the main research paradigm. This chapter further discusses the background to the study area and elaborates on the research design, methodology and methods as well as the approaches the researcher applied in the collection and analysis of data. It also discusses the sampling procedures and the processes the researcher followed during the collection and analysis of data.

The findings of this study are presented in four, separate but interconnected chapters.

**Chapter Four** presents an evaluation of thematic distribution in performance poetry. This evaluation involves a qualitative analysis of isiZulu performance poetry.

**Chapter Five** is the presentation and analysis of the data, which are then analysed and presented under identified themes. The poetic techniques and stylistic devices in isiZulu performance poetry are discussed in this chapter.

**Chapter Six** discusses issues around Socio-Linguistic Dynamics in Performance Poetry.

**Chapter Seven** presents and discusses the various elements of isiZulu performances.

**Chapter Eight** is the concluding chapter and it presents a summary of the research findings, the contribution of the study, conclusions of all the previous chapters and the recommendations as well as an evaluation of the research questions, objectives and hypotheses.

There are five appendices at the end of the thesis. Appendix One contains the consent form that the researcher used to invite participants to partake in this study. Appendix Two is a consent form the participants signed confirming their agreement to the terms and conditions that guide their participation in this study. Appendix Three is a piece of information indicating ethical clearance and when it was obtained. Appendix Four is a list of the poems studied. Lastly, Appendix Five is the biography of the poets who were interviewed for this study.

## **1.12 Conclusion**

This chapter briefly outlines the aim of this study and sets up the basic guidelines to be followed in conducting this study. The conceptual framework and the highlights of the study have been clearly indicated together with the research objectives, research questions, area of interest, research methods, theoretical framework, the significance of the study and motivation for undertaking the study. The research methodology is discussed in greater detail in the subsequent chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 Introduction

The chapter outlines and analyses the contribution of earlier studies on poetry in general and performance poetry in particular. Scholarly works conducted beyond the South African borders have also been reviewed with a view of broadening the researcher's insight into the research topic. This chapter looks at various works which are relevant to contemporary poetry as they relate to the current study. It is imperative for a researcher to be familiar with the literature related to the topic before undertaking the whole study. Leedy and Ormrod (2014) indicate that literature review helps the researcher to ascertain whether antecedent researchers have already addressed the research problem the researcher seeks to explore or at least some of its sub-problems.

In most instances, researchers begin their review of literature in the early stages of the research study and they draw on existing theories and the research studies conducted prior to the current one to help them develop insights into their research problem and the accompanying hypotheses and questions. The following literature review is not arranged in any particular order of significance. Rather, it serves as an illustration that the present study contributes to a wider field of scholarly research whose analysis has been dedicated to poetry in general and contemporary performance poetry in particular.

#### 2.2 Early research studies on oral tradition

Canonici's (1996) discussion on orality traces oral literature back to Latin origins: *os*, *oris*, and *littera*- and examines each term individually. According to this scholar, *os* and *oris* mean oral and signify the mouth which takes into account facial expressions and the attitude of the whole person. *Littera*, on the other hand, symbolises anything written or anything that makes use of the letters of the alphabet to symbolise the spoken word. Oral communication is, therefore, first and foremost, realised by means of the vocalization of words, and secondly, through one's presence, gestures and body posture (Zondi, 2008).

The existence of oral tradition is based on both waves of sound and verbal cues; it exists all around us and we are involved in its creation every day in one form or another. Several scholars

have attempted to define oral tradition. Whitaker and Sienaert (1985) argue that oral tradition may be conceived as consisting of words or texts and it may also be conceived as the ideas conveyed by the word, the content, the thought conveyed by a sentence or paragraph, an incantation, a maxim, a joke, an entire story or the recounting of a historical event. Whitaker and Sienaert (1985) further say that oral tradition may also have an even more casual and less formal shape than a literary or historical genre, such as instructions on how to make a plough or furniture or bake a pie. Such lore also forms an important part of oral tradition. It encompasses the lives of individuals and the life of communities and societies. According to Kgobe (1989), oral traditional literature tends to make songs and poems salvaged from the past serve the goals of the present for the sake of shaping the future. It is only when tradition begins to die that it starts to lose contact with the present and it becomes a preserver of its own past rather than a continuator.

Adedeji (1971:2) defines oral tradition as a “complex corpus of verbal or spoken art created as a means of recalling the past.” He adds that oral tradition is based on the people’s ideas, beliefs, symbols, assumptions, attitudes and sentiments. The terms “oral literature” and “oral tradition” refer to almost the same body of material. The difference lies in the terminologies that are employed at various instances to designate the same corpus of material and the scope to which each terminology refers (Sanka, Eyison and Darteh, 2014).

Oral literature is always linked to performance art itself. The significance of performance art and the essential presence of the performers without whom the oral literature can exist is a fundamental characteristic which, in the past, has often been overlooked in the study of oral literature. This same characteristic is an essential aspect that shapes all works of theatre. There is a strong parallelism between oral literature, theatre, dance and music, which all depend on repeated performances for their continued existence. In this sense, written plays differ from the rest of the body of written literature (Schipper, 1986). Schipper (1986) further states that oral literature always contains elements of drama and that storytelling performance is a total occurrence, a total art form in several ways. The narrator is often a poet, a singer, a musician and an actor. In addition to being a poet, the artist re-creates traditional ‘texts’ in their own improvised way. Artists are able to do so because of their creative knowledge, mastery and command of the traditional literature. An artist is a singer because he or she sings the complete text or parts of it, and a musician when he or she accompanies himself as his own instrument (Chipper, 1986).

The oral word is a powerful political tool in contemporary Africa; hence, the continent's oral tradition has increasingly become a useful tool for the validation of socio-cultural and aesthetic practices. Oral tradition is a vast field of knowledge through which cultural information and messages are transmitted verbally from generation to the other. It is a complex corpus of verbal arts recreated as a means of recalling the past. Sometimes oral tradition is used interchangeably with folklore or cultural elements such as language and belief systems that are shared by a group and this is what gives a community its cultural and national identity. In contemporary usage, oral tradition or folklore is synonymous with popular and group-oriented expressions of a people's culture. Oral tradition is governed by certain characteristic features such as the situation or the context of production, the audience, the language and the structure or form of the art. One major feature of oral tradition, which relates to the nature of performance, is its involvement of the community in the whole creative process as well as in the critique of the collective art. Every performance is for and about the audience.

According to Bidu (2013), oral poetry results from mental processes that seek to serve immediate poetl, social or cultural purposes, which enforce its creation. However, oral creativity has been marginalised and denied attention. Indeed, ways of dealing with and identifying it remain vague. An examination of creativity in oral literature in relation to its context, purpose and production generates new ideas and insights into oral poetry. Unfortunately, this approach poses difficulties for researchers in their exploration of its creation, production and dissemination. Natural settings help in disclosing poets' inner emotions that enforce oral creativities but, unfortunately, they are not readily available to bring about a better understanding. In his article, Bidu (2013) analyses creativity in oral poetry within its natural contexts, performances, and their texts in order to establish the unity of purpose, manner and content with the context of the belief poets create following traditions in reaction to the immediate realities.

Agyekum (2000) discusses the role and performance of oral literature in the media and the ultimate effect it has on the Akan community and the entire Ghanaian society. He considers the potential promotion, development and the preservation of the Akan language and culture. He analyses the relationship between oral literature and advertisements and also between oral literature and the media as well as the trends and deviations. Agyekum (2000) proffers suggestions for the prospects and development of Akan oral literature and language through the media. The study concentrated also on the role of oral literature and the media in the Akan

philosophy, environmental knowledge, the etymologies of certain words in Akan and the promotion and preservation of Akan traditions and cultural values.

The study found out that some elements of oral literature in the media draw Akan oral literature closer to the Western type of opera and movies. Suggestions for the development of Akan oral literature through the media were put forward for consideration. The paper argued that in the absence of moonlight games and oral literature sessions in the Ghanaian communities, the media provide the richest source of and channel for the dissemination and preservation of oral literature among the Akan people of Ghana. By implication, the continuation of the performance of most of the oral literature genres in the media lead to all the accrual of all the benefits of oral literature outlined in the paper.

Oral literature often deals with some historical events. It portrays the deeds and the excellence of the earlier generations of the society that the contemporary generation ought to emulate so as to maintain the dignity of the group. Such aspects of oral history tend to promote the social well-being of a group over that of all other societies. These historical notions inculcate nationalistic and patriotic ideologies in the psyche of the new generation. Such ideas are embodied in the oral literature practised on a daily basis in the form of proverbs, songs, praise poetry, narratives, riddles and so on (Okpehwo, 1992). On the other hand, Selepe (1997) cited in Gumede (2009) stresses the view that literature should be studied or taught within the context of the social processes that shaped it. Selepe (1997) further argues that should the societal features such as the economy, political establishment, religion and so forth not be taken into account, problems regarding the teaching of African literature in a democratic Africa will persist.

### **2.3 Early research studies on oral poetry**

Oral poetry is far from being an odd or aberrant phenomenon in human culture, neither is it a fossilised survival from the distant past, destined to wither away with the pervasiveness of the modernisation drive (Finnegan, 1977). The term ‘oral poetry,’ according to Finnegan (1977), sounds fairly simple and clear-cut. Equally, this is the same impression one gets upon hearing or seeing some statements about it. Oral poetry, in the strict sense of the term, essentially circulates through oral rather than written means. In contrast to written poetry, the distribution, composition or performance of oral poetry is through the word of mouth and not the written or

printed word (Kgobe, 1994). Kgobe further states that oral poetry is defined not merely in terms of its form but also its technique of composition, manner of transmission and performance. Thus, oral poetry is not confined to a mere poem that tells a story, but it is also a poem that, regardless of its manner of composition, has undergone transformation in the process. Since oral poetry has been well-known as the antipodal of written poetry, it is logical that the word “oral” has often been substituted with the word “unwritten”; but it is obscure as to where exactly stands the boundary line between the two terms (Tesi di Laurea, 2004). According to Piskac (2007), the term oral poetry is the more concrete in this context since it describes an event that has a specific social value. The narrator may concoct a part of the content, but then the listener may find it harder to pick the thread of truth from such fiction. On the contrary, a literary work based largely on the aesthetic function basically alters its relationship with reality. According to Coullie (1999), an oral text derives its shape and substance from the interaction between the performer and his or her audience, whereas the printed text is both privately composed and privately consumed. It is reliant on the isolation of both the writer and the reader (Coullie, 1999).

It is pertinent to bear in mind the fact that one of the fundamental purposes of poetry is to communicate thoughts and emotions. Thus, oral poetry serves as an effective medium of communication between indigenous Africans and their ancestors and between them and their societies through cultural practices embedded in oral poetry. The composition and performance of oral poetry are based on the daily realities of the African culture and this depends on the cultural area in which the oral poetry operates (Obaje and Yakubu, 2012). Oral poems are full of emotions, an unmistakable epic tone, piety and historical accounts. Oral poetry employs witty words that carry home the weight of the elegy being performed.

African oral poetry is handed down by verbal means from one generation to another. This type of poetry is also called African traditional poetry and its main characteristic is collective participation. It may also be described as a collective experience brought to the fore by an individual in a group, and the rest of the group therefore shares it. The poetry is a common heritage shared by all and handed down from one generation to another. Traditionally, African oral poetry was not exclusive to a few people or a particular group, but a product shared by the entire community.



When one looks at contemporary poetry; performance poetry in particular as the preoccupation of this study, one observes that it does not necessarily cater for the whole community but it is exclusive to a particular group and it has become more of a commercial, individual enterprise than a communal product. It is within the context of the culture, heritage and pride of a particular African society that such oral poetry is created and performed. In other words, oral poetry is not the property of a few bards, but the entire society. This scenario obtains since oral poetry is created and effectively manipulated to create the desired atmosphere through evoking the appropriate emotion as conditioned by the occasion, whether sad or happy. The communal approach influences the production and consumption of oral poetry in the African traditional society and this helps in the reaffirmation of the cultural heritage of a people, for the African society boasts rich traditions and treasures of meaningful oral poetry that consistently seeks the reaffirmation of the African cultural heritage and cultural rehabilitation.

Oral poetry is composed extemporaneously to suit whatever occasion that warrants its purpose. Travelling bards sang songs and recited poetry with the accompaniment of musical instruments, and in the process told stories and anecdotes that satirised, corrected, educated and informed the society at large on a particular phenomenon (Obaje and Yakubu, 2012). Thus, the unequivocal essence of the creation and performance of oral poetry is rooted in the need to express thoughts. Some areas of culture in Africa no longer have the central influence they used to have over the people, and this has given room for the development of a communication gap between them and their ancestors. The presence of Western institutions makes cultural values less effective. Precisely, African cultural patterns have been changing, often giving way to new ones as the society becomes more complex and cosmopolitan as a result of Africa's contact with the outside world.

However, the fact remains that despite these tremendous cultural changes, kingship remains the subject and embodiment of traditional poetry in African communities. Obaje and Yakubu (2012) have examined oral traditional poetry and found out that it is a channel of communication between the audience and the minstrels in the various regions of Africa and they also established the significance of oral poetry in Africa as a medium of communication between the living and the dead, between Man and his ancestors, across various age groups and occupations, and the entirety of the African society. Their study has also examined the various modes of African oral poetry and how they perfectly communicate to their respective

designations. The study also revealed that although oral poetry may seem moribund, it is still vibrant and useful as a vehicle of protest and social consciousness in modern African writings.

Tsui (2008) conducted a study on Sesotho oral poetry and the aim of his study was to investigate in order to explain the characteristics of Sesotho oral poetry as composed and performed at the onset of the 21st Century; a need that was both necessitated and at the same time made possible to fulfil by the advent of the modern video and other communication technologies. Oral poetry in Sesotho is a broad concept that captures a collection of oral genres, the investigation of which would have been too broad for the purpose of this study. A selection of issues to be investigated was therefore inevitable. Basing on the material at the researcher's disposal, it became worthwhile to narrow the investigation to the Dithoko 'praise poetry', the Difela 'mine workers' chants' and the Diboko 'family odes' with the view of their performances shortly before and at the turn of the 20th Century. In addition, in his analysis of the indigenous oral poetry in Nigeria as a tool for national unity, Eyoh (2011) raises issues regarding authorship, performance and language in relation to oral literature. The study found out that each ethnic group in Nigeria has a rich heritage of oral poetry comprising such oral paraphernalia as musical instruments, dance songs, names and naming systems, greetings and oratory, folk songs, work and occupational songs, praise songs, proverbs, symbols and symbolism, divination poetry as well as myths. Interestingly, these forms enjoy striking similarities in terms of function, subject matter, shape, origin, worldview, the values they emphasise, the vices they condemn, the philosophies they propagate and the manner in which they are performed. These similarities are strongly suggestive of a common origin of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria and hence they need to be apprehended and appropriated for national unity, integration and development.

Okoh (2008) also conducted almost a similar study and asserted that in Nigeria, oral literature deals with certain serious issues about life, man and his relationships with his environment and with other human beings, all of which are pertinent issues to the society grapples with today. Oral literature, as Okoh (2011) concludes, plays an enormous role in national development. Complementing what other scholars who studied oral poetry noted, Eyoh (2011) explored and illuminated indigenous oral poetry in Nigeria as a tool that fosters national unity. Eyoh (2011) believes that since oral literature, like language, is dynamic, artists of oral texts may be forgotten in time, but poets or artists who currently produce their texts, like musicians, are entitled to the production of their texts. The second issue relates to the argument raised by some

critics against the existence of oral texts outside the context of performance. In this vein, oral literature owes its existence to performance; and outside this context, the oral text ceases to exist. This raises a big question on how oral poetry differs from performance poetry as they are both verbal.

However, it is imperative to note that poetry is as old an African feature as the human race itself. From the earliest studies by Wali (1963), Schapera (1965), Cope (1968) and Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1981) to the more recent ones by Opland (1998), Okon (2008) Eyoh (2011), Olowookere (2012) and Fiyinfoluwa (2013), it is apparent that poetry is a well-established literary genre, manifesting itself both in the oral and written forms in the indigenous languages of Southern Africa. With specific reference to oral poetry, it is arguably true that oral poetry expresses the nature of a people's identity and its appeal to people is far reaching. It touches people so emotionally that they feel either the pleasure or the pain, and it stirs the listener or reader's mind so deeply that they feel obliged to reflect on some fundamental concepts of life (Sone, 2000).

Andrzejewski (1985: 31) pointed out that "there is mounting evidence that the presence of literature is a universal characteristic of human society...literature is an art which uses language as its medium irrespective of whether it is oral or written." A clear testimony to this observation is the fact that in so many oral societies in Africa, poetry inherently embodies the power of poets as political power brokers, and this is an ordinary fact of life. While poetry may have been regarded as the most verbally organised genre and therefore, the most socially elevated medium of communication in oral societies, there also existed the omnipresence as well as the importance of the method of the narrative, storytelling and proverbs that enjoyed their niche in the literary space as powerful components in the expression of pertinent ideas and command transfer formulations and implementations in these societies. Ong (1985: 140) argues that "although it is found in all cultures, the narrative is certainly more widely functional in primary oral cultures than in others...most, if not all oral cultures, generate quite substantial narratives or a series of narratives." In storytelling, which is a widely used method of education in oral societies, famous storytellers are, in many cases, celebrated and treated as synonymous with poets. In many African societies, as Pellowski (1977: 44-45) puts it:

There is still a high priority assigned to family storytelling... children of the Ewe people of Ghana are simply not considered educated unless they have heard many times the gliwo, animal stories that intended to teach basic lessons in obedience, kindness, courage, honesty and other virtues through indirect example... Some groups in Africa have special names to describe the storytelling events within the family circle. For the Edo of Benin, Nigeria, such a gathering is called an ibota. It includes the children, youth, wives, and the head of the household in one compound. It usually takes place in the largest room, and it can celebrate anything from the successful sale of a crop to the visit of a relative, or just being in a good mood.

To some people, storytelling comes as a natural endowment, but in most cases, it is an art method that is consciously acquired or learned. This is essentially so, for in storytelling, especially in oral societies where it is a prominent vehicle of educational upbringing, the relationship between the speaker and the listener ought to be permanent, selectively reinforced and continually monitored. In fact, what Habermas (1998) called ‘universal pragmatics’ in communication, that is, a socially inclusive understanding between the speaker and the listener is “technically” essential for the achievement of the desired outcome in a two-way traffic of information and ideas. The methods, as well as successes in storytelling are, therefore, more complicated and demanding than a simple narration of the myths and actualities of past and present life systems. What is important in the whole art of storytelling is the use of, not only verbal communication, but all the other effective forms of speech such as pitch, tone, specialised occasional expressions, amusing notes, for-the-moment gestures and all the repertoire of body language that fixes or at least retains a substantial degree of the listener’s attention. Ngeh and Nganyu (2014) demonstrate the manner in which Bongasu TanlaKishani in Konglanjo (1988) and Nol Alembong in *The Passing Wind* (1991) explore the oral aesthetics in their poetry to effectively espouse the political, economic, social, cultural and global concerns. These poets employ elements of oral traditions as poetic ornaments that help emphasise their commitments in their poetic works.

Applying the Cultural Materialist Theory to the analysis of their poetry, they have concluded that folklore and poetry are primarily committed to freedom; and hence, they only thrive in a democratic space that allows freedom of literary and poetic expression. In a neo-colonial dispensation like Cameroon, the primary responsibility of poetry is to enlist in the service of freedom and aspire to rise to profundity within the context of this creative process. Consequently, the two poets craft a dual approach to life: that is, the imperativeness of looking inward towards the ancestral destiny and the imperativeness of looking outward towards the

wider spectrum of humanity. The purpose of their poetry was also to demonstrate the reality that African oral traditions are still so relevant that they can be invaluable in the entire interpretation of contemporary issues like politics, economics and culture within the African context.

Therefore, the study is bent on dispelling the parochial and myopic statements expressed by some European anthropologists who made the fallacious argument that there was nothing of poetic worth to come out of African literature. Mazrui (1986) in *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* has recommended a dual approach to dealing with life in the Africa milieu. That is, in precise terms, while maintaining the African cultural roots, the African should also keep on grappling with the technological and global concerns that are bent on eroding the African identity.

## **2.4 Early research studies on written poetry**

Literate societies use written records to store knowledge, which is then easily retrieved and transmitted. The writing of letters facilitates communication between people at a distance, in addition to exposing ideas in a book which can be read by everybody (Canonci, 1996). The inspiration to write comes either from poet's experience or a problem that besets the community, or from any other source. A writer works in isolation, un-conditioned by the audience and writes when there is a need or the inspiration to do so. Writing fixes the author's frame of mind, their interpretation of events, their vision and feelings forever and once something has been written, it remains fixed, or static. A writer takes great care in selecting the appropriate diction, which involves the changing of expression and phrases to make the intended message as clear as the writer wishes it to be (Canonci, 1996).

In Africa, poetry was largely oral and almost invariably synonymous with songs, chants and declamations. Some of the earliest scholars such as Jordan (1971) and Hegel (1975) simply dismissed this poetry as mere songs and chants. They considered it not qualifying to be classified as poetry, insisting that there was nothing of authentic poetic merit in African oral literature. This raises questions around whether songs and chants cannot be classified as poetry. Is there a significant difference between a song and a poem? In dismissing the threshold of African poetic works, these scholars argued that poetry is a mark of an advanced culture and civilisation, and art is a product of advanced skills and training. They further argued that poetry

is aesthetic and serious and only achievable through highly developed languages – all of which qualities African languages were believed to lack. Groenewald (2003) argues that in a traditional society, a mother may compose a poem for her child to pacify her or him, but, more importantly, she may employ it to express her marital situation in which she uses names in the poem as one of the few ways of rebuking a husband and likewise, a husband may censure a wife through a child's name.

According to Tesi di Laurea (2004:7):

When one thinks about poetry, the immediate image that comes to his/her mind is a written text in rhymes; no one thinks about a person performing in front of a big crowd. However, if we refer to the etymological meaning of the word itself, we will realize that it comes from the Greek noun *poies* whose verb means “to make”, therefore “to create poetry” not necessarily to write it down on paper. So why do people persist in thinking that ‘proper’ poetry has to be written?

Arguably, the act of selecting and putting together words and phrases into lines and stanzas to form a poem is not an easy task, but a demanding and mammoth one. According to Reeves (1970), poetry is a spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions. This definition fits well within the tradition of oral poetry. Where a bard, filled with internal, suppressed emotions and excitement as the praised one, the chief warrior approaches the gathering, just stands up to externalise his powerful emotions. His emotions pour out in the form of words of praise, like an overflowing or flooded river.

Poetry is meant for loud, verbal presentation (Painter, 1970; Denaman, 1988; Heard, 1989; Graves, 1992). Thus, it becomes a powerful tool for rudimentary literacy. Cullinan, Scala, and Schroder (1995) wrote that poetry is especially appropriate for language learning because it contains language employed in its most beautiful forms. The playfulness or poignancy of words and the ability of language to hold the audience almost captive in its intensity, beauty or genius, is particularly apparent in poetry. Its diction and carefully chosen language, compels the audience to pause and wonder. One of the poet's skills is reflected in helping us perceive the world in new ways (Rogers, 1985; Lockward, 1994; Cullinan et al, 1995; Siemens, 1996).

Poetry helps broaden up children's experiences and perception with new concepts as well as providing fresh outlooks on the ordinary things that surround them. The teacher's role is to help students appreciate the fundamental truth “that poetry, like all art, is grounded in the everydayness of experience” (Kazemek, 1989: 114). This everydayness characterises where

we live our lives in families, in neighbourhoods and within ourselves; is the very place where we need a voice to claim and name the events we experience no matter how awesome or ordinary they may appear. Poetry can be synonymous with that voice because it so often expresses our common human condition and experiences, and hence, it is a conduit between us and the poet, as well as us and others. Poetry often validates our feelings and helps us interpret events in our lives in a meaningful way.

According to World Book (2010:591), poetry “is a type of literature in which the sound and meaning of language are combined to create ideas and feelings.” This implies the inseparability of language and poetry. Traditionally, oral poetry has been transmitted from one generation to the next by verbal cues and symbols. Boys and girls were taught to recite oral poetry while sitting around the fire place and during initiation ceremonies to compose or recite songs or oral praise poetry for themselves. These praise songs promoted a fusion of the ideals of action, womanhood and manhood. This transmission, however, has been disoriented (Mojalefa, 2002:85). Most of the scholars whose works were reviewed under this topic were based on the analysis of the poetry composed by other poets. For instance, Ntuli (1984) discusses the influence of traditional poetry, prose narrative, English poetry and biblical philosophies in BW Vilakazi’s poetry. He further examines the different themes in Vilakazi’s poetry.

On the other hand, Manyaka (1995) discusses the influence of traditional and Western cultural values in MLThobega’s poetry. He focuses more on different themes such as death, love, role of ancestors, heroism as well as protest and oppression. As Moleleki (1988) discusses the influence of oral poetry on DM Maphalla’s poetry, he shows how different aspects such as the indigenous culture, religious values and conflict impose their influences on and play a significant role in espousing thematic concerns. Nkumane (1995) presents a deconstructive analysis of LBZ Buthelezi’s poetry. His study depicts the manner in which South African poets in general are influenced by their own culture, while at the same time borrowing Western styles in carving out their poetry. Ndlovu (2016) did a similar constructive study, but focusing particularly on AM Maphumulo’s poetry. The study argued that Maphumulo’s writings were influenced by both traditional and Western ethos and values. The traditional influences that characterise his poetic works are culture, nature, language, customs, values, norms, proverbs, idioms, traditional poetry and the traditional prose narrative. Precisely, the Western influences which shaped Maphumulo’s poetry are the Christian values.

Msimang (1998) also reviewed Maphumulo's poems. In his analysis, he categorises the poems according to their various themes. Lenake (1984) analyses and evaluates KE Ntsane's poetry and classifies it in terms of the subject matters and themes being explored. Makobane (2000) has undertaken an intensive research on Difela-tsa-Diparola-Thota, which is a form of poetry that emerged in the context of immigrant labour.

In his article, Mojalefa (2002) considered the way in which the Northern Sotho traditional oral initiation poetry is arranged in verse form. His study attempted to indicate that in general, Northern Sotho traditional poetry is not necessarily metrically defined merely by its performance as suggested by Opland (1960) and Rycroft (1983) regarding Nguni praise art, because solely the poet determines the structuring of the performance. Although Northern Sotho traditional poems are usually in verse-form, their arrangement is slightly different from the way in which the Western metre is usually organised. He explains this structural difference by investigating the verse-form which characterises a traditional Northern Sotho male initiation poem or song. Furthermore, he observes that meaning in initiation poems is complex; therefore, the analysis of such poetry ought to be executed with great meticulousness.

According to Mika'ilu (2013), the use of literature to advocate for societal transformation is not a new thing in African societies; but most of artists prefer using either prose or drama to poetry. It is therefore worth noting that the majority of the literary figures in South Africa are poets who used poetry as their mouthpiece and weapon to advocate for socio-political change in South Africa during the Apartheid era. His works depict the poet as an advocate of social and political change as evidenced by some selected poems produced during the Apartheid era in South Africa. Mika'ilu's (2013) works portray poems produced in the Apartheid situation in South Africa as the poets' contribution in the struggle for political transformation. As literary figures, poets are mirrors of the society as they take part in the affairs of the society through their works, and this brings out the perception of what society is and what it ought to be.

South African poets are representatives of their society and advocate for social and political freedom of their people. Thus, they choose poetry as an effective instrument for the attainment of socio-political freedom. What remains of the African social, cultural and political values could be attributed to the works of various poets across the continent and that without the poet and poetry, the African society, which is inclusive of South Africa, would arguably be a dreadful place to live in because of man's inhumanity perpetrated against humankind



(Mika'ilu, 2013). Chukwu (2005) examined poetry by exploring religious, geographical and gender issues in order to provide a lens through which to perceive post-colonial literature. He found out that one of the works of Jamaican and Acholonu portrays African and Afro-Caribbean women's strong sense of community, spiritual sensitivity; the holistic attitude of women's fight for liberation; the quest for healing; hope through the power of carefully crafted words and the present rituals and the ideology of African womanhood as embedded in African cultural traditions.

Gillispie (2005) focused specifically on the use of collaborative poetry as a method of deepening the interpersonal communication among adolescent girls who are resident in the treatment programme specialising on co-occurring disorder. He argues that collaborative writing techniques were effective in deepening the interpersonal communication among this population sample. However, Meeks (1980) points out that naturally, adolescents recognise and confront maladaptive behaviour in one another and they tend to benefit if support prevails and on condition that mutual concern exists.

Marry (1995) has stated that poetry affords students another avenue through which they may effectively express their feelings. She elaborates by indicating that using poetry within the context of the classroom does not necessarily have to be a lot of extra work for the teachers, but it can be very rewarding in a non-threatening way as students communicate their feelings and this presents itself as an excellent way for teachers as well to get access to what students think. It also accords students the ability to manipulate the language while spontaneously learning to speak and write. Poetry is another way of communicating feelings and experiences, a method which appears less threatening to some students. It provides an outlet for creative expression apart from affording the shy and the less confident the space to communicate with others by doing away with the immediate worry of correct punctuation and the conventions of prose structure. Marry (1995) found that by using poetry, one can get students to participate orally in class and at the same time stimulate their creative powers and therefore persuade them to write more in their journals.

Mittal (2016) asserts that poetry is a useful literary genre which serves many purposes as and when required. The most important factor to consider when using poetry in second language teaching is to choose the correct and appropriate poems. Initially, a teacher has to introduce poems, which contain emotion, enthusiasm and are based on student-related themes. This

stimulates their interest and afterwards, they can write romantic poems and those that describe the beauty of nature. Poetry helps students do well in high stake tests because it gives their minds an exhilarating workout. Poetry is inspirational as it spurs students to read, imagine, think, discuss and write more than they usually do. In his paper, Semino (2000) focused mostly on the use of linguistic variation in poetry and demonstrates the usefulness of the analysis of stylistic features in investigating the nature and potential effects of such variation in a particular poem. He analyses in detail the poem titled “Poet for Our Times” by Carol Ann Duffy, which was first published in 1990. In his analysis of “Poet for Our Times,” Semino (2000) dwelt in detail on the way in which the language of the poem conveys the impression of (i) a particular speaking voice in a specific setting, (ii) a particular written but non-literary register, and, potentially, (iii) an ironic voice in the last two lines of the poem.

In his work, Mashinge (1996) examines the different strands of contemporary South African protest and resistance poetry. This is executed by analysing selected poems to highlight the relationship that exists between politics and aesthetics and to illustrate the reality that the two concepts are not mutually exclusive. A brief history of written African protest and resistance poetry is provided in an attempt to put this poetry within its historical context and to trace its influence and development. The poems are then examined with the aim of identifying and understanding their thematic issues and the socio-political contexts within which they emanate. These contexts are then portrayed as having important implications as far as the aesthetics of protest and resistance poetry is concerned. The study further highlights the fact that for this poetry to be fully appreciated, it is imperative to recognise particular circumstances around it. This recognition is essential since these circumstances are instrumental in shaping the poetry and the formation of the aesthetics of protest and resistance. A critical examination of whether this type of poetry has any socio-political relevance and literary significance to the contemporary South African society is inevitable.

An analysis of both protest and resistance poems in Mashinge’s (1996) study reveals the interdependence of the political message and the literary aesthetics. The two concepts are then integrated as poets forge ahead with their aim of raising society's socio-political awareness. Eventually, one realises that the aesthetics of protest and resistance poetry actually arise from the message the poets are conveying to the reader, thus, trying to separate the two undermines the essence of this poetry. Mashinge (1996) then concludes that within the socio-political and

literary development in South Africa, protest and resistance poetry still plays a prominent role in helping to shape the new democracy.

One also realises that for political changes to be of significant relevance to the majority of South Africans, changes ought to be accompanied by visible and effective socio-economic changes and that tends to have an enormous impact on the lives of ordinary people on the street. Poets need to maintain their role as the conscience of society by constantly portraying to the society and the rest of the world at large, through their art, the different aspects that are involved in the entire making of the South African community through a canon of poetry that continues to evince artistic dexterity. Ogunyemi's (2011) paper examines the various voices coming out of African poetry.

African poets expose their themes as echoes that salvage various inferences evident in the decaying political, economic and social landscape. The paper argues textually, exuding the cultural ethos and the contemporary post-independence disillusionment on the African psyche resulting from colonisation and colonial experiences. Using the meta-critical approach combined with realism, within the broader sociological approach, the research calls for a concerted effort that stimulates originality and the harnessing of the benefits of globalisation for the development of humanity in Africa. African poetry has expressed many concerns which make it unique to the understanding of African ethos and traditions.

Commenting on these multiple voices characteristic of African poetry, Soyinka (1999) asserts that these poems embrace most of the experiences of the African worldview, modern and historic, though naturally no claim is made here for an unattainable comprehensiveness of their themes or their mutual exclusiveness. The multiplicity of the voices in African poetry, according to Soyinka (1999), encapsulates the historical reality. While some poetry appears to scramble for self-assertion, others reflect a struggle for identity. Some, in the long run, examine the emasculation of man when faced with uncontrollable phenomena.

In a study of the position of women in Thomas Hardy's poetry, Fariza (2012) has been preoccupied with the analysis of major events that characterised the Victorian era as well as the general living conditions pitted against women. Furthermore, the study examines the life of women in a society governed and controlled by the hegemonic patriarchal system. Marriage and divorce have been examined during the Victorian era and the laws and acts that determined

the rights and duties of women. Fariza (2012) also critiqued the categories of women often identified as “fallen” and the institutions, such as the penitentiaries that were built to hold and rehabilitate such women.

The study found that Thomas Hardy’s career as a novelist and poet was influenced by the incidents, theories, ideas and concepts of his age. In his paper, Griffin (2011) examines the distinction that Hegel (1979) makes between poetry and prose in order to defend both the esteemed position he gives to poetry in his system and the distinction between poetry and prose against a particular objection by Paul de Man that collapses the distinction. In *Introduction to the Aesthetics*, Hegel (1979) makes it clear that his claims about art and poetry and their respective positions in his system can only be fully understood by deriving their particular characteristics from a purely concept of art.

In addition, the material, semantic and linguistic forms of poetry and philosophical prose, that is, the former’s use of figurative and musical language, can hardly explain their true difference. Their linguistic forms are essential to the way in which both convey their respective contents, but such forms do not sufficiently offer an objective distinction between the two. Poetry and prose can only be distinguished objectively by looking at the differences between their content. While the former represents a singular manifestation of an idea, the latter conveys a universal content that questions both itself and its conceptual framework.

In poetry, the poet implicitly thinks about thought, but it is only in philosophy that the subject comes to the recognition that the object of thought (and poetry, implicitly) has always been conceptual thought itself. For us, recognising Hegel’s distinction of poetry and philosophical prose needs an understanding of their respective roles for bringing our communal norms before our eyes and allowing ourselves to understand those norms and judge whether or not they are justifiable within our community.

When one embarks on a discussion of the nature of poetry, the first impediment is the inherent vagueness of the name and the number of the legitimate senses it appeals to. Linguistically, it is acceptable to speak of ‘prose and poetry’ in the sense of ‘prose and verse’. Nonetheless, it is wasteful as it squanders valuable words by stretching it to fit into a meaning, which can be accurately expressed by a wider term. Poetry is generally restricted to a verse, which can at least be called literature, though it may differ from prose only in terms of its metrical form, and

be superior to prose only in the superior comeliness of that form itself, and the superior terseness, which usually characterises it. Further, there is verse, which gives a positive and lively pleasure arising from the talent and accomplishment of its author (Housman, 1933).

According to Turner (2003), the Western Nigerians composed satirical songs to vent their political frustrations particularly regarding the federal elections of 1959. Furthermore, the Bashi singers of the Congo composed songs, which were sung at workplaces to express their grievances and dissatisfaction with their conditions. Anyokwu (2009) examines the interrelatedness of myth and history from an African perspective. Anyokwu analyses the poetry of one of Africa's most prolific and decorated contemporary poets, Niyi Osundare. Osundare is a third generation Nigerian poet whose work is influenced by Yoruba oral tradition and the Marxist ideology. Osundare's poetry articulates the so-called "return-to-roots" neo-traditionalist ethos in modern African writing. Osundare's attitude to myth, ritual and other African animist categories are complex and ambivalent in an intriguing way, and it gives rise to charges such as ideological irresolution and culture-epistemic bifurcation. As a champion of the poetry of social statement and revolutionary transformation, Osundare places history on a high pedestal in the overall message his art seeks to portray.

Sunday (2012) examined the issue of gender in modern African poetry in Nigeria. His study was motivated by the desire to find out how women from Nigeria's various regions have come together to form a unitary Nigerian women's poetic canon. The study found that in Nigeria, male poets have always manipulated this literary space thereby misrepresenting women and casting them into total obscurity, although some have always engaged the image of women in a positive way in their treatment of feminine and other socio-political issues.

Anyokwu (2001) analyses the different points where history and myth interact and sometimes diverge in Osundare's poetry, arguing that its conjectural significance lies in the growing world of African letters. Anyokwu found that Osundare's rejection of the Nigerian (that is African) poetic ancient regime has resulted in the emergence of the poetry of revolution and a revolution within poetry through the instrumental orchestration of poetry, as well as fashioning social poetry that is rooted in the principles of participation, performance and social answerability or relevance.

On the other hand, in his analysis of Osundare's poetry, Olufunwa (2001) examines the symbiotic relationships that obtain between humans and nature in the poetic works of the contemporary Nigerian poet, Niyi Osundare. The primary eco-issue Osundare raises is the deterioration of this relationship. In portraying the relationship between humans and nature, Osundare implies that there is no meaningful connection in the sense of a marriage of convenience between the elements that have little choice, but a bond so intricately interwoven into a symbiotic one in which both are so inextricably dependent upon each other that they ultimately become virtually indistinguishable. Thus, the disruption of such a symbiotic relationship is not merely a damaging or severing of close ties; but it is actually a ruination of the fundamental pillars upon which society is built, and its ramifications are all-embracing in their comprehensiveness. Osundare attributes this apparent environmental crisis primarily to the advent of colonial rule, which he fundamentally argues to have disrupted the hitherto harmonious relationship between the indigenous Africans and their nature. This disruption has redefined the manner in which the two related to each other by putting nature at the receiving end of a relentless wave of exploitation.

Another way in which imperialism has upset this relationship was its imposition of an alien educational and social outlook on the indigenes which ultimately alienated them from nature. Thus, what formerly existed as a friend and helper had now become a subject of disrespectfulness and ridicule, even while it was being exploited. In his poetry, Osundare views the relationship between humans and the environment from a multiple dimensional perspective. The relationship is conjured up as poetl, reflective of individual moods, hopes and desires; it is communal as far as it is demonstrative of a communal ethos, cultural attitudes and ways of life; it is political and simultaneously reflective of and resistant to attitudes and ideologies that drive the disruption of a harmonious relationship. It is patriotic and reflective of a centripetal national character that incorporates ethnic, religious, ideological and other divides, thus transcending them to offer what might be called a "natural nation" which the citizenry of a particular nation would not hesitate to call their own.

According to Dick (2015), poetry is generally characterised by deviation, but the question that has been bothering scholars is whether there is a difference in this deviation in Modern African or Nigerian poetry in English as opposed to the patterns of deviation evident in Euro-Modernist poetry. A critical study of the stylistic features of the poetry of Niyi Osundare reveals an exemplary effort to domesticate modern Nigerian poetry in English by adopting a pattern of

deviation that is so unique that it has created an "Alter-Native tradition" in its bid to achieve its overall goal. The deviation emanates from an artistic manipulation of the linguistic features by the poet to deviate from the norms and conventions of language, thereby creating unique aesthetics and artistic values in a canon of literary works, especially in poetry in order to bring about purposeful and meaningful communication. The emergence of Niyi Osundare along with a new poetic tradition is perhaps the height of the concept of deviation in Modern African or Nigerian Poetry from the loins of the Eurocentric poetry.

## **2.5 From traditional to contemporary poetry**

Many scholars studied modern or contemporary poetry using different approaches, despite the controversy that surrounds these two terms. Various scholars have described Modern African Poetry in different ways. Tsaaier (2005) alludes to the confusion and points out that the word 'modern' is problematic as it leads to the question of who and what determines what modern poetry is in Africa. However, Fiyinfoluwa (2013) attempts to disentangle this problematic issue by asserting that the word modern is synonymous with words like 'new' or 'recent' while in the opposite, it implies old hence the existence of Modern African Poetry validates the existence of the so-called old African poetry.

Fiyinfoluwa (2013) argues that the existence of modern poetry is reflective of a paradigm shift from oral poetic traditions, adding that owing to this paradigm shift, African poetry evolved from the oral to the written form, at the same time setting the boundaries between old or traditional African poetry and Modern African Poetry. The written form is arguably the modern one basing on the period it represents and its medium of presentation, which is original. Fiyinfoluwa (2013) further describes Modern African Poetry as a unique brand of world poetry defined by the social circumstances that characterise it, and these include the language and the philosophy, which inculcates the spirit of black consciousness. He adds that although Modern African poetry is conspicuously shaped by the tides of Western philosophy such as gender and Marxism, it retains its African identity because it conjures up the totality of the African experience within (in Africa) and without (in the Diaspora).

On the other hand, in his study Okunoye (2004) defines modern poetry in general within the context of European literary traditions, which are responsible for providing the paradigms, conventions and the critical principles that are either appropriated or neglected in the whole

process of defining the identity of the new literature. By implication, African literature undergoes transformations as it responds to the socio-political realities of the time. In this vein, Olowookere (2012) adds that the pioneer generation of African poets engaged in what he refers to as ‘apprentice literature’, which followed Western literary conventions. He argues that most of their poetic works lack African aesthetics and those that appear to possess this feature tended to romanticise European cultures. Practising ‘apprentice literature’ can be viewed as a departure from the ‘traditional’ literary norms to the ‘modern’ ones. This has made some analysts to assume that the advent of Modern African Poetry starts with the pioneer generation of African poets who imitated the European literary styles and forms. Apparently, language is central in the discussion of African poetry and in Modern African Poetry, most of the poets composed in European languages, a scenario seen by some critics as neo-colonialism. Alluding to the same observation, Okpewho (1992: 12) argues:

... African writers and scholars...saw it as their primary duty to dress African oral literature in a European language in such a way as to bring out the poetic quality, the charm, of the original. Unfortunately, some of them tried to be so ‘fashionable’ that in the end, their translations sounded just as un-African as the ones that Europeans did.

Various arguments have been presented by scholars such as Wali (1963) and Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1981) regarding the choice of language in the writing of African literature. In particular, Wali (1963: 14) warns that:

Until these writers and their Western midwives accept the fact that any true African literature must be written in an African language, they would be merely pursuing a dead end, which can only lead to sterility, non-creativity and frustration.

However, it has been argued that the collective experiences of slavery and colonialism brought about a shared experience and ideology between Africa and the outside world, particularly the West. These collective experiences have led to the modernisation of African poetry. However, the change in the nomenclature and taxonomy of African literature, which occurs as a result of the contact with the West, does not necessarily provide a comprehensive definition of Modern African poetry. It is beyond reasonable doubt that Western influence is evident in Modern African Poetry and oral culture is not exceptional. Therefore, the foundation of Modern African Poetry manifests in the culture and oral background of a people (Olowookere, 2013).



In addition, Olowookere (2013) asserts that it is poetry alone that successfully wins the consensus acceptance as being indigenous and peculiar to Africa. Following the coming of European cultures into Africa and the introduction of writing, the nomenclature of African poetry evolved into Modern African Poetry. This led to the assumption that Modern African Poetry emerged with the arrival of the Whiteman on the African scene and the writing culture. Also, the contributing impact of Africa's contact with Europe cannot be denied, but the fact that African poets have long left the imitating stage and moved to the stage of adept is undeniable.

According to Nnyigide and Engenti (2013), poetry is a literary genre that affords poets that rare opportunity to mirror the society through addressing the complexity of socio-economic, political and religious as well as security issues. Over the years, issues to do with the quest for African unity, identity and development have been paramount to African writers, poets and critics. This explains the rationale for the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963; which later metamorphosed into the African Union (AU). Obviously, some Igbo poets, just like other members of African society, equally expressed their profound interest in contemporary African issues through their poetic works.

Although several literary scholars have undertaken some researches on Igbo poetry, it has been observed that some of their works have glossed over the need to address some contemporary issues in Africa in an extensive way. It is against this backdrop that this study finds it necessary to examine some contemporary Igbo poems that address contemporary issues bordering on African unity, identity and development in general and those of Nigeria in particular, so as to determine the extent to which the poets have addressed these pertinent issues.

From the analysis of their poems, it is obvious that some Igbo poets are really aware of the prevalent issues in the contemporary African society. The poets of the selected poems analysed in their study address the issues related to African unity, identity and development by criticising and satirising some socio-political and economic ills such as insecurity, bribery and corruption; poor leadership, exploitation, oppression and discrimination; mismanagement of resources, lack of basic amenities and so on. Their study concluded that sadly, some African societies are still under the influence of neo-colonialism.

Nevertheless, the analysis exudes the fact that the poets do not only satirise the African leaders, but they also admonish them to live up to expectation. Besides, the poets use their poetic works to rekindle African consciousness, beliefs, identity, ethical issues and so forth among Africans. Apparently, their aim is to reinforce peace, unity, social harmony and development in Africa. However, collective efforts are critical in promoting national unity. This certainly helps to enhance the safety of all citizens. It is quite clear that the study has helped to dispel the misconception that Igbo poetry is purely confined to pleasure and entertainment. Niedringhaus (2011) studied three collections of Minnis's poetry with an aim of analysing the manner in which she employs other devices, hers being her duplicitous speaker, ideograms and ellipses, in order to supplement the poetic language. In a broader sense, Minnis's poetry could be considered an exciting indicator of the future of contemporary poetry. If she has proven that a sensual and live presence can be conveyed through an illustration of a two-headed deer, then one can only imagine what she or her contemporaries would do next with the style of the poem.

Minnis shows readers that poetry is not just words or rhythm or alliteration or any other presupposed characteristics of a poem, but instead, it is, in its simplest form, an artistic message. Further, the way this message is communicated is just as important, if not more important than the message itself. Minnis's work transforms the way we perceive poetry, and likewise, communication. She proves that sometimes poetry does not need words only to denote a feeling through language, as an ideogram can convey the same emotion in, perhaps, a better way. Through her integration of ellipses, ideograms and illustrations into poetry, Minnis shows readers what to feel instead of telling them through words (Niedringhaus, 2011).

In his article "Modern African Verse and the Politics of Authentication", Bamgbose (2014) argues that the authenticity of Modern African poetry is guaranteed by the intricate tie between the African verse and African life in its diverse forms and complexities. Bamgbose (2014) examines the "modern" nature of African poetry, its oral roots, its treatment of colonial and cultural *négritude*, language, radical consciousness and gender in the poetry of Okot p'Bitek, Taban Lo Liyong, Tati Loutard and Gahlia Gwangwa' Mkangelwa of Southern Africa (the space in critical discourse on modern African poetry possesses a complex nature in Black Africa and Africans).

Bamgbose (2014) discusses the nature of Black African poetry by examining a range of ideas that shape the authenticity of African verse. Bamgbose (2014) offers an overview of critical

issues in contemporary African verse including its "modern" nature, its oral roots, its treatment of colonial and cultural nationalist issues, and issues around *négritude*, the language question, radical Black consciousness, the gender issue, as well as its "international" nature. More often than not, critical discourse on Black African poetry takes on the exploration of West African poetry, which is understandable since West African writers have achieved a degree of prominence in terms of their presence on the African literary scene. Furthermore, the poems of Okot p'Bitek, Taban Lo Liyong and Frank Chipasula from East Africa; Tchikaya U Tam'si, Tati Loutard and Gahlia Gwangwa'a from Central Africa; and Dennis Brutus, Agostinho Neto and Luvuyo Mkangelwa from Southern Africa are all subjected to literary analysis. Kehinde (2010) argues that it is an indubitable fact that the post-colonial African poetry, to a great extent, reflects the realities obtaining on the African continent. Actually, all the works of art treat the relationship existing between the individual and his or her society. Consequently, the post-colonial African poetry is portrayed as a site for the interplay of context and text.

According to Igboanusi (2004), modern African literature, poetry in particular, continues to reflect the African tradition, which gives this literature a distinct identity and character. This shows that there is a continuation of the oral poetic traditions in Africa contrary to a legacy bestowed on Africa by the West as a result of the cultural contact and colonialism. The term "modern" is not in fact "a departure from the old", but rather a reshaping of the "old" poetic tradition into a "new" poetic tradition. Even the pioneer poets such as Donatus Nwoga claim that they "were continuing the tradition of our vernacular literature" (Bamgbose, 2014:122).

According to Ojaide (1999), the concept of the old or the new is relative in the context of African literary history. It is argued that the old and the new could be rooted in the same literary tradition. Literature is arguably part of a culture, which is a dynamic process. Though written in European languages such as English, French and Portuguese, Modern African Poetry can hardly be termed English, French or Portuguese for reasons that include the fact that it carries the weight of African sensibility, culture, world view and most importantly, it is a response to the poet's own peculiar realities. In discussing the "modern" nature of Black African poetry, one question that readily comes to mind is how modern this poetry is. Thus, in order to examine the measure of its modernity, one ought to consider literacy, orality and the modernist movement in that canon of poetry.

Bamgbose (2014) concludes that Modern Black African poetry articulates the complexities of African experiences, realities and worldview on the one hand, and the complexities and multiplicities that characterise the African identity on the other. This poetic canon encodes African realities and experiences in their diverse and complex forms. This gives credence to the assertion that the boundary between a poetic text and its context is often so thin or veiled that it becomes impossible to distance poetic texts from their enabling circumstances because Modern Black African poetry is created and understood within its historical and social context. Bamgbose adds that Modern Black African poets, in different times and spaces, have woven history, memory, and contemporary issues into the contemporary Black African verse through an exploration of the abundant resources of African folklore, thus establishing continuity between African oral or traditional and written or modern poetic traditions. This has given Modern Black African poetry its true African essence and authenticity. Although its emergence has been attributed to the Western poetic tradition, Modern Black African poetry has been able to re-authenticate itself by defining and describing its own worldview.

Since Modern African poetry is the poetry of commitment, it has an intrinsic utilitarian value. This canon of poetry emerged as an intellectual response to the denigration of Africa and Africans by the White colonisers. From then on, there has been consistency as African poetry continued to claim its space in the political realm of the African continent with a view to change the prevailing poor conditions of the masses who suffer at the hands of the negligence of the ruling elite. However, in the current globalised world driven by Information and Communication Technology, the focus has shifted to the mirroring of environmental degradation as a way of galvanizing political action towards preserving the ecosystem for the survival of Man. This paper examines the relationship between politics and Modern African poetry from West, East and Southern Africa, and the paper further posits that politics is the substance while poetry is its vehicle of expression (Okon, 2013).

Modern African poetry, like any other poetic canon all over the world, has been the vehicle of the expression of various emotions and themes bordering on love, the death of a loved one, hope and faith, to the praising of nature, amongst others. However, the political theme has tended to dominate this poetic canon. It may be argued that Modern African poetry has necessitated the expression of the problems, peculiarities and prospects of politics on the African continent in the Twentieth Century and beyond. In modern Africa, politics dates back to the period of colonial conquest and the partition of Africa by the Europeans in the late

Nineteenth Century, through the colonial phase, to the neo-colonial aberrations that manifest today as the independent African states. This, together with the cultural trauma it unleashed on the African psyche through religion and education, form the basic material for Modern African poetry, without prejudicing other germane themes.

## **2.6 Praise poetry**

The word *izibongo* is derived from an isiZulu verb *bonga* which means to thank or praise. Generally, praise poetry may be defined as a poetic composition in which the poet "praises" a person, entity or an object that has inspired them. The word "praise" is relative to situations as it carries either positive or negative connotations. As the bard may reveal the positive and admirable attributes of the subject of praise, thus praising him, the same bard may also condemn a subject by realising the embedded negative attributes (Mtumane, 2000). In Southern Africa, praise poems are preponderant as they may be found anywhere from the private bedrooms to the public political arena, from the family occasion to the trade union gathering, and on subjects from toddlers to the recently deceased elders (Groenewald, 2001).

Scholars such as Gunner (1979), Gunner and Gwala (1991), Masondo (1997) and Turner (1997) have done significant research on praise poetry. Turner's (1997) work engages with the dynamic and transformative nature of praising in the contemporary amaZulu society. Under people's praises, Turner (1997) delineates men's praises, women's praises and the praises contained in *Maskandi* music. The most profound and important point that Turner makes regarding amaZulu women's praises is that they are used as a legitimate emotional outlet in the closely-knit structure of the amaZulu polygamous unit which is characterised by tension and rivalries. Turner further asserts that a community is also strengthened, enhanced and sustained through the existence of these praises in their diverse forms.

Makhambeni (1989) also researched on the significance of *izibongo* in the amaZulu society. The praises tackle a variety of aspects relating to the protagonist receiving the praises and these include heroism in wars, extended families, humanity and the prominent actions of the praised. For the Bantu-speaking Southern Africans, a praise-poem is the proudest artistic possession they ever cherish. It is in this genre that the greatest possibilities of a Bantu language as a medium of literary expression manifest themselves. A praise-poem may have as its subject a nation, a tribe, a clan, a person, an animal or an inanimate object. The poem may be partly

narrative or wholly descriptive. Praise poetry abounds in epithets, very much like the Homeric ones, and generally, the language is highly figurative (Jordan, 1971).

According to Masondo (1997) cited in Gumede (2009), praise poems engrain historic and remarkable events in the protagonist's life prior to his or her birth, at birth and right into adulthood. Masondo (1997) stresses the point that the events attached to the praised can reflect either the desirable or the undesirable traits. Gunner (1984) asserts that the term praise poetry can refer to the poetry praising the collective entity, an individual and the various units of praise or praise names that make up an individual's praise poem. *Izibongo* is based on a system of names of various sorts, which are expanded to form a praise-verse. The praise name is the most frequently used construction in praise poetry and many of the lines and couplets consist of nothing else other than the praise name (Nzama, 1992).

The term "izibongo" applies to a set of poet's praise names associated with an individual, comprising a cumulative series of praise names and epithets bestowed on that individual by their associates, from childhood onwards. Such praise names are interspersed with concise praise narrative passages or comments. The praises often embody concise allusions to a historical incident, memorable achievement or characteristic that is connected with each family and that often amounts to praise poems of considerable length and excellence. Praise poetry is particularly treasured by the Nguni-speaking people as the highest form of their literary expression (Mphande, 1993).

Nzama (1992) concurs with Mphande's definition who asserts that *izibongo* embrace references to particular events and the effect of endeavour, history and records of Man's deeds, which continue to grow while he is still alive. Canonici (1996) views *izibongo* as pure poetry with special and formal stylistic features such as alliteration and parallelism, verses and stanzas. He further indicates that praises are more inclined to a song or music than to a piece of Western poetry, which ought to be read and appreciated in an individual study. *Izibongo* may be free floating, which is strikingly different from the way that written poetry is composed, though there are still certain conventions of language that differentiate them from ordinary speech giving the language a rich, varied denseness (Gunner and Gwala, 1991).

On the other hand, Kresse (1998) argues that the reason *izibongo* is to be regarded as the highest form of isiZulu poetry is that this poetry displays the widest range of stylistic devices apart

from encompassing various layers of meaning. While they give rise to isiZulu language's most complex form of aesthetic experience, they also express more significance regarding the power relations and social structure than the other poetic genres.

According to Tladi (1996), the function of praise poems is related to the function of praise in general, which borders on bringing about conformity to the modes of behaviour approved by the society. As the poet praises the king, he expresses the subjects' opinion of their king and elicits respect for that king. In praising the king, the poet depicts him to his people as a symbol of admiration. The praises also give an account of the king's poetlity and actions, without which the praise poem would not fulfil its function as an agent of conformity to the approved patterns of behaviour on the part of his subjects. In presenting the king as the plumb line for the people to emulate, this tends to reinforce a sense of respect for him. This evokes a sense of solidarity, as the king is presented as the image of the tribe. Royal praise poetry does not only cement the relationship that exists between the king and his tribe, but it also rekindles the unity that binds the tribe to its ancestral spirits.

On the other hand, praises serve to heighten the audience's appreciation of the figure being praised (Tladi, 1996). One of the most exclusive characteristics of praise poetry is its oral nature. It is important to note this aspect because, as an unwritten form of poetic expression, praise poetry has techniques that are peculiar to it. Written poetry has forms which, because they can be recognised physically, make it easier for the reader to understand the ideas that are classified in a particular form. Stanzas, for instance, are clearly recognisable compartments of certain ideas and on seeing a stanza, the reader immediately expects a new set of ideas (Kgobe, 1994).

Furthermore, Kgobe (1994) studied praise poetry among the Northern Sotho. He found that praise poetry is but one facet of the Northern Sotho's oral poetry and may be engaged in virtually by anybody, in a number of contexts, and it may be directed at a variety of people, animals or objects. For instance, herd boys praise their clay oxen, live animals in their care or their friends much in the same way as a ploughman praises his lead ox; a hunter, his dogs. A father may praise one of his children or his homestead; a wife, her husband, and so on.

Among the Northern Sotho, praise poetry and poetry in general is a genre that has grown from the oral to the written form. This suggests that oral praise poetry has had some influence on the

written version of praise poetry. Such influences account for the similarities which tend to outweigh the differences in terms of the comparison between traditional and modern praise poetry. The striking similarities border on the thematic preoccupations, obscure allusions and archaic words, totem praises; imagery in its diverse facets, repetition and eulogies. However, the praise poems also differed in some themes. Kgobe (1994) contends that Northern Sesotho chiefs and warriors are showered with many praises. These praises manifest in the form of praise names and praise poems. At an induction ceremony, a chief or headman is usually given a praise name. This is clearly symbolic, and for that reason, such praises can only be understood within the context of the conditions that prevailed prior to the coronation.

In addition, Groenewald (2001) conducted a study on the isiNdebele praise poetry. He established the varied nature of isiNdebele praise poetry, which includes memorisation and recitation as well as the importation of praise poetry from external cultures. The importation of praises is not necessarily suggestive of stagnation. In fact, emergence is vital for the survival of any tradition. The most vibrant traditions in South Africa, namely amaXhosa and amaZulu, are characterised not only by linguistic creativity but also by emergence or performance in new contexts.

AmaNdebele praise poets have often placed the art of praising in its diverse contexts, such as a highly volatile political situation and in the printed media. Where no tradition of praising existed, as in the *ingoma* (initiation for men), amaNdebele simply borrowed and adapted praises from the Northern Sesotho. In isiNdebele praise poetry, linguistic creativity is another feature suggestive of the vitality of the tradition. Currently, isiNdebele praise poetry is a vital feature during memorial occasions, and a case in point is when the current monarch officiates at the Nyabela Day celebrations, held annually.

Nonetheless, this situation does not suggest the beginning of a decline, since this tradition has proved that it possesses a latent vitality to transcend to a new contextual opportunity. Such vitality manifests in the appearance of younger poets on the poetic scene. In general, contextual changes in South Africa have created more opportunities for the production and performance of praise poems, a scenario that illustrates the resilience of one of the most traditional forms of verbal art in this region. This is regarded by some scholars as “South Africa’s truly original contribution to world literature” (Brown, 1998:76-77). Praise poetry remains a traditional art among the Southern Gauteng amaNdebele.



The praise poetry among these people is called *isibongo* and the praise poet is known as *imbongi*. The process of praising is called *ukubonga*, a word used among amaZulu, amaXhosa and amaSwazi peoples (Malungana, 1994). Opland (2010) views isiXhosa oral poetry (*izibongo*) as one kind and as praise poetry, commonly found in Africa in forms such as the Yoruba *oriki*, Bahima *ekyevugo*, or Shona *nhétémbo*. It essentially consists of a set of names that can constitute a poetic line or sometimes a variable number of lines. The names that form the core of these verses and stanzas can be in the form of metaphors (often drawn from the animal kingdom) or compound names such as Stamps while Fighting (Lwaganda) or Watch the Red Dawn (Jongumsobomvu) or the names of relatives or ancestors. Opland (2010) gives a typical example of Nelson Mandela's praise name. He says:

Nelson Mandela, for example, is known by the praise name of one of his royal forebears, Madiba, a name that is expanded into the praise verses uMadiba owadib' iindonga, "Filler who filled gullies," because the original Madiba united the estranged factions of his people (Opland, 2010).

The core praise names, which may be used as alternative names in ordinary discourse, commemorate poetically physical features, actions or attributes. These units, that is, praise names, verses and stanzas, are the actual "praises" that constitute a "praise poem." Praise poems may be composed to pay tribute to domestic animals such as dogs, cattle, or horses or even inanimate objects such as motor cars. Traditional praise poems honouring birds once pervaded praise poetry. At various times, praises may be composed by any member of the community about himself or herself or by his or her associates and these compositions are then assembled to form a poet's praise poem.

There are also traditional poems about clans. These consist of the names and praises of the ancestors of the clan. *Izibongo* may be uttered to encourage animals or urge people to express their pride or gratitude. Clan praises, or the praises of the ancestors may be recited as invocations in ritual contexts. The order of the praises varies from one performance to the other. *Izibongo* are not linear in their structure; rather, they are unified in their presentation of facets and are not always flattering to the subject of the poem (Opland, 2010).

Presently, praises among amaXhosa are not only performed at traditional gatherings but they are also performed in many contexts such as concerts, weddings and at funerals. There is some

controversy regarding whether the praises performed in other situations other than at the traditional gatherings still maintain the characteristics of traditional praises. In many isiXhosa praises, the praise poets draw their terminology and diction from Biblical texts. This strategy can be understood as an attempt at breaking the boundaries that historically existed between Christianity and isiXhosa poetry (Somniso, 2008).

This type of praise poetry, according to Masilela (1981) cited in Somniso (2008), shows evidence of being adaptive to new social circumstances brought about by Western urbanisation, literacy and assimilation. These follow logically from the assertion that performed praise poems among amaXhosa are predicated on improvisation, constant re-creation and re-formulation. Added to this understanding is the notion that poets adapt the subject of *imbongi* tradition, which predominantly focuses on poetilities, preferably royal ones, to praises that tend to focus on commoners, processes or objects of the historical divide between tradition and modernity.

Opland (1990) indicates that praise names constitute the structural core of *izibongo*, arguing that these names enjoy an independent currency in traditional society, operating as modes of address, or codes of reference, or as honorific salutations. To form *izibongo*, a sequence of names may be strung together to refer to one individual being praised, a genealogical series of names that the poem comprises derived from a lineage and clan poems that consist collectively of the names of distant ancestors of a particular clan. Each of these names is often extended by a brief explanation or qualification which ultimately develops into lines or verses. These verses, in turn, may be expanded by means of a limited set of traditional poetic devices into a succession of lines that constitute units that may be recognised as stanzas.

### **2.6.1 Praises of kings and chiefs**

These are comparatively lengthy and highly polished eulogies of kings and chiefs composed by professional royal bards (*izimbongi*) meant for recitation at formal and ceremonial functions. Mlondo (1994) concurs with Koopman (2000) on the assertion that during olden times, praise poems were recited by *izimbongi* who were found in the royal courts of great kings. These praise poems were preserved and later written down in stanza form, resembling modern poems. This was a result of the influence of Western poetry on traditional oral poetry. This poetry is

written in that style because of the many external characteristics of the poem, such as rhyme and rhythm.

Turner (2010:60) described the term *izibongo zamakhosi* as “praises which are considered to embody the most sophisticated poetic of all the oral traditions.” They describe the events and lives of the Zulu kings as well as incorporating the descriptions of their physical appearances and poetilities. These heroic poems contain the epic of a whole nation, personified in its sovereign state. The reciting by *imbongi* of *izibongo zamakhosi* plays a significant role as part of the oral tradition of a people. Ong (1982) as cited in Turner (2010) discusses the functions of *izibongo zamakhosi*, maintaining that they instil in the audience a sense of pride and the spirit of nationalism. By praising the king, praise poems are an expression of the loyalty and pride cherished by his subjects and they serve to exult and honour him. They also act as a channel of public opinion between the monarch and subjects. In addition, *Izibongo* play a religious role in the sense that *imbongi* calls out the names of the ancestors, and by so doing the former becomes an intermediary between the latter and the living. Royal praise poems can also be used as an oral record of the historical and cultural events of a tribe or nation.

With reference to praise poetry, Opland (1998) argues that *imbongi* enjoyed the privilege of criticising chiefs in his or her poetry with impunity. His criticism was never misconstrued as an intention to stir up dissent or dissatisfaction among the subjects, but rather as a way of expressing popular opinion and to moderate excessive behaviour exhibited by those in authority. *Imbongi* thus acted as the spokesman of the ruled. In essence, he aroused in the people intense feelings of loyalty towards the chief. Literally, he acted not only as an ethnic history book, but he also moulded communal solidarity. The herald, spokesperson, mediator, historian and entertainer, were all the elements encapsulated in the complex role of *imbongi* in tribal life; but the most overriding of all was the peculiar ability by a competent *imbongi* to arouse in his audience, intense pride, loyalty and bravery.

The art of praising a king or a political ruler, presenting a socially heroic portrait of him, due to the centrality of the ruler's historical position, also illustrates the current state of society (Krige, 1936). This is a delicate issue, and one can see why *imbongi* has to be 'knowledgeable' regarding all the different aspects of society, their current state and interaction, and their present significance to the relationship between the ruler and the ruled (Vail and White 1991).

### **2.6.2 Praises of commoners**

Masuku (2005) investigated about the poetry that praises the female commoners. Her study sought to see the manner in which these women praise themselves. The investigation sought to establish whether these women depict themselves as strong-willed people or they simply succumb to the conventional and stereotypical roles assigned to them by the patriarchal society, for instance, being a good mother, with acceptable virtues, that is, being a woman who is held in high esteem by the society. These are rather shorter and less polished praises, often highly spiced with humour and scatological references. They are composed by non-professionals; the so-called “man-in the street.” They are recited at various social gatherings, especially those of a competitive nature, stick-fights or football games, for instance. Such praises may be, and frequently are, self-composed.

### **2.6.3 Praises of animals**

Animals are found in every part of the world and they share the land, water and air with people. It is believed, however, that man once shared common ground with animals, birds included. It is well-known that they could talk to each other, solved common problems and cohabitated harmoniously until the proverbial fall of man (Kgobe, 1994). The traditional praises of wild animals, sung by hunters as they set out to hunt, and on their victorious return, have now sunk into oblivion. Praises for domestic animals, however, composed by their owners particularly the ox, bull, horse and other domestic animals continue to feature prominently in rural life.

These praise poems may be recited by the owner on his own, when simply contemplating the animal concerned, or they may be recited when the animal needs encouragement. The same applies to the fighting bulls or the dogs when hunting. Praise poems are composed for different things, for example, there are those that are meant to praise people, inanimate objects and animals (wild and domestic). Molefe’s (1992) study focused more on the analysis of praise poems meant for domestic animals. He closely looks at the praises as a thread that binds a domestic animal and his owner together. The main purpose was to find out how rich the praises of domestic animals are in terms of poetic elements.

Writers such as Lestrade (1935), Jankie (1939), Lerothodi (1956), Nyembezi (1958), Finnegan (1970), Swanepoel (1983) and many others studied praise poetry from different angles.

Kunene's analysis of heroic poetry of Basotho (1971) features a short account of praises for both domestic animals and wild game, but he mainly deals with praises of the Basotho heroes. According to Molefe (1992), the purpose of praising, as far as domestic animals are concerned, is directly linked to the functions which praises are meant to perform for society. Praising is not confined to showing love and the intimacy that binds people to their animals, but there are more intentions to be explored concerning these praise poems. In order to develop a sound argument, we ought to ask ourselves why it is necessary for domestic animals to be praised.

#### **2.6.4 Clan praises**

Every isiZulu clan has clan praises peculiar to it. These praise poems may run from two or three lines to as many as forty or fifty lines in length. Rather than being composed by known individuals, clan praises gradually accumulate with years. Single names from these praise poems may be used in greetings and expressions of gratitude; but full versions are recited at solemn family events such as ritual sacrifices, weddings or funerals. Groenewald (2001) concurs with Koopman (2000), who asserts that clan poetry performed at weddings and praises in the context of divination are apparently more mediatory as they serve to establish a connection between the living and their ancestors.

*Izibongo* constitute a "genre" of praise poetry among amaZulu and several related South-East African peoples. This genre responded to various dynamic historical processes and cultural interactions, but in so doing, it maintained its distinct form (Gunner and Gwala, 1991). The term "*izibongo*" is derived from the verb *bonga*, which basically means "to praise," but it could also mean "to thank" or "to worship" (Grant, 1993; Rycroft and Ngcobo, 1988) as well as to coin a clan name or a kinship term (Vilakazi, 1938). The scope of the various types of "*izibongo*" is diverse, but united in naming, identifying and therefore giving significance to the named person or object (Gunner and Gwala, 1991).

Gunner and Gwala (1991) further argue that poetl praise poems comment on a person's individual experience of change, sometimes dislocation and disjunction, but sometimes continuity and interpoetl relationships. They can be a medium through which an individual mediates difficult, painful or exciting events and showcases them to the rest of the community through performance. It is the way in which, *izibongo* in general can appeal to the emotions and life experiences of an individual in relation to the social and working environments which

need emphasis in the contemporary national culture (1991). High social significance is best expressed in an extraordinarily formalised language rather than everyday speech. Thus, “*izibongo*” is a practical genre that evolved as a specific art meant for praising. In essence, anything can be praised and anyone is capable of being a praise singer (*imbongi*) although there are categories of specialist praise singers to which the term specifically applies. Coullie (1999) describes *izibongo* as performance texts that, while seeking discursive stability, are always unstable. They are also, as she contends, public and functional whereas narrative autobiography texts are private, reflective and depend, for their purpose of narrating identity, on textual stability.

## 2.7 Children’s poems

*Imilolozelo* (lullabies) are part of amaZulu children's poetry and they are probably the most ancient form of African children's literature. The genre includes the poetry and folksongs from societies whose literature was transmitted orally from generation to generation. Like all folklore, children's oral poetry is a performance art and tradition that has been transmitted from one's forefathers for generations. Children's oral poetry is characterised by song, repetition, physical actions and gestures. Performance, which is the central aspect of *imilolozelo*, is arguably typical of an informal school where, from infancy, a child slowly discovers her or his world and all the aspects are contained in it. Commenting on oral performance, Okpewho (1992: 42) points out that:

There must be a certain appeal in not what the performer is saying but, in the way it is said much of the appeal lies in the quality of the voice used and the skill with which the speaker manipulates the tones of the words involved.’ Zulu traditional oral poetry, like all African poetry, was not composed to be read silently or aloud; instead, it was always meant to be heard by the ear and its actions perceived and appreciated with the eyes.

The oral element focuses on performance and sound, whereas the written form is text-centred. The performance of *imilolozelo* or “cradle songs” as Weinberg (1979) calls them, was intended not only to entertain children or while away time, but they were composed also to teach people and bring them together (Ntuli, 2011). In spite of the heavy reliance on technology for entertainment in contemporary homes, oral tradition, which manifests in the form of children's songs, continues to play a pivotal role in the upbringing of children. Game songs are popular owing to their accessibility to all children who are energetic enough to play. Song, in its diverse

forms, is important for its cultural, aesthetic and ideological contributions. Rhythm and rhyme characterise children's songs in particular, acting as a vehicle for the transfer of societal knowledge, skills and values (Makina, 2009).

Molebatsi (2007) conducted an extensive study on the current patterns around the musical genre created by the young artists of spoken word in South Africa. She contends that it stimulates one's imagination of musical art as a strong influence and force in today's poetry. Musicality, within the observed poetry, goes beyond the traditional praise poet's voice and passion for percussion, but it validates these poets as musicians in their own right, writing, arranging and performing words to musical instrument and time. This phenomenon is increasingly making music and the art of spoken word inseparable. These two mutually inclusive forms of expression (spoken word and music) are interwoven in an artistic fashion that builds a mutual partnership, thereby bridging the gap between what is sung and what is spoken.

Msimang (1991) describes *imilolozelo* as a short poem or song composed and sung specifically to lull a child into a slumber. A child's mother or a nursemaid giving care to the child usually recites it. The most crucial element of this poem is its song-like rhythm. In his definition of *umlolozelo*, Msimang (1991) explains this performance genre as almost like *isilandelo* and most of these song-like poems are used to help children sleep. Turner (2010) expresses almost the same definition of *umlolozelo*, describing it as a lullaby or song used specifically to lull a child to sleep. Being largely poetic in form, *umlolozelo* makes use of the traditional poetic linking device, especially rhythm, in addition to alliteration, assonance, parallelism, bold imagery and so forth. Ntuli (2011:20) also expresses the definition of *imilolozelo* that is given by Gule, Maphumulo and Thwala (1993) as follows:

Umlolozelo uyinkondlo ethile yokudlalisa nokuthunduzela umntwana. Uhleleka njengenkondlo noma isizosha, kepha ulandwa ngezwi elisamculo. Umlolozelo usangomana yokukhulisa abantwana. Umlolozelo uyinto eyakhiwe futhi eyaqanjwa abaqambi bakudala. Umlolozelo ungomunye wemidlalo yesiNguni, wakha ubudlelwano phakathi kwengane nonina.

(A lullaby is a poem that is used to entertain a child or to induce a child to sleep. Its structure is that of a poem, but it is voiced in a form of a song. A lullaby is like a song that is used in the upbringing of children. It is something that originates from people of long ago and is one of the games of the Nguni people, it builds a relationship between mother and child.)

Traditionally, *imilolozelo* and *izilandelo* are reflective of a rural way of life. This assists in determining the time and the setting in which some lullabies were composed. Although some kinds of oral poetry appear to be set in a particular cultural backdrop and time, it nonetheless essentially demonstrates typical African experiences (Ntuli, 2011). Fraser (1996:33) contextualises oral isiZulu children's poetry, particularly their suitability, content and performance, in the following remarks:

*Imilolozelo* are appropriate for young children and have a particularly strong rhythm. The content of these poems generally relates to the world of the child and his particular needs. Some of the poems seem to make little sense, especially the poems which have been passed on for many generations. *Imilolozelo* have a distinctive "chant-type" mode of delivery and can be performed at full speed and volume. The poems are said enthusiastically and movement is always included in the performance. The poem can be repeated over and over until the children tire of it.

Ntuli (2011) adds that as a part of isiZulu oral tradition, *imilolozelo* were told not merely to keep boredom at bay; but they also had a vital role to play. They were an oral art form that expressed a message apart from preserving culture. The weight of the message depended on the developmental stage of the child being lulled to sleep.

## **2.8 Research on performance poetry**

According to Scheub (2002:226), performance poetry involves "things of the external form: the spoken word, silences, gestures, body movements, facial expression, audiences, place of performance" in addition to "the internal form: all the feelings and meaning undercurrent of the external forms." Performance poetry is the emotional bringing to life of a poem so that the audience has an emotional, cathartic response. However, for the sake of this research, the researcher defined performance poetry as the "poetry that is read or spoken aloud and live in front of an audience." This is perhaps the broadest definition of the genre the researcher could afford to present. Nonetheless, the researcher feels that this is perhaps the fairest definition. The researcher conceptualised the idea of performance poetry as the art of composing a poem with the intention of presenting or reading it aloud to the audience. This conceptualisation seems to exclude those poems that become more powerful when performed, though they are also capable of existing in the written form.



Bowkett (2009) asserts that performance poetry has been composed specifically for an audience. In a way, that understanding should include most poems ever created, if the reader believes, as the researcher does, that poetry is intended mainly to be heard and not just read silently using one's eyes. In precise terms, the idea is generally understood to mean poems that are regarded as considerably powerful because of paralinguistic features like the performer's facial expressions, body movements and the use of props as well as the involvement of the audience. Performance poems, then, are those that can be acted out. They may also effectively employ rhyme and rhythm, a chorus (that the audience can be part of), and perhaps different sections suit different voices like the parts characters take in a play. Sometimes a performance poem uses music or sound effects, a few props, or other people would be miming as the poet speaks.

Performance poetry, also known as spoken-word poetry, is intended to be performed, and not exclusive to reading in front of an audience. It thrives on the intensive use of poetic devices like rhythm, repetition and other stylistic devices that include external, aural and visual devices. However, another term is always associated with performance poetry; namely, poetry slam. It refers to a competitive event that combines the elements of performance, writing, competition and participation by the audience. This kind of poetry is performed at events called poetry slams, or simply slams. The name 'slam' arose from the manner in which the audience possesses the power to praise, or sometimes destroy a poem, and from the high-energy performance style the poets exhibit. Although performing, chanting, or singing the performance poem aloud was a rudimentary and well-established tradition in almost all languages and cultures, the style tended to wane when people began to rely on reading texts following the advent and preponderance of the print media (Muhammad, 2017).

Performance poetry is part of the new Black poetry. This canon includes spoken word and slam. It has been argued that the introduction of slam poetry to children can "salvage" their almost broken "relationship with poetry" (Boudreau, 2009: 1). Performance poetry is specially designed for oral transmission and so it necessitates the presence of an author-speaker and the audience. This poetic genre does not claim proper existence in any other sense. The audience is obligated to contribute, participate and therefore finish the poem. Performance poetry depends on the active involvement of others as it solicits for interaction through conjoining, provoking and incorporating the audience. It does not tolerate the passive or consumerist role

on the part of the receiver (Beasley, 1994). Performance poetry does not have confinement as it happens anywhere. It does not need a cumbersome production or technical facilitation.

In performance poetry, performing power, imagination, originality and beauty are apparent in the performance of the natural setting. These have a strong impact on the audiences and their feelings. Oral poetry is synonymous with performance poetry. Oral poetry is a reflection of mental processes represented verbally to serve immediate poetl, social or cultural purposes, which enforce its creativities. Contrary, oral creativity has either been undermined or denied attention. Indeed, the best way to deal with and identify oral poetry remains unclear. Examining creativity in relation to context, purpose and production engenders new ideas and insights into oral poetry. Unfortunately, these pose difficulties for researchers as they seek to explore its creativities, production and dissemination. The natural settings help the poet to disclose his or her inner emotions that enforce those creativities though they are not readily available to bring about a better understanding. The ability to create is much more demanding than exploring natural settings. Moreover, the performer of the poem establishes a real contact with the audience as if he is “giving himself” to it, and the performer and the audience eventually “feel” beyond the visual as if they could “virtually touch” each other (Zumthor, 1984: 241).

Ramogale (1995:213) thus explores the fundamental role of orality in the South African liberation struggle:

Oral performance became not only an alternative literary medium but also a counterhegemonic struggle; it positioned the cultural independence of blacks as its praxis and black political emancipation as its goal. In other words, the oral performance was a literary practice which looked backwards in order to look forward.

Oral poets and narrators such as Ingoapele Madingoane and Mzwakhe Mbuli, have contributed immensely towards the struggle against colonial domination. Since the colonial times, these poets have given “the voice to the voiceless, speech to the silenced, and hope to the desperate” (Cloete et al, 2004:42). They have shaken the seemingly indestructible enemy, as history has proved. In his article, Bidu (2013) analyses creativity in oral poetry from the point of view of natural contexts, performances and their texts to unearth the unity of purpose, manner and content that characterise the belief that poets create beliefs following traditions in reaction to immediate societal realities. A creative performance displays emotions, desires, motives,

composition and singing prowess. These fit into given social, cultural and historical contexts that help realise the poet's objectives. The stage, the poet, the audience and the interactive relationship of these performance inputs as well as the emotional intensity reveal purpose of the poem.

Performance poetry possesses, within itself, the potential to undo the silence in a community or group of people. This is particularly so since it is a highly communal art form. O-lan and Colin (1986: xii) argue that "the strength of performance poetry is always mediated by the strong, underlying principle that it is custom-built by the people for the people" (O-lan et al., 1986: xii). This makes performance poetry a highly appropriate art form to be used by a group of people as they seek to address problems that collectively affect them as a community.

O-lan et al. (1986) further argue that performance poetry adapts to its audience through its ability to introduce a fresh stream of similes and metaphors that captivate the audience. Thus, it always adapts to its subject for it to effectively appeal to its audience. This research seeks to explore the manner in which performance poetry may be adapted to include the language that is understandable and popular among the workshop participants. Poetry is the language of emotions (Heywood 1976). Performance poetry is intended for performance before a live audience. Performance poetry is a collective and societal art form that has the potential to elicit the participation of the audience. This potential can, therefore, be explored through the poetic debate concept and also by having a facilitator to direct the debate and therefore offer a platform for the audience to voice their views.

Poetry affords individuals the opportunity to comment on themselves and other individuals around them. This commenting also involves the questioning and also the proffering of solutions. Performance poetry also creates the platform for social interaction and the workshops in this research have been structured in a way that promotes social interaction. Finnegan (2011) adds that for anyone to categorise a poem as 'oral,' it is imperative to consider three different factors, which are: composition, transmission and performance, and therefore, one would then be able to state and specify in which of these aspects a certain oral poem is accounted. The audience's reaction can actively influence the performance interpreter as evidence of what has just been stated. As such, performance is not fixed, but it keeps changing depending on different aspects such as: "the age and the energy of the performer, the nature of the occasion, the type

of setting, whether or not any musical accompaniments are used, especially by the performer” (Okpewho, 1992: 42).

Gräbner (2008) studied performance poetry and in his study focused only on the investigation of the impact of new languages and new literary circuits on this type of poetry. He found that its characteristics include the use of vernaculars, dialects and accents. By using the accent in a performance, the poet reaffirms and promotes the use of such an accent by the group that uses it. Moreover, performance poems employ elements that appeal to the oral and the aural, and it is not exclusively confined to the visual. These performance elements include music, rhythm, recordings or imitations of non-verbal sounds, smells and other sensual perceptions oftentimes performed simultaneously with other elements of signification.

In his study, Low (2006) reveals that spoken word engenders crucial lessons for the curriculum that teaches the manner in which contemporary youth communicate, express themselves and make meaning through practices that constitute what might be perceived as “counter literacy.” Low (2006) further argues that the spoken-words presentation is so topical and central to the present cultural epoch because it anticipates forms and theories of language as well as poetic sets of communicative relations. Goggin’s (2009) also conducted a study on performance poetry examining the rhetorical relationships within performance poetry (slam and spoken word), indicating how they create a truth-sharing environment for all who are involved through a case study of poets from Atlanta and Charlotte to explore the techniques poets employ in writing from their own experiences in order to deliver their messages to the public and to investigate the relationships involved regarding performance poetry, those of society on the one hand and those of the poet on the other and therefore explore the poetry itself. He noticed that rhetorical strategies are so important to the poets for them to connect with the audience with the hope of inspiring them to add named utterances to their heteroglossia, which will enable them to develop new, collective truths that will then be incorporated into their reality.

Opland (1983) identifies the various ways in which performance poetry adapted to the specific political and social needs throughout the Twentieth Century, an era characterised by grievous inhumanity meted out to Blacks by the then Apartheid Government and its draconian laws. He notes how migrant workers on the mines had been using forms of praise poetry for most of the Twentieth Century in order to praise or criticize *izinduna* or shift bosses.

Mnensa (2010) undertook a study in which she examines the shared, collective preoccupations that kept emerging in the poetry, for instance, issues pertaining to race, class, gender and the politics of the past. She illustrates that, although the analyses of the poets belong to different racial, generational and geographical locations, they all share similar preoccupations. She further indicates that the works of particular performance poets ought not to be dismissed simply on the grounds that their work is not linked to a collective and organised struggle. The study shows that their work is effective in so far as it serves several purposes.

In addition, Brattin (2013) conducted a study on contemporary performance poetry from Cape Town and found that the scene of the poetry also encourages poets to read in their indigenous languages, although English usually reigns supreme. The study also found that the scene of performance poetry incorporates many activists from all races, genders, and ages whose past experiences, ancestry and intersectionality define their writings. However, divisions within it, lack of public acknowledgement and external discrimination, mar the celebration of diversity and activism within performance poetry. Brattin (2013) also discussed contemporary conflicts between the traditional “page poets” and the performing poets, as well as the racial, wealth, education and the age make-up of the two differing groups.

The post -Apartheid poetry has attempted to maintain some sense of activism. Yet, as the poetry increasingly becomes undesirable at rallies though it is not under constant threat of banishment, it has lost its rebellious appeal. This sentiment, coupled with the poisonous, yet pervasive belief that the new dispensation in South Africa has nothing to resist or campaign against since the general public has since lost interest in poetic performances, specifically those that are geared towards activism. The current observation does not seem to concur with Brattin’s (2013) statement solely because performance poetry has gained its momentum as it reaches out to the young South African generation.

According to Afrax (1999), contemporary Somali poetry is a product of the urban society, representing the experiences of a society in transition from the traditional to the modern way of life. The poetry itself undergoes a transformational process from ‘purely’ oral methods of composition and transmission to a new form that mixes elements of orality, techno-orality (the use of audio and video recording) and written form. Due to this transitional status, the new poetic form still hovers between adjusting itself to the demands of modern times and having to break with the established traditional poetic devices handed down from traditional oral poetry.

Pastoral imagery is among the three most pre-eminent devices inherent in this poetic tradition, the other two being alliteration (*xarafraac*) and metrical scansion (*miisaan*). The rigid rules of these last two features regulate the structural patterns informing almost all the types of the Somali verse, thus imposing on the new poetry serious ‘restricting, and hence, debilitating effects’ (Samatar 1982: 60).

While the restraining effect of these latter two devices, especially the *miisaan*, has attracted the attention of many students of Somali literature, the limitations imposed by pastoral imagery are yet to be subjected to scholarly examination. In his article Samatar (1982) highlighted aspects of Somali literature which, perhaps, parallel the experiences of other cultures. Despite the general tendency to be inclined towards the ‘conservatism’ that is universally found in oral and semi-oral cultural forms, one assumes that, with time, time-honoured features, including pastoral imagery in urban poetry in Somalia, would inevitably adhere to the pursuance of the winds of change.

According to Finnegan (2005), performers often draw on an amazing constellation of visual resources. For instance, gestures, facial expression, eye glances, bodily orientation, demeanour, visible movements, dress, ornament, and make-up are the numerous visual resources. Material props such as sceptres, microphones and pointers may be part of the act too, as they are associated with visual images and exhibits specifically icons, pictures, prints, stage sets and graphic displays. Senses of touch and smell sometimes do have a part to play too, and the corporeal experience brought by music with the tactile as well as musical and rhythmic interrelations of dancing and embodied movement. The spatial and temporal dimensions of the so-called “oral” performances bring in their multiplex resonances too: and these include the physical setting and arrangements, the timing and lighting or the proxemics and the embodied relations existing between the participants. Time and again, performances turn out to be multidimensional rather than purely “oral.” The literary forms with which we are accustomed, especially reading verbalized texts, with perhaps a nod to their vocal delivery, may now need to be re-assessed as multisensory (Finnegan, 2005).

In his essay, Kiguli (2012) attempts to go beyond awareness to use the voices of the performer’s critics as part of an effort to break with a kind of scholarship based mainly on the models of the West that impose strict categorizations of genres and an adherence to an understanding of the poetic form and practice as it manifest itself in contemporary Western traditions and

cultures. He further asserts that isiZulu poetry was traditionally composed specifically for performance regardless of its being a nursery rhyme or a heroic poem. Performance is such an integral part of isiZulu traditional poetry to the extent that its meaning could only be fully realised through dramatisation.

The public nature of the performance poetry requires not only a skilled presentation by an actor-poet, but also the active involvement of the audience. It is not uncommon for the members of the audience to make complimentary side comments on some episodes of a poem as the poet narrates and acts out his words. Kunene (1981) concurs with Kiguli (2012) arguing that performance is a communicative process in which the performer, the audience and the social practice of oral poetry are mutually vital for the interpretation and understanding of the genre. The performer is central to the performance event and as such, an analysis of his or her views contributes to an informed understanding of the relationship between the performer, the composition process, the audience, the purpose and the overall context in which performances of oral poetry occur.

Kiguli's (2012) understanding of performance is not confined to language and action; but it also deals deeply with the expression of the layers of meaning found in both the present and the past. The poets presented their performances as intense interaction of knowledge, alternative perspectives and experiences in a way that compels both the performer and the audience to engage in a conversation mentally and physically. They mostly perceive performance as a particular way of being, that is conditioned by the performer, the audience, time and the cultural context, and all these compel all the participants to engage in the analysis of their beliefs, perceptions and the prevailing situations.

Mnensa (2010) conducted a similar study on performance poetry, but what differentiates it from the current study is that the main aim of her research project was to explore the manner in which the performance poets under scrutiny re-negotiate the inherited identities in order to eke out the possibility of crafting new ones. Initially, it is important to trace the influences that are evident in contemporary performance poetry. Hip-hop music, for instance, appears to be a major ingredient in the generality of performance poems (Mnensa, 2010). The poetic techniques and the body language employed on the stage both complement the message. Although the analysed performances are important to her, she then suggested that the content and form of the poetry are worthy of critical attention. Mnensa (2010) also noted with concern

that the careers and contributions of performance poets are unfortunately short-lived. So, conducting such a research on performance poetry ensures that the works of these poets do not fade into obscurity by ensuring that they are preserved in the print form, thus adding value to the rich oral tradition of South Africa.

Contemporary performance poetry does not imply that a poet simply gets onto the stage and reads or recites his or her poem (Mnensa, 2010). According to Finnegan (1977), performance may inflect a message or the atmosphere of a poem by the poet's own dramatization, speed, singing style, pauses, rhythmic movement, gestures and facial expressions among other paralinguistic features. Therefore, it is clear that the performance and the potency of the content of the poem depend entirely on the style of delivery and the dramatization of the poem. This, once again points to the necessity of the participatory audience as an equally important ingredient and the collective, reciprocal nature of the performance. Every performance is for and about the audience. In this instance, the main objective of the performer is to entertain, amuse and impress the audience in order to earn praise, admiration and material gifts.

In creative performance, the audience neither listens silently nor waits for the invitation of the performer to join in the performance. Instead, the audience spontaneously breaks into the performance with additions, queries and comments. In her assessment of the importance of performance in African verbal arts, Finnegan (1997) stresses the fact that a "full appreciation must depend on an analysis not only of the verbal interplay and overtones in the piece, its stylistic structure and content but also of the various detailed devices which the performer has at his disposal to convey his product to the audience." Smith (1993:28) was quoted defining performance thus:

Performance is an art form in itself, and should be regarded as one. . . I have become aware that the one step beyond the performance, the show, is truly the most important step. What the art form of the show is really saying is that the community of people who hear the poetry and are involved in the poetry, and what happens to them, is more important than any individual poet or any individual poem. We're a community; we need to be together, not only with poetry but with everything else we do in our lives. Poetry shouldn't be separated; it should be just one of the many threads that connect us as human beings.

The available literature has shown that little research has been done on isiZulu Performance poetry. Precisely, the scholars who have analysed isiZulu poetry focused on the text, structure



and meanings of written isiZulu poetry. Such literary scholars as Kunene (1961), Ntuli (1984), Ntuli and Louw (1987), Mlondo (1994), Zulu (1994), Ngwenya (1998), Zondi (2005), Koopman (2005), Ngwenya (2015) and Gcumisa (2009) admitted that although many isiZulu poets of the period 1935 and 1975 composed the poetry that contained shortcomings, they nevertheless made a significant contribution to South African poetry in general and isiZulu poetry in particular. For example, Mlondo (1994) analyses D.B.Z.Ntuli's poetic works and also examines the various themes explored by Ntuli in his poetry. The main purpose of the analysis was to assess and evaluate his poetry with the aim of examining more intimately the degree of Ntuli's success in delivering meaning to his audience.

August (2014) also conducted a similar study but focused on the re-evaluation of the poetry of the South African writer and poet, Dennis Brutus. August (2014) observed that even though Brutus produced a substantial number of poems spanning more than half a century, his work continuously receives limited attention in South African literary criticism. One of the main reasons stems from the perception that he was primarily a writer-cum-political activist who wrote poetry to advance his political objectives. In spite of writing extensively on political issues, his themes touch on a wide range of subjects. In addition, he paid close attention to the art of poetry. Owing to the tendency to foreground the political content of his writings, the complexity of and diversity in the language and style of his poetry seldom receive due attention.

Ngwenya (1998) also analysed African poetry just like many other scholars who studied poetry before him. He studied BW Vilakazi's poetry and its contribution to African literature. He argues that a careful analysis of Vilakazi's poems that deal with the theme of inspiration also reveals the notion that his understanding of the relationship between African or isiZulu culture and the Western one was far from being simplistic as it was largely characterised by a conscious desire to integrate the two cultural worlds into one coherent perspective. He also found that Vilakazi, as a modern poet, artistically chooses to utilise the cultural heritage of his people to conceptualise and define his role as an artist.

Camangian (2008) examines the impact of performance poetry on students' critical thinking, literacy and voice from the perspective of a teacher and researcher based in an urban classroom. Bridging the critical and performance aspects of the spoken word poetry in a South Los Angeles High School composition classroom, his work offers a concrete example of this praxis and it reports on a curriculum project that empowered students to examine issues related to privilege,

social control and oppression in the United States society. He concludes with pedagogical implications for using, and going beyond, performance poetry as an effective instructional tool for creating student-centred, critical and discursive spaces in schools.

Pearn's (1985) thesis seeks to demonstrate the notion that there is a direct relationship between the emergence of poetry as a performing art in the English speaking Caribbean and the phases of nationalist agitation from the uprisings against unemployment, low pay and colonial neglect during 1937-8 to the present day. Although this calibre of poetry has many variations in scope, ranging from light-hearted entertainment, its principal momentum has been spurred on by protest, nationalism and the revolutionary sentiment. The thesis seeks to relate poetic tone, style and content both to specific historical periods and cultural contexts and to the degree of engagement of the individual artist in the political struggle against oppression. Since it is frequently theatrical, performance poetry has commanded a stage and a popular audience. Though it is urban in style, the poetry is rooted in older, rural traditions. In the Caribbean, Creole, the vernacular of the masses, is a vital common denominator allowing the poetry to be aurally stimulating and often highly rhythmic. The popular music of the day has played an integral part and a formative role in terms of the composition of performance poetry.

Performance poetry has increasingly been recognised for its educational and cultural value. The generality of the performance poets regularly visit schools, institutes and community centres, where they deliberately use their poetry to stimulate discussions and debates around language, cultural and social issues. The poets seek to make young people more conscious of their history and cultural heritage (Pearn, 1985). This study therefore, seeks to bridge the gap by focusing on isiZulu performance poetry, particularly its functions, poetic features and the various factors that contribute to its development in isiZulu society. This study also intends to provide more insights into the significance of poetry and its relevance to the modern society.

Performances take place within specific contexts where the narrator and the audience play mutually significant roles. Both the narrator and the audience enjoy some degree of shared knowledge about the role of the narrative performance in constructing the Bukusu perception on a number of issues. It is this collectively shared knowledge that makes the oral narrative performance much more than a mere piece of entertainment. It has also emerged that the Bukusu oral narrative performance makes use of a great deal of verbal and visual features to enrich its delivery of the content. Each performance is reflective and creates an experience

while reflecting upon that experience at the same time. These verbal and visual features of performance poetry greatly contribute to the actualisation of the oral narratives as they enhance the audience's appreciation of the narrative developed during a live performance (Masungu, 2016).

Schechner (2002:4) defines performance as "a mode of behaviour, an approach to experience, it is play, sport, aesthetics, popular entertainment, experimental theatre and more." From Schechner's definition, it emerges that performance is a multidimensional process with the potential to elicit different meanings in different contexts. Performance is understood as a means of communication essential in the construction of meaning. Sparks and Grochowski (2002) understand performance poetry as a language that enables the youth to define themselves and serve testimonies of their lives. Further, it allows the youth to be critical when shaping their poetl identities as well as manipulating language through making it so customisable that it encourages self-expression.

In addition, performance poetry, which is also known as spoken words poetry, is identified as a form of poetry that encapsulates oral traditions, call-and-response home language, storytelling and resistance. Performance poetry is usually performed and heard before an audience (Desai et al., 2005). Furthermore, Herndon and Weiss (2001) qualify performance poetry as an expression of a shared language, shared with an audience, which then creates a bond between the audience and the poet through shared insights into the societal issues.

Fundamentally, performance, which is the mode of spoken verbal communication, thrives on the assumption of its responsibility to an audience for a display of the communicative competence by the performer. This competence depends on the performer's knowledge and ability to converse in socially acceptable ways. Performance depends, on the part of the performer, on the assumption that it maintains accountability to an audience in terms of the way in which communication occurs, above and beyond its referential content. From the point of view of the audience, an expression, on the part of the performer, is thus subject to evaluation for the manner in which it is done, particularly the relative skill and effectiveness the performer displays as demonstration of competence.

Additionally, oral performance avails itself for the enhancement of experience, acquired through the present enjoyment of the intrinsic qualities the act of expression embodies.

Performance thus calls forth special attention to and a heightened awareness of the act of expression, which gives the license to the audience to regard the act of expression and the performer with special intensity. Thus, what one then conceives is that performance is a mode of language use or a manner of speaking. The implication of such a concept for a theory of verbal art is that it is no longer necessary. To begin with, artful texts, identified on independent formal grounds are then re-injected into situations of use, in order to conceptualise verbal art in terms of communicative competence. Precisely, in terms of the approach being developed here, performance becomes constitutive of the domain of verbal art which falls under spoken communication (Bauman et al, 1990).

According to Muhammad (2017), performance poetry is unequivocally a poetic form evolving from traditional poetry. In addition, performing poets challenge the stereotypical nature of the revered wise writer. As mentioned earlier on, the verse to be performed requires the satisfaction of certain conditions on both the poet and the form for it to achieve its unconventionality, which is one of its objectives. The poet should resist the elitist attitude that characterises academics in approaching the ordinary audience. The backing elements represent the defiance that marks the traditional poetry, aspects that play a significant role in conveying the poet's message. In other words, stylistic devices such as imagery, rhyme, meter and other poetic paraphernalia are inadequate in qualifying performance poetry. It is very crucial also to move a discussion on contemporary performance poetry, in general, which looks at a wider range of other performative genres that include slam poetry and praise poetry. It seems realistic to assert that very little has been written about performance poetry in an attempt to reconcile and integrate all the various genres, which typically grace poetry sessions in South Africa.

## **2.9 Theoretical framework**

The term theory has been defined differently depending on the field of study, the scientific ground and even the era in which it was recognised to be a vital device in the process of acquiring knowledge throughout history. Hempel (1952: 36) who compared theory with “a complex spatial network” whereby “system and observation” is the floating device, while the “rules of interpretation” control and guide them, proffered one of the oldest definitions from the scientific theory. Homans (1952:812) believes that essentially, no theory exists unless there is a clear “explanation” accompanying the “properties” and “propositions” which clarify its relations, thereby forming a “deductive system.”

In addition, Burr (1973) was concerned with the deductive theory which assumes that propositions “explain why certain things occur;” deducing them afterwards. Burr (1973) then concluded that these propositions are examined and tested for science has a purpose; and this leads to the elimination of “invalid propositions” simultaneously increasing the number of “useful and valid” propositions (Burr, 1973: 3). In contrast, it is claimed that once a formal definition is offered for a theory, its real beauty, emotional significance and importance in everyday life will be lost. She defined theory in a unique way as the perception of reality, expressing someone’s prominent insight into the aspect of a phenomenon in addition to a fresh and new understanding about a world aspect (Silver, 1983).

Precisely, the word theory merely refers to a particular kind of explanation. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:4) view theory as:

An organized body of concepts and principles intended to explain a particular phenomenon.”

Thus, theories explain “how” a phenomenon operates and “why” it operates in the manner it does (Johnson and Christensen, 2007). As stated by Boss et al. (1993:20), “Theorizing is the process of systematically formulating and organizing ideas to understand a particular phenomenon. Thus, a theory is the set of interconnected ideas that emerge from this process.”

McMillan and Schumacher (2001) explain that a theory is capable of generating a scientific knowledge using these criteria: first, providing a simple explanation for the observed relations regarding their relation to a phenomenon; second, a theory ought to be consistent with an already founded body of knowledge and the observed relations; third, provide a device for the verification and revision process, and fourth; stimulate further research in areas that need investigation. An understanding of a theory demands travelling into another person’s mind in order to comprehend reality around a particular person.

When an individual experiences a shift in their mental structure and therefore discovers a new and different way of thinking, it means that the person has since understood that particular theory. It is like a new discovery bordering on the observation of things in a totally different manner. Thus, a theory is developed after the completion of a highly abstract thought process

necessitated by setting aside the ideas from the world of immediate experience and sensation in successive stages. Despite being abstract, theories are significantly helpful in enhancing people's understanding of the experienced world.

Two complementary theoretical frameworks inform this study. Firstly, Bourne (2001) proffers Tolstoy's Expressive Theory of Arts, which this section discusses as a background theory. The theory is set to provide benchmarks to the understanding of the main aim of the poetry and the reciting of performance poetry. Secondly, Hyme's (1981) Ethnopoetic Theory, ethnopoetics, which is concerned with composition in the course of performance, also comes under discussion.

### **2.9.1 The Expressive Theory**

This study is partly informed by Tolstoy's Expressive Theory of arts, which is the primary theory that underpins this study. The Expressive Theory of arts was born of the Romantic Movement, which reacted against the 18th Century Classicism and placed the individual at the centre of art. This theory sees art as a means of portraying the unique feelings and emotions of an individual, who is the artist and it further contends that good art successfully communicates the feelings and emotions the artist intends to express (Bourne, 2001 web). From this perspective, art is seen as an effective means of portraying the unique, individual feelings and emotions of the artist and as such, good art should be able to successfully communicate the feelings and emotions, which the artist intends to express. The coordination of the Expressive Theory is the relationship between the poet and the poetic work (Abrams,1993).

The Expressive Theory defines poetry as an expression, overflow, utterance, or feelings or as the products of the poet's feelings. According to Abrams (1979: 22) the central issue the Expressive Theory addresses may be summarised in this way:

A work of art is essentially the internal made external, resulting from a creative process operating under the impulse of feeling, and embodying the combined product or the poet's perceptions, thought, and feelings. The primary source and subject matter of a poem [work], therefore, are the attributes and actions of the poet's own mind; or if aspects of the external world, then these only as they are converted from fact to poetry by the feelings and operations of the poet's mind.

According to Abrams (1979), poetry must be a spontaneous overflow of feelings. Poetry should be reflective of the state of mind, not in the object itself, for example, when the poet wants to tell about a lion, he should state the excitement of the spectator or the poem should be based on the human's emotion or feelings of the object, not only the physical appearance of the lion itself. This theory tends to judge the work by its sincerity to the poet's vision or state of mind. The poet, but also the attitudes, evaluations, atmospheric qualities, expectations, disappointments, frustrations, relief, tensions and relaxation may express not only the sensation, feelings, moods and emotions.

Poetry should not only be brief bursts of lyrical feelings evoked by specific, intensely felt events, but also the inner quality of whole life or world. Even when art argues a case, its real interest is always rooted in the need to express the felt experience of arguing. Critics of the Expressive Theory, however, argue that important though expression may be, other factors are no less essential to the creation and appreciation of art. Bell (1914), for instance, wrote that if art expresses anything, it is an emotional experience felt for pure form, and form must be the primary concern. Equally, one may argue that the expressive qualities people value are those which steer clear of clichéd, stereotypical or trite forms of feelings.

Tolstoy (1995) defines art as a human activity, through which one person consciously, by certain external signs, conveys to others the feelings he has experienced, and people are affected by these feelings and tend to live them over in themselves. Furthermore, art is a communication of feelings from an artist to viewers through certain external signs. Artists are people inspired by their emotional experiences to use their skill with words, paint, music, movement and so forth to embody their emotions in a work of art with the aim of stimulating the same emotions in an audience.

However, Freeland (2001) notes that the Expressive Theory applies effectively to abstract expressionism, but less effectively to other kinds of art and that, in its original form, the theory suffers the weakness arising from restricting artists to the mere expression of feelings and emotions. It can also be viewed as the act of representing or externalising an artist's inner emotional and psychological state or subjective vision, often for communication or for catharsis. This theory seems to be largely inclined more on the artist, and one can apply it to music or drama though it also apparently relevant to performance poetry.

Before one composes a poem, one firstly thinks of a particular phenomenon or one might have an internal, emotional or psychological feeling inside that one wants to cough out, so poetry does not spring from the vacuum, but it is an expression of the inner feelings and emotions. This theory is used in this study to demonstrate how people use poetry as a medium in communicating their feelings and emotions. For example, in his poem entitled “Ngimbonile Ufikile Uhambile,” Senzokhaya Khambule is expressing his feelings towards his lost lover:

*Ngimbonile uFikile uhambile.  
Uthando lungenzile;  
Ngikhumbula lawo malanga ngisemncanynaa  
Ngingakalwazi uthando lomuntu emhlabeni  
Ngingakaze ngithande muntu ezweni.*

(I saw Fikile, she left.  
I am a victim of love;  
I miss those days when I was still young  
Before I knew of a person’s love on earth  
Before I loved anyone in the world.)

The Expressive Theory is relevant to this study since the study belongs to the domain of the arts where amaZulu poets use art, particularly performance poetry, to express their feelings about the issues they encounter in their everyday lives. The point is that poetry helps others to be able to express the things they too have felt, but have not been able to articulate. The artist is “not singular in his having that emotion or the power of expressing it, but in their ability to take the ‘initiative in expressing what all feel’” (Collingwood, 1938:119).

Regarding Collingwood’s (1938) perspective, what is apparent is the vitality of the expression that takes place in a medium of communication. There is no way of showing others how to express the same feeling if your expression cannot be shared. Anderson and Pildes (2000) describe the concept of expression as the ways that an action or a statement (or any other vehicle of expression) manifests a person’s state of mind. The state of mind can be cognitive, that is, it can be a belief, idea or theory. The characteristic vehicles for the expression of such purely cognitive states of mind are declarative sentences, often uttered in speech or writing. Nonetheless, people can also express their cognitive states through actions or paralinguistic gestures.

According to Anderson et al. (2000), people can express other kinds of mental states besides beliefs, and these include moods, emotions, attitudes, desires, intentions as well as poetlity



traits. People can do so not only through speech and instrumental action, but also through gestures, the tone of the voice, posture, forms of art and other means. At the level of individual action, a shrug may express indifference; a whisper, reverence; a swagger, cockiness; a song, joy; a sneer, contempt. At the level of state action, deliberative principles and policies can be appropriately interpreted as expressions of official state beliefs and attitudes, for instance, the state's hostility toward certain ethnic or racial groups or its approval of a certain religion. Indeed, the law frequently treats state action as doing exactly this, as the research seeks to demonstrate and justify. The relationship between people's states of mind and their expressions is three-dimensional: ontological, epistemic and normative. Expressive theory assisted this research in the interpretation of contemporary isiZulu performance poetry and its function. The Expressive Theory is however supplemented by Hymes' (1982) Ethnopoetics Theory, which is under discussion below.

### **2.9.2 The Ethnopoetics Theory**

This research also employed the principles of the Ethnopoetics Theory as a complementary theory. Ethnopoetics made its entry on to the literary scene in the early 1980s with the production of high-profile works such as Dell Hymes' *In Vain* (Hymes, 1982) or Tedlock's *The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation* (Tedlock, 1983) gathered admiration in the wide interdisciplinary field of anthropologists, folklorists and linguists. Tedlock and Hymes both added value, volume and sophistication to the arena of ethnopoetic analysis, with Tedlock's *Finding the Center* (1999) and Hymes' *Now I Know Only so Much* (2003). Both Tedlock and Hymes applied ethnopoetic analysis in doing justice to the artistic richness of the Native American verbal art. In Tedlock's case, the method served the purpose of rendering the spoken artistry's visual features; for Hymes, it was a method for reviving the defunct oral traditions by turning written versions of folk stories into re-oralisable ones.

Ethnopoetics is defined as the study of the verbal art of the pre-literate cultures aiming at discovering the cultural and aesthetic aspects of their oral poetics. It focuses on the texts, their rhetorical structure and presentational forms. Ethnopoetics focuses on the aesthetic and poetic structuring of oral art. "It's methodology and theoretical foundations lie in pragmatics, phenomenology, sociolinguistics, ethnomethodological conversation analysis, the ethnography of speaking and the performance approach in American folklore studies" (Anttonen 1994:113).

One branch of this approach developed by Dell Hymes is based on the idea that works of verbal art are subtle organizations of lines and verses (Hymes 1982). Therefore, “these expressions are founded upon a socially constituted poetic structure that is presented both in the organization of experience as well as in the organization of reports on that experience” (Anttonen 1994:113). According to Hymes (1982), the lines and verses are “organized in ways that are not only poetic, but also a kind of rhetoric of action in that they embody an implicit cultural schema for the organization of experience.” This theory aids in literary interpretation of performance poetry and the methodology of transcription and data analysis of collected data, especial on the stylistic devices and techniques employed by poets in poem composition.

Ethnopoetics is a subject foretold on the understanding that form and content are so entangled that it is impossible to find a distinction between the two. Thus, ethnopoetic analysis stresses the requisite learning of the grammatical structures of a story’s original language in order to carry out the essential and intensive reading of the text. One cannot tackle anything like a full analysis of a story without endeavoring to comprehend the person marking, the tense-mode-aspect system or other basic grammatical forms and the relations in the text’s language of origin. Hymes (1982) consistently claimed that the representations of the oral narrative on the page in the form of line, verse, stanzas and scene was important in indexing a performative competence rarely conscious in the mind of the performer, but nonetheless real and present in the organization of the text. Writing is a visual medium of a language and thus, one should pay attention to the visual presentation of the word on a page if one is to be able to write the previously “invisible” oral narrative.

Both anthropology scholars and linguists (Hymes and Tedlock, as cited in Moore, 2013) developed Ethnopoetics as a separate discipline of study in the middle of the Twentieth Century. In addition, Tedlock (1992:80) says, “The aim is not only to analyse and interpret oral performances but also to make them directly accessible through transcriptions and translations that display their qualities as works of art.” Tedlock (1992) further argues that practitioners in the discipline of ethnopoetics treat the relationship between performance and text as a subject of experimentation. Texts that were taken down in the era of handwritten dictation and published as prose are reformatted and retranslated in order to reveal their poetic features. In the case of a sound recording, transcripts and translations are not only used as listening guides, but also as scores for new performances. The Ethnopoetics Theory takes interest in the aesthetic components and the poetic structuring of oral poetry. Ethnopoetics

gives guidelines on how to organize an oral text into lines to render its fullest charge of poetic texture: rhythm, nuance, phrasing and other components that allow the development of full poetic meaning. The intention is that this poetic restructuring particularly helps in the realization of poetic qualities in African poetic works.

Furthermore, Ethnopoetics has been concerned with individual creativity and the careful attention paid to linguistic details (Hymes, 1981; Tedlock, 1983; Johnstone, 1996). As Bahr (1986: 171) notes, “ethnopoetics should be more than the study of technique... it should include meaning and use.” Friedrich (2006) and Blommaert (2006) have embarked on useful evaluations of ethnopoetics work. As Blommaert (2006: 259) puts it, “ethnopoetic work is one way of addressing the main issue in ethnography: to describe (and reconstruct) languages not in the sense of stable, closed and internally homogeneous units characterizing mankind... but as ordered complexes of genres, styles, registers and forms of use.” Such a perspective ought to engage individual poets on the one hand, but also the languages they use and the connections they make on the other.

Related to the above, Blommaert (2006: 266) articulates that “ultimately, what ethnopoetics does is to show voice, to visualize the particular ways often deviant from hegemonic norms in which subjects produce meaning.” The researcher observes the recognition of voice as central concerning Ethnopoetics (Kroskrity and Webster, 2015). Blommaert (2006:181) also discovered that Ethnopoetics is a literary method “designed, initially, for the analysis of poetry and folk stories and based on an ethnographic performance-based understanding of narratives emphasizing that meaning is an effect of performance.”

In addition, Ethnopoetics, seen from this perspective, is a literary method used to analyse poetry in order to discover meaning. This meaning is not only embedded in the literary diction but also in the performance itself, particularly the sounds, pauses and even the vocal hems. This understanding of poetic analysis relates this study of poetics not only to the written text, but also to the audible aspect of the language. Sherwood (2008) discusses the breadth of Ethnopoetics as a project greatly engrossed in showing the variety and importance of oral poetries, along with elaborating the role that transcription and translation play in the re-evaluation of poetry beyond the limited Western canonical view. Sherwood further points out that Ethnopoetics enlarges the possibilities of poetry through its active questioning of the Western canon.

Authors take up various stands on Hymes' Ethnopoetics interest and reveal how this focus on verbal art, far from being a marginal pursuit of the occasional Americanist project, is actually central to many contemporary issues of folklore, linguistic and cultural anthropology. Indeed, more scholars have been pushing for a rethinking of the importance of an ethnopoetic research. Hence this theory, as it applies to this study, is being used to analyze the internal structure of performance poetry. AmaZulu poets have been using a different approach that has been discovered in the use of contemporary poetry for some reasons. The canon of performance poetry being studied exudes the fact that poets do not take particular interest in the structure of the poem but the message being portrayed. Even though the main focus of this study is not on the structure of the poetry per se, the researcher is keenly interested in the performance poetry itself. However, it is necessary to consider the structural aspect in order to understand the poetic techniques and the stylistic devices employed by the poets in composing their poems. These manifest in the extract of the poem below:

*Ngingowesifazane  
 Ngiyintandokazi  
 Ukuba khona kwami kungeyakho Mdali intando  
 Nginothando angiyidingi intando  
 Ngingowesifazane  
 Ngimuhlekazi.*

(I am a woman  
 I am the favorite  
 I owe my existence to your will, Creator  
 I possess love, I don't need a love potion  
 I am a woman  
 I am very beautiful.)

The Ethnopoetics Theory takes interest in the aesthetic components and the poetic structuring of oral poems. Hymes' 'Ethnopoetic' approach to this material offers a theoretical framework and a set of methods that put these tales and myths back into their seemingly original contexts. Like the literary theorists of the contemporary generation, Hymes believed in the value of a close reading of a poem that is attentive to all the syntactic and semantic details of poetic texts that constrain the manner in which readers can interpret the meaning of the texts. Hymes also observed that the narrative text is a universal genre, centrally involved in the speech events in which culture is re-created and transmitted. Blommaert (2006) adds that ethnopoetic works could show the rest of the world what the Native American verbal art was like, at the same time

helping in the recovery of lost knowledge specifically in terms of the languages and cultural values that face extinction in the face of external forces.

Hymes' Ethnopoetics revolves around the conception that narratives are primarily organised in terms of formal and aesthetic 'poetic' patterns, not in terms of content or thematic patterns. The narrative is therefore seen as a form of action, of performance and the meanings it generates are attributed to the effects of performance. Narrative texts, seen from this perspective, are organized in lines and in groups of lines (verses, stanzas), and the organization of these lines in the narratives is a kind of implicit patterning that creates the narrative effect, including emphasis and insistence, the narrative-thematic divisions and so on (Hymes, 1996). Content, in other words, is an effect of the formal organization of a narrative: what there is to be told in the poem emerges out of how it is being told.

The relationship further manifests itself in prosodic aspects such as stress, pauses, pitch and intonation, syntactic aspects such as similarity or parallelism in grammatical structure, morpho-grammatical aspects such as similarity in verb tense or aspect, phonetic aspects such as alliteration and rhyme as well as lexico-syntactic aspects such as the use of certain linguistic particles or discourse markers. Poetic presentations in the form of lines and verses expose the shaping artistry of the narrators. According to Burke (1968: 38), the narrative presentations in poetry lie in "all that complex wealth of minutiae which in their line for-line aspect we call style and in their broader outlines we call form." Slowed reading makes it far more possible for the reader to perceive repetition, parallelism and succession in a particular text and what is constant and variable among texts. Such analysis contributes to a general theory of the competence and practices involved in the oral narrative itself.

This theory aids in literary interpretation of performance poetry and the methodology of transcription and data analysis of collected data, especially on the stylistic devices and techniques employed by poets in poem composition. The relevance of this theory to this study is that poetry cannot be studied without taking into consideration the structure and the pattern of that particular poetry. Even though the focus of this study is not exclusively on the structure, this aspect ought to be considered when analyzing the new phenomenon recently embedded in performance poetry, which forms part of the structure.

## **2.10 Conclusion**

Different scholarly views on what poetry means have been presented and opinions differ from scholar to scholar depending on the approach each scholar adopts and what exactly that scholar intends to achieve. Several ideas have been discovered although they are apparently related to one another. Varying submissions on performance poetry have been supported by critical studies to prove that they are of a similar message but different voices. The researcher would like to categorically state that all the works analysed for this study are unequivocally exceptional. They contributed magnificently to the discussion and analysis of poetry in general and performance poetry in particular.

This literature review has proved that every oral tradition has a unique role in the development of society. The review has not been restricted to literature on contemporary performance poetry. In fact, it has taken into account other forms of oral traditions. The reason for being inclusive is that while this study is concerned with performance poetry, it has to be highlighted that such works of art do not stem from the vacuum but form part of other traditions as such creative arts begin with the jotting down of ideas before performance is done. This chapter aimed at reviewing related literature as it pertains to poetry in general, including oral poetry, modern poetry, performance poetry, praise poetry and children's poetry. This study also analyses contemporary performance poetry. Apparently, a lot has been said and written about this genre. It has also introduced the Expressive and Ethnopoetic theories to underpin this study. The chapter commented briefly on the theories in general terms and the significance of the theories in the literary works. The next chapter discusses the methodology of the study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Research methodologies differ from one study to another, depending on the nature or focus of the researcher's investigation. This chapter details the research methodology this research study adopted. This involves a description of the research design; the sampling technique used in the engaging with participants; study procedure; data collection strategy and data processing techniques. The chapter further provides details on the ethical issues the researcher considered as well as the strategies employed to maintain assurance in terms of the quality of the research.

#### **3.2 Research strategies**

A research strategy can be defined as a collection of both philosophical and theoretical commitments that may influence decisions made regarding research design and the researcher's choice of specific methods of data collection and analysis. Research strategy is also closely related to the questions the research is capable of addressing. It also determines the type of findings that may result from the research. Qualitative research strategies are meaning-centred and are informed by the interpretivist tradition in the social theory. This tradition maintains that the description and explanation of the social world must make reference to subjective meanings (Kelly, 2016). This study embraced both Epistemological and Ontological strategies to research for one major reason that it is a qualitative study and this nullifies the need for the formulation of a hypothesis.

##### **3.2.1 Epistemology and research strategies**

All the aspects of social research tend to imply a specific intellectual stance that relates to epistemology. Epistemology is a theory concerned with the quest for knowledge. It is a branch of philosophical study that seeks to determine how a research finding can be accepted as 'true.' Qualitative social research seeks to establish knowledge about the social world through studying people's poetl interpretations of the social world. Researchers who opt for the quantitative social research apply a version of the natural science method used to establish knowledge about the social phenomena. Such researchers are called positivists. Positivism is not the only way of describing the scientific approach to the study of the social world and the

researchers who argue that quantitative data analysis provides important insights into the social world. The term ‘realism’ is often preferred since it conveys some degree of commitment to a scientific approach, though it offers a much more sophisticated view of the process of scientific research than that conveyed by the term ‘positivism’ (Kelly, 2016)

### 3.2.2 Ontology and research strategies

Ontology is a theory that describes the state of being and existence, one’s world view, and one’s sense of oneself in the world, how one and other living things exist in the world. The reality one believes in is out there in the world and the way one relates to it is affected by one’s ontological position (Wisker, 2009). Ontology also refers to the nature of the social: that is, ‘social constructs’ relate to interpretivists and ‘social objects’ apply to positivists. Wisker (2009) further postulates that ontology and epistemology underlie a specific research paradigm, which then informs a research study, and the theory used to structure and interpret the knowledge that is revealed or constructed and therefore interpreted. Similarly, the current study applied this approach to help the researcher gather information on contemporary isiZulu performance poetry.

Both qualitative and quantitative research approaches have been used by researchers as the most appropriate ways of generating new knowledge and developing the existing one. Each method is based on a particular paradigm, which is a patterned set of assumptions concerning the reality of knowledge (ontology), the truth of that reality (epistemology) and particular ways of knowing about that reality (methodology); and that the two methods (qualitative and quantitative) do not study the same phenomena. The table below summarises the distinguishable features of these two research strategies:

#### *Components of social research strategies (Kelly, 2016)*

	<b>Qualitative research strategy</b>	<b>Quantitative research strategy</b>
Defining characteristics	Meaning-centred	
Descriptive aims	Detailed descriptions of core meanings of a culture. Interpretation of the meaning of action.	Summarises descriptions (averages and variation) of social variables and the degree of confidence in these estimates.



Relationship between theory and research	Theory generation by means of revealing or reporting the constructions of reality in talk and text including official documents.	Theory testing via the establishment within a specified context of contingent relationships between variables taken as representing theoretical construct.
Epistemology	Interpretivism; The human nature of social objects requires reference to the subjective meaning when explaining social action. Theory is generated by analysis of the subjective.	Positivist or post-positivistic; Theoretical models are developed by deduction and tested by measurement of concepts and applying criteria of causal inference.
Ontology	The 'social world' is constructed in our attempts to understand it and act upon it.	There is a knowable social world independent of our constructions of it.
Theoretical perspectives	Symbolic Interactionism to post-modernism; Social structure is formed by institutionalized meanings and constructs.	Structural Behaviourism; Meanings and action derive from occupancy of structured social locations.

As alluded to in the table above, the researcher focused on the main aim of the research, which is to analyse contemporary isiZulu performance poetry. The researcher then gathered information aligned to the aim and objectives of the study through observation, recordings and interviews. All these reveal what exactly happens during the showcasing of performance poetry. Research is not a process merely confined to the gathering of information, as sometimes suggested. Rather, it seeks to address unanswered questions or create those that do not currently exist. In many ways, research can be seen as a process that expands the boundaries of our knowledge (Goddard et al., 2001).

According to Welman et al. (2005), research involves the process of obtaining scientific knowledge through various objective methods and procedures. Objectivity indicates that these research methods and procedures are independent of poetl feelings or opinions, and these specific methods are used at each stage of the research process. On the other hand, Kerlinger (1986) defines scientific research as a systematic, controlled, empirical and critical investigation of natural phenomena, which is guided by theory and hypotheses set to determine the presumed relations among such phenomena. However, social science research, according to Neuman (2000), is a collaborative human activity in which social reality is studied objectively with the aim of gaining a valid understanding of it. In addition to that, McMillan et al. (2001) view research as a systematic process of collecting data and logically analysing it for a specific purpose.

### **3.3 Research paradigm**

The Longman's Dictionary (1995:1205) defines research as "the studious study of a subject, which is intended to discover new facts or test new ideas; the activity of finding information about something that one is interested in or needs to know about." Accordingly, social research is a technical subject that has a precise variety of language. According to Kim (2003), as the definition implies, research is the strenuous journey to knowledge and researchers and scholars employ a variety of research paradigms to guide them through the course of knowledge acquisition. From the research perspective of organisational learning (OL), the three primary research paradigms, positivism, interpretivism and critical science, have been widely discussed and used within the field of research.

The term paradigm originated from the Greek word *paradeigma* which means pattern and the word was first used by Kuhn (1962) to refer to a shared conceptual framework which provided a community of scientists with a convenient model for the examination of problems and the search for solutions. Kuhn (1977) describes a paradigm as an integrated cluster of substantive concepts, variables and problems attached to corresponding methodological approaches and tools, adding that the term refers to a research culture characterised by a set of beliefs, values and assumptions that a community of researchers holds in common regarding the nature and conduct of research (Kuhn, 1977). Precisely, a paradigm therefore, implies a research pattern, structure and framework or a system of scientific and academic ideas, values and assumptions (Olsen, Lodwick and Dunlop, 1992).

Taylor, Kermode and Roberts (2007:5) describe paradigm as “a broad view or perspective of something.” Additionally, in their definition of paradigm, Weaver and Olson (2006: 460) reveal the manner in which research could possibly be affected and guided by a certain paradigm by stating thus, “paradigms are patterns of beliefs and practices that regulate inquiry within a discipline by providing lenses, frames, and processes through which investigation is accomplished.” As such, to simplify the researcher’s structure of inquiry and methodological choices, a consideration of the paradigm adopted for this study ought to be discussed.

Contrary, Strydom et al. (2005) argue that the term paradigm has its origin in linguistics, where it is understood to refer to the various forms words often take in some languages, according to the declension or conjugation of a particular word, especially as a model for other similar nouns or verbs. However, du Plooy (2013) defines a paradigm as a set of common beliefs about how researchers perceive the phenomena which they study. Some commonly employed types of paradigms include, amongst others, the positivist paradigm, the post-positivist paradigm, the interpretive paradigm and the critical realist paradigm.

The interpretive paradigm was employed in this study. This type of paradigm focuses on the holistic perspective of the person and the environment, which is congruent with the nursing discipline (Weaver and Olson, 2006). Additionally, the interpretive paradigm is largely associated with methodological approaches that afford an opportunity for the participants’ voices, concerns and practices to be heard (Cole, 2006; Weaver and Olson, 2006). This is important because the research undertaken using an interpretive paradigm focuses on social relationships as well as the mechanisms and processes through which members in a particular setting navigate their way and create their own social worlds. The interpretive paradigm also seeks to explain the solidity of behaviour from the individual's viewpoint. Researchers who subscribe to this paradigm try to observe "on-going processes" to get a better understanding of individual behaviour and the "spiritual nature of the world" (Bailey, 2007:53). The interpretive paradigm, in contrast, seeks to understand the values, beliefs and meanings of social phenomena, thereby obtaining *verstehen* (a deep and sympathetic understanding) of human cultural activities and experiences (Smith and Heshusius, 1986).

Interpretivist traditions portray a world view in which reality is socially constructed, complex and ever changing. From an interpretivist perspective, it is important to know the manner in

which people interpret and elicit some meaning of an object, event or perception. These constructed realities are viewed as existing not only in the minds of individuals but also as social constructions in the sense that individualistic perspectives tend to interact with the language and thought of the wider society. With the research goals involving the interpretation of the social world from the perspectives of those who are actors in the social world, it follows logically that the most suitable research methods involve interacting with people in their social milieu, conversing with them about their perceptions (Glesne and Pushkin, 2011) cited in Ndebele (2012).

The interpretive paradigm emphasises the point that any action can be explained in terms of the interacting factors, events and processes. It is difficult to attain objectivity and make broad generalisations when individual systems of meaning are involved and that reality should be studied holistically since the world consists of multifaceted realities. An interpretive research paradigm is therefore concerned with a descriptive analysis and understanding of knowledge systems and the way they are constructed to create meaning (Henning, 2004).

Interpretivist researchers are concerned with understanding the social world produced by the people through their continuing activities. This reality consists of meanings and interpretations given by the social actors to their actions, other people's actions, social situations and natural and humanly created objects. Precisely, in order to negotiate their way around their social world and interpret it, social actors have to interpret their activities together, and it is these meanings, embedded in the language that constitute their social reality (Blaike, 2000). The interpretivist paradigm is applicable to the current study since the researcher focuses on the social meanings, functions, motivations, ideas and feelings attached to the social phenomenon in the form of performance poetry performed by amaZulu people.

### **3.4 Research methods**

Research methods are the instruments and/or tools that researchers employ in administering any form of inquiry or investigation (Bailey, 1994; Walliman, 2011). Rajasekar et al. (2013) describe research methodology as "...the procedures by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena." A research methodology provides a piece of research with its philosophical background, the values and assumptions that drive the

rationale for carrying out the investigation as well as the standards that will be utilised for the interpretation of information and the drawing of conclusions (Bailey, 1994).

### **3.4.1 Research design**

A research design is a plan that guides the researcher's invitation of research participants and the collection of information from them. It guides the researcher's description of what he or she is going to do with the participants, with a view of arriving at conclusions about the research problem being investigated (Welman et al., 2005; Welman, 2009). However, Babbie and Mouton (2008) describe a research design as a blueprint for conducting the research, adding that it also entails a detailed plan according to which the research is going to be undertaken. A research design is further defined as a set of guidelines and instructions the researcher is going to follow in addressing the research problem.

In addition, the research design enables the researcher to anticipate the appropriate research decisions so as to maximise the validity of the ultimate results (Mouton, 1996). According to Mouton (1996), the main purpose of a research design is to capacitate the researcher as far as anticipating the appropriate research decisions that are likely to be taken is concerned in order to maximise the validity of the eventual research results.

A research design focuses on the end-product of the research and all the steps involved in the process of achieving the research outcomes. In essence, a research design is the functional plan that links certain research methods and procedures to acquire a reliable and valid body of data for the empirically grounded analyses, conclusions and theory formulation. Thus, the research design provides the researcher with a clear research framework as it guides the methods and decisions as well as setting the basis for data interpretation. Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006:71) define a research design as a set of "... operations to be performed, in order to test a specific hypothesis under a given condition." The research design in qualitative research offers probably the most flexible of the various experimental techniques that encompass a variety of accepted methods and structures (Astalin, 2013). There are four major types of qualitative research designs that are commonly used. These are: (1) phenomenology (2) ethnography (3) grounded theory and (4) case study. This research utilises ethnography, which the researcher discusses in the following section.

### 3.4.2 Ethnography

Ethnography requires the study of a group through direct contact with its culture and social interactions. Ethnology involves the systematic comparison of different cultures using a range of ethnographic research methods to compare and contrast patterns within and between different cultures. The term ethnography comes from the Greek word *ethnos*, which means people or cultural group, and the term *graphia*, which means representation of specific groups of people through writing (LeCompte and Priessle 1993). The etymological definition of ethnography carries in itself the explanation of what an ethnographer is supposed to do: describe specific cultures and groups of people, be they exotic groups from different cultures or groups within the ethnographer's culture. Ethnographies were first applied in cultural anthropology, but they are now being applied in sociology, psychology and education as well as marketing research.

Maree (2011) and Welman et al. (2005) concur with the above definition of ethnography, adding that the term has been traditionally associated with social and cultural anthropology. They further argue that in the field of anthropology, ethnography has been interpreted to mean the description of a community or a group that focuses on the social system and cultural heritage. Ethnographical studies assume that all human behaviour is intentional and observable and research should, therefore, be orientated towards understanding the rationale for people's actions. The researcher who is not a member of the group spends time living in the community observing and doing in-depth interviews, reading and researching on primary source materials and observing the lives of the people he or she wishes to study. Eventually, the researcher compiles all the obtained data and analyses it in such a way that he or she can create a full picture of whatever group being studied.

Creswell (1998) defines ethnography as the study of an intact cultural or social group based primarily on observation spanning a prolonged period of time the researcher spends doing fieldwork. Ethnographers examine the group's observable and learned patterns of behaviour, customs and way of life. They listen to and record the voices of the informants. Rubin and Babbie (2001) state that a good ethnographic study gives one an intimate feel of the way of life observed by the ethnographer. Welman et al. (2005) argue that the ethnographic approach to research has been taken over and adopted by sociological, psychological and educational researchers amongst others and all these are referred to as qualitative research approaches.

According to Maree (2011), ethnographers normally spend a significant amount of time in the field to allow themselves ample time to study the lives of the people within their naturalistic setting. The aim is for the researcher to be able to describe the culture or way of life of a particular group from the perspective of the folks or people by interpreting the inherent meanings of gestures, displays, songs, sayings, and everything else that has implicit meaning in that particular culture. An ethnographic study is especially useful for it affords the researcher an understanding of the complexities of a particular socio-cultural group. Ethnographic studies allow the researcher to engage the participant's observations, thereby becoming immersed in the daily life of the people being studied. In fact, during the course of the study, the researcher's role may gradually change from that of an "outsider" to that of the "insider". Arguably, the disadvantage is that the researcher may become too emotionally involved to the extent of losing the ability to assess the situation objectively and maintain accuracy (Leedy and Ormrod, 2014).

Throughout the fieldwork, the researcher is a careful observer, interviewer, and listener. Furthermore, the researcher takes field notes in the form of dialogues, diagrams, maps and so forth. Lengthy conversations and significant events are often recorded using audiotapes and videotapes. Considering the nature of this study, which dwells on contemporary isiZulu performance poetry evolving the study of poets, the audience and the community as a whole under the same aspect of language and culture, it therefore makes sense to employ the ethnographic approach in order to achieve the objectives of the study. Fetterman (1989:11) explains the ethnographic research method as "the art or science of describing a group or culture." As this study is intended to analyse the poetry among a certain group of people, this method is suitable and relevant. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), ethnography is more suitable than other approaches as far as this kind of research is concerned as the researcher is capable of studying the phenomenon as it occurs in its natural setting, without the researcher deliberately influencing the setting. These scholars further argue that ethnography allows for data to be collected from a range of sources such as documents, participant observation, informal conversation, and so forth. In this context, data does not entail a fixed research design from the start, but it allows for flexibility, depending on the context. Finally, data analysis involves the interpretation and the making of meaning out of actions and practice. In this sense, the researcher was able to attend a number of poetry performance sessions without influencing either their occurrences or content.

### **3.5 Research approach**

This study utilises a qualitative research approach, which aims at examining and exploring contemporary isiZulu performance poetry, through the use of observations and audio recordings and interviews. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research explores and seeks to understand the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Silverman (2000) asserts that if the researcher is apprehensive with the reconnoitring of a people's life, history or everyday behaviour, then qualitative methods may be the most preferred. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are discussed in this chapter in order to give a clear understanding of how the researcher chose the qualitative methods. The distinguishing of these methods is outlined as well.

Quantitative and qualitative research methods involve similar processes. For instance, they both involve the identifying of a research problem, the reviewing of related literature and the collection and analysis of data. Quite often, these research processes are combined and carried out in different ways, leading to distinct research methods, for instance, the quantitative research which often starts with one or more specific hypotheses to be tested. They isolate the variables to be studied, use a standardised procedure to collect some form of numerical data and use a statistical procedure to analyse the data and draw a conclusion from them. In contrast, the qualitative researcher often starts with a general research question as opposed to specific hypotheses. The qualitative researcher collects an extensive amount of verbal data and/or non-verbal artefacts, organises those data and artefacts into some form that gives them coherence and then use a verbal description to portray the phenomenon they have been studying (Leedy and Ormrod, 2014).

Qualitative and quantitative research designs are appropriate for answering different kinds of questions. As such, researchers learn more about the world when they are equipped with both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies than when they are limited to only one approach or the other. Some sorts of research problems may only require data that can be collected by observation and not interviews. One such example would be an observation survey at a recycling site and that is a component of a survey, which collected data on what is brought to the recycling sites on specific days. Such data only require a simple grid being made to aid the recording of the observations.



The limitations of this particular method is that observational techniques do not allow access to the underlying factors in terms of the behaviour observed; neither can the researcher learn about the attitudes, motives and explanations for such behaviour. However, observational research techniques are simple to carry out apart from being less resource intense (Flowerdew and Martin 2005). In this study, the researcher employed the qualitative method to explore and examine contemporary isiZulu performance poetry and its impact on the modern society. The qualitative research method was chosen because it fosters an understanding and interpretation of meaning as well as the intentions underlying human interaction.

### **3.5.1 Qualitative research method**

Qualitative research aims at providing an in-depth understanding of the world as seen from the perspectives of the people being studied. It does not aim at imposing preordained concepts. Hypotheses and theory are generated during the course of conducting the research as meanings emerge from the data. Statistical inference is not the objective, although, within government, results are used to inform policy and therefore some form of generalisation or transferability is implicit. Qualitative research may stand alone or used in conjunction with the quantitative research used before, alongside or after. Where the two approaches to research are associated, then the sampling strategies for both should ideally be considered simultaneously (Wilmot, 2005).

According to Babbie and Mouton (2011), qualitative researchers always attempt to study human or social action from the perspective of the social actors themselves. The primary goal for studies that use this approach is embedded in describing and understanding, rather than explaining, human behaviour. Therefore, qualitative studies use qualitative methods to gain access to the research subject (for instance, theoretical selection of cases, snowball sampling); qualitative methods of data collection (for example, participation observation, semi-structured interviewing, the use of poetl documents to construct life stories); and qualitative method of analysis (for example, the grounded theory approach, analytical induction, narrative analysis, discourse analysis). Qualitative research is appropriate to the study whose attitudes and behaviours are best understood within their natural settings, as opposed to the somewhat artificial settings in which experiments and surveys are done.

According to Kelly (2016), qualitative research methods allow the researcher to discover the manner in which the social world is constructed by the people being studied. The aim of the research is grounded in the need to report the manner in which the culture of a people observed challenges the popular but false stereotypical perceptions. Qualitative research often reveals the aspects of the social world that may or may not be recognised by those being studied. Qualitative social research is distinctive in that it is concerned with social processes.

Quantitative research often takes cross-sectional snapshots of the social world at one moment in time, whereas the design features of qualitative research are concerned with seeing how social processes emerge within the wider context of the social world. The use of techniques such as participant observation illustrates this commitment to the qualitative research process. Qualitative researchers seek to arrive at a better understanding of complex situations. Their work is sometimes (although not always) exploratory in nature and they often use their observations to build a theory ((Leedy and Ormrod, 2014).

Furthermore, qualitative research encompasses a number of methodological approaches that are based on diverse theoretical principles such as phenomenology, hermeneutics and social interactionism as they employ methods of data collection and analysis that are non-quantitative and those that aim at exploring social relations and describing reality as experienced by the respondents. Barton and Lazarsfeld (1979) cited in Sarantakos (1998) for instance, see qualitative research as an exploration that helps in analysing research objects, identifying indicators and establishing classifications and typology. It is also a discovery of the relationship between variables, enabling comparisons and conclusions to be made regarding the significance of certain factors for the relationship.

According to Gobo (2005), qualitative researchers seem to conceive the idea of their research simply as a means to reach a goal (the knowledge) and not an aim in itself or as an independent research area upon which to build an autonomous field to study a phenomenon that happened with the progressive emancipation of methodology, sociology and psychology. In other words, while the tendency for the exclusive methodological research makes its way, qualitative researchers continue to conduct only substantive research with the primary aim of creating a sociological theory if their primary aim is not to arrive at substantive knowledge and /or build a theory, and the rules might well become an obstacle that distract the research from its primary aim.

In addition, qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach in order to understand phenomena in context-specific settings, such as the "real world setting [where] the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest" (Patton, 2001:39). Qualitative research is broadly defined as "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:17) and instead, it is a kind of research that produces findings arrived at from real-world settings where the "phenomenon of interest unfold naturally" (Patton, 2001:39).

Qualitative analysis produces a type of knowledge different from that generated by the quantitative inquiry because the former builds an argument from the underlying philosophical nature of each paradigm by gathering data through detailed interviews and the latter focuses on the apparent compatibility of the research methods, "enjoying the rewards of both numbers and words" (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992: 8). By implication, such methods like interviews and observations are dominant in the naturalist (interpretive) paradigm and they are supplementary in the positivist paradigm, where the use of surveys serves in the opposite order. Although it has been claimed that quantitative researchers attempt to disassociate themselves as much as possible from the research process, qualitative researchers have come to embrace their involvement and role within the research itself (Winter, 2000). Patton (2001) supports the notion of the researcher being involved and immersed into the research by perceiving the real world as being subject to change and therefore, a qualitative researcher should be present in order to witness the changes and then record the events before and after the changes have occurred. However, both qualitative and quantitative researchers ought to test and demonstrate the credibility of their studies. All research, whether qualitative or quantitative, is based on an underlying assumption that constitutes valid research and that research methods are appropriate for a particular reason and in a particular research context.

The study of nature in which the form of reality is examined is called ontology. The nature and form of reality are defined in different ways by various philosophers, and in a diversity of research methodologies and approaches to research. Positivist researchers argue for one objective reality observable by an inquirer who has a little, if any, impact on the object being observed and the object has an ontological status in itself, a state which therefore makes it possible to study it objectively (Maree, 2011). Positivists believe that knowledge can only be revealed or discovered through scientific methods. They maintain that discovered knowledge

enables the researcher to provide a possible explanation for the occurrence of things in the world, often independently of the intentions of people.

This approach emphasises the need for experimentation, observation, control, measurement, reality and validity in the various research processes. On the contrary, Maree (2011) asserts that qualitative researchers perceive the world as being made up of people with their own assumptions, intentions, attitudes, beliefs and values, and thus, reality can only be known by exploring the experiences of a sample of people regarding a specific phenomenon in an attempt to see how other people have constructed reality by inquiring into it. Clearly, qualitative researchers examine human events in a more holistic way in order to attempt to identify individual actions within their cultural context. This implies that human activities must be investigated in terms of their meaning, that is, attempting to explain the reason why people ascribe to certain meanings, why they do certain things, why they act in this way or that way. And all that must be interpreted by the qualitative researcher.

### **3.6 Sampling**

In this study, non-probability sampling has been employed. In a non-probability sampling, the researcher does not have a way of predicting or guaranteeing that each element of the population will be represented in the sample. Furthermore, not all members of the population have equal chances of being sampled. Leedy and Ormrod (2014) argue that there are three common forms of non-probability sampling which are convenience sampling, quota sampling and purposive sampling. Sarantakos (1998) asserts that the non-probability sampling procedure hardly employs the rules of probability theory; it does not claim representativeness and it is usually used for explorative and qualitative analyses. In this study, the purposive sampling technique is used in selecting a sample of poets from various areas. This type of sampling affords the researcher an opportunity to purposefully target a sample of participants with the desired expertise to address the research questions (Marshall, 2006; Sarantakos, 1998).

This method of sampling is suitable for a special situation where the sampling is done with a specific purpose in mind, such as when a research seeks to investigate the attitude of married women between the ages of 21-30 years regarding abortion. In such cases, the interviewer would specifically target women who appear to be in that age group, but the researcher would also have to ask the women about their age and marital status to make sure they qualify. In

purposive sampling, people or other units are chosen as the name implies, for a particular purpose. For instance, researchers might choose people whom they have typically classified in a particular group or those who represent diverse perspectives on an issue.

According to Maree (2011), qualitative research generally uses non-probability and purposive sampling techniques rather than the probability or random sampling approaches. Purposive sampling simply means that participants are selected because they possess some defining characteristics that make them capable of possessing the data needed for the study. Purposive sampling decisions are not only restricted to the selection of participants but also involve the settings, incidents, events and activities to be included for the data collection process.

In purposive sampling, researchers rely on their experiences, ingenuity and or previous research findings to deliberately obtain the units of analysis in such a manner that makes the sample they obtain representative of the relevant population (Welman, 2005). At some point in qualitative research, researchers have to make a deliberate choice about the kind of people to be included in their studies. In this study, the poetic works of different poets were selected and studied. Only 10 poets were requested to participate in the semi-structured interviews. The researcher pursued the informants she knew; those who had composed and performed on various occasions and the researcher knew that they would not object to taking part in the interviews. From January 2018 up to June 2019, the researcher participated in performance poetry sessions. As the poetry sessions took place at different times and places, the researcher had to keep abreast with them from time to time. The researcher attended a total of 15 poetry sessions during which details of the context, audience and nature of performance were recorded. Some of the data were collected on UKhozi FM during Bongani Mavuso's *Back to My Roots Programme* and YouTube.

This is important for this study since data gathered from such a sample can successfully advance the researcher's interests and has the potential to explore new perspectives. The researcher has been gender sensitive in the selection of the sample as evidenced by the selection of the work of both male and female poets and also considered participants from both urban and rural areas for participation.

### **3.7 Data collection instruments**

Sekaran and Bougie (2010) define data collection methods as an integral part of the research design, each method having its own advantages and disadvantages. During the execution of this research, a variety of qualitative research methods were employed. These methods include amongst other things, observations conducted during poetry sessions, audio or voice recording and in-depth interviews. All these sources were useful in painting a graphical picture of the issues around contemporary isiZulu performance poetry. Besides the aforementioned methods of data collection, the works of different poets were reviewed and analysed for purposes of conducting this study.

According to Creswell (2007), qualitative researchers gather multiple forms of data rather instead of relying on a single source of data. Thereafter, the researcher reviews all of the data, interprets or makes sense of them and organises them into categories and themes that cut across all the sources of the collected data. Through the use of multiple data collection methods, the researcher hoped to triangulate the data in a way that enhances their validity to this study. In order to gather information relevant and particular to the individual participants in the performance poetry, the researcher used the research tools such as the interviewing of key informants (using both unstructured and telephone) and also the observation of participants. The data collection methods are discussed below:

#### **3.7.1 Interviews**

One of the most popular qualitative research tools is the interview method. Gubrium and Holstein (2002) advocate the use of face-to-face interviews, arguing that the method is more flexible than the rest in terms of question content and the target population, usually delivering higher response rates; it proves to be the most appropriate when conducting long interviews with complex questions and allows for unobtrusive interviewer observations. Face-to-face or poetl interviews often deliver more accurate responses owing to the naturalness that obtains within the context. The advantage of preferring poetl interviews to other methods, according to Fox and Bayat (2007), is that there is an opportunity for the researcher to reassure the respondent when showing signs of reluctance.

Further, the interviewer may also clarify certain instructions or questions. The interviewer has an opportunity to probe further for answers by asking the respondent to clarify some issues or expand on certain responses. However, one of the disadvantages is that poetl interviews can be costly. Poetl interviews provide a significant scope for interview error or bias in cases where the interviewer's behaviour, appearance or actions, in some way, influence the respondents to the extent of providing inaccurate answers.

Interviews are so flexible that they can be designed differently depending on the needs being addressed and the information being solicited. Interviews can be categorised into three types which are: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. For the sake of this research, semi-structured interviews were employed as part of the data collection process. Different methods of conducting interviews are available for the researcher and these include the use of poetl interviews, telephonic interviews and self-administered surveys (Welman et al, 2005; Fox and Bayat, 2007). For purposes of this study, the researcher focused on the telephonic and face-to-face interviews. In these interviews, the interviewer interacts directly with the respondents as opposed to telephone interviews and other methods (Fox and Bayat, 2007). In this study, 10 poets were invited to participate through responding to the pre-structured research questions.

### **3.7.1.1 Semi- structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews are non-standardised and are often used in qualitative analysis. In this type of interview, the interviewer does not conduct research with the aim of testing a specific hypothesis (David and Sutton, 2004). This type of interview gives the researcher an opportunity to probe for the interviewee's views and opinions. Probing is a strategy through which the interview explores new information paths which were not initially considered by the researcher (Gray, 2004).

In this study, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews that targeted participants whose ages ranged from 15 to 35. This particular age group was targeted for it is the most actively involved in performance poetry. During the data collection process, the researcher attended poetry readings in Durban and surroundings areas. The researcher videotaped the poets as they staged live performances of their works to the audience. After the performances, few poets whose poems the researcher found interesting and relevant to the study were invited to participate in the interviews. Some of the poets were interviewed right on the spot but others

were not comfortable with giving instant responses and therefore, the researcher had to arrange appointments in order to meet them as individuals. In this way, a total of 10 poets were interviewed on their experiences and their views regarding the impact of performance poetry on their lives and the society as a whole. The majority of the interviews lasted between 10 and 20 minutes and the participants were encouraged to speak freely about their experiences and performance. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed to produce primary thematic data.

### **3.7.1.2 Telephonic interviews**

Frey (1983) defines a telephonic conversation as an interactional communication sequence occurring without the assistance of visual cues. A few scholars like Oppenheim, (1992) and Barriball et al. (1996) compared telephone and face-to-face type of interviewing and concluded that telephonic interviewing produces data that are at least comparable in terms of quality than that attained through the face-to-face interview. Telephonic interviews often reduce response biases that are often associated with face-to-face interviews. When conversing over the phone, the interviewer is not physically present in the room to impose their influence on the interviewee's answers or make the interviewee feel uncomfortable if the research questions are very sensitive. The anonymity that characterise the telephonic interview reduces the interviewer's bias by making the interview setting more calming and comfortable. This leads to more accurate and truthful data being collected (Musselwhite et al., 2007).

Perhaps the most commonly quoted advantage associated with using the telephone is both time and cost effectiveness it affords to researchers (Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004). First, telephonic interview allows the qualitative researcher to interview a greater number of people relying on a relatively smaller budget and a more constrained time frame. Second, the telephonic interview allows geographically dispersed people to participate in studies that they might not have been able to participate in, had the nature of the interview been face-to-face (Glogowska et al., 2011). Finally, the telephonic interview allows researchers who are physically disabled or have pressing commitments to undertake a study that may otherwise involve traversing great distances to conduct interviews with participants (Glogowska et al., 2011).

In this study, the interview method was presented as a conversation in which interviewees shared their poetl experiences and views regarding the impact of performance poetry on society



and its contribution to language and cultural development in society. The researcher put in place measures that helped to overcome any misconceptions or stereotypical views about interviews. The interviewer conducted a total of 10 interviews of which 3 were undertaken using the telephone mode and the other 7 utilised the face-to-face mode. The interviews were conducted between June and July 2018 and each took an average of 10-20 minutes. However, all the responses from the telephonic interviews were e-mailed to the researcher for transcription. The researcher's choice of the interview method as a data collection tool made it possible for her to probe for better understanding and through seeking clarity from the participant. As a result, some of the reporting and analysis of data was representative of the views of the participants.

### **3.7.2 Observation**

The observation method is a type of research tool in which the researcher simply observes participants for the purpose of understanding their behaviours and culture. This research method does not call on researchers to talk to participants. Instead, the researcher may make use of cameras, audiotape recorder, or videotape equipment to facilitate the observation, and a transcript is subsequently prepared to conceptualise the relevant issues. Such a transcript is apparently qualitative because the data are expressed in non-numerical terms, using language and images. In an organisational setting, personnel who often use the observational method include supervisors, human resources experts or consultants. By virtue of their responsibilities, such personnel are expected to observe workers' behaviours on the job (Krumm, 2001) cited in Ehigie et al., 2005).

Mason (2002) views the observation method as a tool for generating data and it entails the researcher being so poetically immersed in a research setting that they can experience and observe at first hand, a range of dimensions in and of that particular setting. These observable dimensions might include social actions, behaviours, interactions, relationships, events, as well as spatial, locational and temporal dimensions. Observation is all-inclusive since it is open to all observable social phenomena. Nonetheless, there are some limitations. For instance, there are issues that do not lend themselves to an observational analysis, such as sensitive political issues or the causes and consequences of social phenomena (Sarantakos, 1998).

Observational techniques are methods by which an individual or individuals gather first-hand data on programmes, processes or behaviours being studied. They provide evaluators with an opportunity to collect data on a wide range of behaviours, to capture a wide variety of interactions and to openly explore the topic under evaluation. By observing operations and activities directly, the evaluator may be able to develop a holistic perspective, which encapsulates an understanding of the context within which the project operates. This is particularly important where it is not the event that is of interest, but rather the manner in which that event may fit into, or be affected by, a sequence of events.

Observational approaches also allow the evaluator to learn about issues the participants or staff may be unaware of or those that they are unwilling or unable to discuss candidly in an interview or focus group discussion (Fetterman, 1989). According to Maree (2011), observation is an essential data gathering techniques as it creates the possibility of providing the observer with an insider's perspective of the group dynamics and behaviour in different settings. It allows the researcher to hear, see and begin to experience the reality, much in the same way as participants do. A researcher learns through poetl experience the manner in which the setting is socially constructed in terms of power, communication lines, discourse and language.

Furthermore, observation is described as a systematic process of recording the participants' behavioural pattern, objects and occurrences without necessarily having to question or communicate with them. Observation is an everyday activity whereby observers use their senses as well as their intuition to gather data. As a qualitative data gathering technique, observation enables the researcher to gain deeper insights into and an understanding of the phenomenon being observed. In the current study, the researcher collected data by observing poets during performance poetry events to provide answers for the questions derived from the objectives of the research. Observations were invaluable in so far as they provided information about the significance of these performance poems in their diverse forms.

According to Maree (2011), there are four types of observation employed by researchers in qualitative research and these include the complete observer, the observer as a participant, the participant as an observer and the complete participant. The current study employed an observer-as-a participant technique as the main instrument for data collection and recordings. The reason this research used these two methods is that data was collected as events unfolded, where the researcher observed everything that was happening during the poetry sessions.

Observable dimensions included the audience's behaviours, responses and attitudes, amongst other things. Again, the researcher tape-recorded poetry as it was recited on radio during UKhozi FM's programme, *Back to My Roots*.

Participant observation occurs when the researcher is simultaneously a member of the group she or he is studying and a researcher conducting the study (Babbie and Mouton, 2011). The researcher gets mesmerised by the situation but remains focused mainly on his or her role as an observer in that situation. The researcher often looks for patterns of behaviour in a particular community to understand the assumptions, values and the beliefs of the participants and to interpret the social dynamics, but the researcher remains uninvolved and does not influence the dynamics of the settings (Maree, 2011). One of the most obvious advantages of participant observation is that the researcher can do it anywhere (Kellehear, 1993) cited in Babbie and Mouton (2011). It is important to note that in observation it is pivotal for the researcher to make full and accurate notes of the occurrences during events. Even tape recorders and cameras can hardly capture all the relevant aspects of social processes. Another advantage of observation is the presence of the observant and contemplative researcher right on the scene of the action.

The researcher observed numerous poetry sessions in the search for more insights into the different themes that poets explore when reciting their poems together with other dynamics of performance poetry. Each performance session usually lasted for about two to three hours, giving the researcher ample time to get whatever information she needed considering the fact that she was not attending these sessions as a researcher but as an observer-participant. Even though the organisers of the performance sessions were informed about the researcher's other role as a researcher, the participants remained unaware of this reality.

### **3.7.3 Recordings**

The primary data were also gathered through voice recordings during performance poetry events in their natural settings. According to Babbie and Mount (2011), the term "natural" also reflects a concern for the normal and unobstructed course of events. The researcher also recorded poets when reciting on the radio on the *Back to My Roots* programme every Friday. Fifty poems were selected for use in the study, obtained from the works of different poets accessible on various platforms like YouTube, *Back to My Root* programme and from live performance poetry sessions. The qualitative researcher wished to study the events as they

occurred rather than to rely on a retrospective reconstruction of such events, although it shall be noted that certain qualitative designs made it imperative to resort to the latter.

The transcription of the recordings was done qualitatively. According to Bucher et al. (1956) cited in Ndebele (2012), voice recordings have assumed prominence as a technical aid in social research. Socio-linguists, public opinion, specialists, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, social workers and family counsellors have resorted to the use of electronic recording devices in their work. Although the use of electronic recorders was originally confined to the clinical and laboratory situation, they are now being frequently employed in field research as well (Bucher et al., 1956). Voice recording is arguably the best method, as raw data remain usable in subsequent studies. The scenario of not having to worry about taking notes enables the researcher to take part in conversations in a natural way. Maree (2011) also concurs with other researchers by highlighting the fact that audio or video recordings are frequently used to capture group discussions as well as the recording of non-verbal elements that may have slipped the attention of the moderator.

### **3.8 Data analysis**

Van Niekerk (1991) upholds the view that once data collection has been completed, the researcher should embark on the process of analysing them. As an analytical framework, performance studies allow researchers to take particular communicative acts, unearth the myriad of the thematic preoccupations and the relationships that construct them, and therefore interpret them (Counsell and Wolf, 2001). Several strategies can be employed to quantify the qualitative data collected using the designs described in order to create a single but comprehensive dataset. One of the commonest strategies is the counting of the number of times a qualitative code occurs. After the collection of the data, the researcher then needs to organise the information that has been gathered.

For the purpose of analysis, all the objectives of the study were identified using the specific themes to infer the conclusion from findings and was analysed qualitatively. As Miles and Huberman (1984) point out, qualitative data come in the form of words rather than numbers. In order to analyse and interpret data, a thematic analysis was employed. Thematic analysis refers to a method of identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. It minimally organises and describes the researcher's data set in greater detail. However, the

process often goes further than this, interpreting the various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998). In order to produce appropriate and accurate data for this study, the researcher considered the various but complementary phases of data analysis which are summarised in the below:

**Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006)**

	<b>Phase</b>	<b>Description of analysis process</b>
1	Understanding the core concept of poetry	i. Data collection
2	Familiarizing with data	i. Transcribing data ii. Re-reading the data and noting down initial ideas
3	Generating initial codes	i. Coding interesting features of the data ii. Collating data relevant to each code
4	Searching for themes	i. Collating codes into potential themes ii. Gathering all data relevant to each potential code
5	Reviewing the themes	i. Checking if themes work in relation to the coded extracts ii. Checking if themes work in relation to the entire data set iii. Reviewing data to search for additional themes
6	Defining and naming themes	i. Generating clear definitions and names for each theme
7	Producing a report	i. Final analysis of selected extras ii. Relating the analysis back to the research questions

The table above maps out the phases the researcher went through in her accomplishment of the current study. Primary data were collected from their natural settings through observation, audio recordings of live poetry sessions and semi-structured interviews. After collecting data,

the researcher had to organise the information she had gathered. Audio-recording was the most important tool used at the time of data analysis, a process that required frequent repetition. This repetitive process was inevitable since the researcher had to fully see, hear, digest and understand the performances staged by the various poets. According to Eisner (1991), note-taking and audio-taping are crucial tools in any qualitative research in so far as they provide the researcher with reminders, the accurate quotations and details for both descriptions and data interpretations.

In addition, data were analysed through the use of content coding procedures in order to identify themes that are related to the major topics looming in the conceptual framework and the interview protocol (Weber, 1990). Further, an inductive approach was then used to identify emerging themes that were then added to the codebook (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Weber, 1990). The themes were hierarchically structured, with sub-themes being created as and when they were appropriate. Data were then analysed and transcribed qualitatively. After the data was read and re-read, the researcher then classified them into distinct codes and themes. In identifying themes, the researcher had to look for important information emerging from the data in relation to the research questions. Creswell (2013:186) notes that “themes in qualitative research (also called categories) are broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form common ideas.” The researcher therefore, identified common ideas related to the issues being raised by the poets. Braun and Clarke (2006) add that thematic analysis is an analytical qualitative method appropriate for the identification, analysis and reporting of patterns (themes) within the data. Hardy and Bryman (2004) hold the view that thematic analysis is an approach concerned with content analysis, where the coding system depends on the categories designed to capture the dominant thematic stakes.

The subsequent step involved data interpretation. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006:161-162), in qualitative research, data interpretation is a process that “brings meaning and coherence to the themes, patterns, categories, developing linkages and story line that is engaging to read.” Similarly, Creswell (2013) describes data interpretation in qualitative research as involving the act of going beyond codes and themes, reaching out to the larger activity of establishing meaning out of the gathered data.

The last stage involved an interpretation of the data derived from observations of the natural occurrences of performance poetry and the interviews that were administered to a few

individual poets. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) also argue that data analysis is a process that involves a systematic searching and arranging of the interview transcripts and the materials that are accumulated to increase the researcher's understanding of them and to present to the others what has been discovered. Data analysis is conducted so that the researcher can detect a consistent pattern. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) define data analysis as the organisation of what has been observed in order to sensibly interpret what the researcher has discovered during the data collection process.

### **3.9 Ethical considerations**

When conducting any research, conducting oneself ethically is a crucial responsibility the researcher ought to uphold as ethical conduct ensures the protection of the rights of participants, apart from facilitating communication on the field. Researchers are expected to protect participants from the risk of harm, whether physical, emotional or otherwise arising from their participation in the research. It is also a commitment for the researcher to ensure high quality work and professionalism (Neuman, 2006). The ethical considerations the researcher employed in this study are outlined as follows:

**Informed consent:** Obtaining informed consents implies that all the possible or adequate information on the goal of the investigation, the procedures to be followed during the investigation, the possible advantage or disadvantage related to the investigation and dangers to which the respondents may be exposed, as well as the credibility of the researcher, be rendered to the potential subjects or their legal representative (Williams et al., 1995). Informed consent becomes the necessary condition rather than a mere luxury or an impediment (Hakim, 2000). In this research, the permission to attend local poetry sessions was granted by the facilitators and the consent forms were also signed.

**Permission:** Depending on the nature of the study, researchers are obliged to seek formal, written permission to conduct a study. However, in this study the researcher did not require any written permission to conduct the study on performance poetry considering the fact that the study was non-intrusive. Regarding participants, however, permission was granted before attending each poetry session.

**Recording:** Permission to take videos and audio recordings during poetry sessions was requested and granted and this ethical aspect was also accounted for in the consent form.

**Honesty:** Facilitators of poetry sessions were alerted about the research and that a video would be taken during poetry presentation sessions as and when it became necessary.

**Confidentiality:** Confidentiality implies that only the researcher, or possibly a few of her assistants, should be made aware of the identity of the research participants and that they should also be obliged to commit themselves to the ethical principle of confidentiality. The principle of confidentiality was not considered as this study does not deal with sensitive issues that call for confidentiality.

**Anonymity:** Information given anonymously to the researcher calls for a need to protect the privacy of the subject. Researchers sometimes assure their subjects that they would adhere to anonymity in their covering letter or through verbal communication, but mark the questionnaires secretly (Strydom et al., 2005). According to Babbie (1990) and Bakker (1988), anonymity means that no one, including the researcher, should be able to identify any one of the subjects after the research has been conducted. As mentioned above, this study does not deal with sensitive issues; therefore, it was unnecessary to conceal the names of participants or any other information regarding poets, audience and the organisation of the events. Furthermore, exposing the names of the poets, the organisation and the events ultimately benefits them as they become well-known.

**Voluntary participation:** Despite all the above-mentioned precautions, the researcher made it clear to all participants that the research was solely for academic purposes, an aspect which rendered their participation in it absolutely voluntary. No one was co-erced into participation.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

This chapter dwelt on the research methodology and methods employed in data collection, organisation, analysis and interpretation during the study. Quantitative and qualitative research methods investigate and explore different claims to knowledge and reality and both methods are designed to address specific types of research questions. While the quantitative method claims that reality is objective, the qualitative method holds the view that reality is subjective,



and hence, it allows the researcher to explore the phenomenon under study in order to better understand its complexity.

This research adopted a qualitative approach in order to adequately investigate the key issues it seeks to address. This was then followed by an outline of the three major research paradigms and a detailed discussion of the phenomenological research paradigm. The target population, the sample and the sampling technique used in this study were explained. The various data collection methods that have been employed in this study were discussed. These include interviews, observation and recordings of the conversations as they occurred naturally. The adopted data analysis procedure was also highlighted and it entailed the transcription, organisation and the reading of the data, classifying them into themes, interpreting as well as presenting or representing the data.

Thereafter, the ethical considerations that guided the researcher throughout the study were also delineated in detail. Chapter four presents data analysis which is based on thematic distribution and the portrayal of the message in contemporary isiZulu performance poetry. The researcher believes that the collected data is responding precisely to the research questions and objectives.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EVALUATION OF THEMATIC DISTRIBUTION

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter is a critical evaluation of thematic distribution and message portrayal in isiZulu performance poetry. The poems discussed in this chapter are a canon of those that were recorded and transcribed during the actual performance sessions. The researcher presents the themes that emerged from the poetry performed in both poetry sessions on YouTube and UKhozi FM under the auspices of the *Back to My Root* programme. These themes emerged as participants staged live performances of their poems which articulate their experiences, life stories, principles, goals and actions that they value as members of the performance poetry community. The poems are a fountain of the knowledge salvaged from the past. They are a reservoir of the nation's history and culture that is handed down from one generation to the next through oral literature. The portrayal of messages differs from one poet to another. Furthermore, the occasion at which the poem is being performed determines the nature and manner in which the message must be conveyed.

Commenting on the Expressive Theory, Tolstoy (1995) believes that art is a human activity in which one person consciously, by certain external signs, conveys to others the experienced feelings. People are affected by these feelings and live with them as part of their everyday lives. Furthermore, art communicates feelings of an artist who views life through certain external signs. Artists are inspired by emotional experiences expressed skillfully through words, painting, music, movement and so on to embody their emotions in a work of art with the aim of stimulating the same emotions in their audience. The communication of feelings in poetry is inseparably intertwined with the articulation of thematic issues that the poets intend to put across to the audience. Therefore, Tolstoy's (1995) Expressive Theory is taken into consideration in analyzing and evaluating thematic issues and the message being portrayed in performance poetry. Discussing performed poetry as a genre exudes the fact that this poetry includes other thematic features and styles that influence this form of poetry.

## **4.2 Thematic distribution**

Themes are abstract and often fuzzy constructs that link not only expressions found in texts but also expressions found in images, sounds, and objects. You know that you have found a theme when you can answer the question, what is this expression an example of? Themes come in all shapes and sizes. Some themes are broad and sweeping constructs that link many different kinds of expressions (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). A theme is an expression of the reason behind a meaning that is depicted in a song or poem. It serves to embody the significance of a particular story. Poets exploit the theme of the poem to portray an artist's contemplations, convictions and qualities to the audience. At the superficial level, there are five broad categories of themes noticeable in performance poetry, and these are discussed in this chapter. Precisely, at the core of these thematic concerns are death, love, education, religion and protest. Some themes, however, are more dominant than others. This chapter specifically deals with the themes from the poet's perspective and perception.

### **4.2.1 Death**

Performance poetry expresses human consciousness of death. Arguably, death, as one of the dominant themes is commonly interpreted and understood as an external object or external identity whereas "dying" is perceived as a process which can be both external and internal, that is, a phenomenon that happens to others or to one self. Death poems are mostly performed at funerals and in most cases are performed by family members of the deceased. When they perform a poem at this kind of occasion, people become more emotional such that even the poet or performer may fail to recite his or her poem as a result of being overwhelmed by emotions. Msimang (1986) argues that death poems are abundant. Hence, some of isiZulu performance poetry that depicts death as a recurrent theme has taken particular interest in the death of family members, loved ones and famous people. The recurrent message in such poems is that human beings will always be overwhelmed with distress and misery when they have lost an close member of their family. In spite of it being an everyday occurrence, death remains a very painful and unusual experience. For this reason, this theme always catches the poet's attention because it is part of people's day-to-day life.

#### 4.2.1.1 Death in general

There are times when poets depict experiences that do not concern them at poet level. Rather, they compose poetry for the community as a whole. The purpose would be to share the feelings that the poet has about that particular phenomenon or to warn society about impending socio-political and economic developments happening around them, especially those which they are unconscious of. The poet, as a messenger and social commentator does not have boundaries, and as such, he or she would be courageous enough to confront whatever situation to which he or she is exposed. The issue of death is something that touches the human heart, whether the deceased is one's relative or a mere stranger. The poetry in this study shows that death of a human being has never been a pleasant thing. In his poetry, Smart Black captures someone who is on her deathbed. The poem titled "Snenhlanhla" bemoans the behaviour that has led to the death of this particular girl:

*Usengumuntu nje njengomshuwalense wokufa  
Lo mntwana uyayikhokhela indawo yokulala  
Ngihlangane nephupho lakhe lifake ingubo emnyama  
Nalo lithi alizikhethelanga  
USnenhlanhla uyena owazikhethela izindlela zobumnyama.*

(She is a mere person, just like a funeral policy  
This child pays for a place to sleep  
I met up with her dream wearing a black dress  
It also said it did not choose by itself  
Snenhlanhla is the one who chose the dark ways.)

Firstly, in this stanza, it may be surmised that the girl's name, Snenhlanhla, embodies the hope her parents cherish and in precise terms, the good they expected from her. Unfortunately, her behaviour and deeds do not portray anything positive about her future. This young woman is lying in a hospital bed, fighting for her life, but the poet maintains a pessimistic tone that dashes all hopes of her recuperation. The poet's concern is not the victim's situation; he is worried about the innocent souls that perished in Snenhlanhla's hands. After finding out that she is HIV positive, the lady deliberately dated different men and intentionally infected them. One may argue that the aim of this poem is to warn society against the likes of Snenhlanhla whose callousness would give them the guts to kill other people because of their negligence and self-seeking behaviour. When the poem is recited, the audience easily recognises the apparent anger

that characterises the tone of the poem. In spite of Snenhlanhla's deteriorating condition, the poet does not feel sorry for her. Instead, he believes that Snenhlanhla put herself into this predicament and caused pain to many other innocent souls. Gelcher (1986) says that the occurrence of death, although inevitable, can be significantly disruptive and upsetting to the family system and the network of relationships to which the dead person belonged:

*Imihosha yaseNanda ibikhala ngendlala ithi,  
Nakhu sekuphele izinyanga ungahushulanga mntwana.*

(Ravines of Nanda were complaining of hunger saying  
Months have passed without you aborting a child).

In these lines, the poet shows the audience that apart from killing people through HIV transmission, Snenhlanhla had a history of committing abortions. She is now remorseful, begging for forgiveness for having killed innocent souls. This poem is stirring society to the reality that not everyone who sleeps around does that out of love. There are those whose promiscuity aims at intentionally spreading the deadly HIV/AIDS, and killing innocent victims.

There are poems where the poet is not necessarily close to the people who died but is showing how death generally affects us as human beings as can be seen during natural disasters, and so forth. This is best demonstrated through Scelo Mpungose's poem titled "RIP Uyinene":

*Icala lokudlwengula nokubulala ayikho indlela yokulilungisa  
Shuthi nejele alibona ubulungiswa  
Ngoba oboshiwe usengaphuma  
Kanti umphefumulo awubuyi uma uke waphuma  
Shuthi nejele alanele  
Sithi sekwanele  
Ulale ngokuthula Uyinene!*

(There is no way of correcting a case of rape and murder  
That means even jail is not justice  
Because the arrested may still come out  
Whereas a soul never returns once it leaves  
Which means prison is not enough  
We are saying it is enough  
May you rest in peace Uyinene!)

The poem was triggered by the killing of 19-year-old University of Cape Town student, Mrwetyana Uyinene who went missing for a whole week and was eventually found dead. Uyinene was brutally murdered on 24 August 2019 after she went to the local post office to collect a parcel. This matter was all over the news and women were very vocal about the gender-based violence and women abuse. The University of Cape Town turned out in force to honour the murdered student. Thousands of students picketed outside parliament, where they jeered at police minister Bheki Cele and the Speaker of Parliament Thandi Modise, and cheered vice-chancellor Mamokgethi Phakeng. When you listen to this poem from the beginning, Mpungose is comparing men to a heartless dog. The poet further claims that even a dog is better than men. Mpungose is a male poet who is against the killing of women and children. In his poem, it can be observed that he was very angry and devastated by the incident. This incident happened during the same week where one father hanged his three children and one-step daughter following an altercation with his wife. All these cruel acts touched the hearts of many people across the country and people were vocal about these horrendous acts. Xolie Vilakazi also shares her feelings about this in the poem titled “Kungabe yimina yini olandelayo?”:

*Sengiqala nokumngabaza noyoba ubambo lwami lwakusasa  
Kwasemendweni angisalubhadi.*

(I am now starting to doubt the one who might be my future soul mate  
I no longer wish to get married).

Vilakazi is lamenting about the killing of innocent children in the community. The poet reveals that she does not trust even traditionally respected figures such as pastors and teachers, given the way men are cruel. In the line above, she reveals that even the biological father cannot be trusted because they are the ones who rape and kill their own children. At the same time, the issue of xenophobia gripped South Africa where people from neighbouring countries were wantonly killed. Some poets went as far as composing poems to convey their feelings about xenophobia. Siyabonga Mpungose was one the poets who were totally against the killing of fellow African brothers and sisters. He then conveys his message through the poem titled “Maluju”:

*Kwafika abangafani nathi,  
Imingcele bayikama  
Amazwe bawaqamba ngamagama  
Bathi asifani nabafowethu, beqamb'amanga.*

(The ones different from us arrived  
They demarcated boundaries  
They bestowed names to countries  
And said we are not like our brothers, telling lies.)

The poet titled his poem “Maluju” (A surrender). This word is commonly used during a fight where the defeated bows and says, “Maluju”. In this poem, Mpungose is lamenting about the killing of fellow Africans from neighbouring countries during the recent wave of xenophobic attacks. The attacks started after South African truck drivers staged a nationwide strike to protest against the employment of foreign drivers. Due to the high unemployment rate in South Africa, some people feel that foreigners are taking their jobs. Simply put, xenophobia is the fear or hatred of foreigners or strangers; it is embodied in prejudiced attitudes and behaviour, and often culminates into violence, abuses of all types, and exhibitions of hatred (Mogekwu, 2005). The poet reveals that the system of apartheid has had a huge effect on the attitudes of South African citizens for a number of reasons. Mpungose, like other poets is totally against the killing of the people of African nationality. In his poem, he complains about how the apartheid government made black Africans turn against each other. He says that blacks should realise that they are the same and belong to the same kraal. The poet is worried that black people fight each other and fail to identify the real enemy.

#### **4.2.1.2 Death of a family member**

In performance poetry, the theme of death operates at various wave lengths. The different messages the poetry disseminates ranges from the way one ought to acknowledge death, people’s reactions after losing individuals who had been important in their lives, and so forth. Whether it is the death of either a loved one or an enemy, it is something that is difficult to embrace. While people learn about death as often as possible in their lives, it is not an occurrence that they can easily embrace.

The death of parents brings a huge change in children’s lives. For example, in Siyabonga Mpungose’s the poem titled “Umalumekazi”, the poet views death as an eventuality that could possibly usher in a complete change in a person’s life. According to the poet, death is portrayed as an occurrence that causes untold suffering. However, such suffering can make the bereaved person stronger. Suffering is portrayed in Mpungose’s poetry as the pain or grief one has to endure one loses someone who is intimate to them.

The poem “Umalumekazi” is a reflection of the poet’s own lived experience. After the narrator lost his mother, life became very difficult. He had to relocate to live with extended family members and is now reflecting on how the death of the mother dislocated the course of his life. The poet is alluding to his experience with the extended family, emphasising that when one loses an important figure in their life through death, they can be promised heaven on Earth. The narrator was promised to be taken care of, which did not happen anyway. Here, the poet is not only talking about what happened during his childhood, but he is also revealing how the situation between him and his Malumekazi has changed. This is demonstrated in the poem below:

*Kodwa kukhona amazwi angiduduzayo  
“Ungadabuki ndodana... sizoba nawe njengomndeni.”*

(However, there are words that are comforting me  
“Do not be sad son...we will be with you as a family.”)

This poem retells the sad story of the narrator who had been living with his mother since he was born. Following the death of his mother, he had to move to live with his aunt, in other words, his maternal uncle’s wife. In isiZulu culture, an aunt is regarded as part of an extended family because she is not part of the nuclear family. Although the poet’s aunt was a Christian, the way she mistreated him did not befit the notion that she was a woman of God. Further, given the way she was trusted in church, it was difficult to tell the congregants about the other side to her character. With the passage of time, the narrator succeeded in life. His success is juxtaposed against his aunt’s children who became street kids, smoked marijuana and got involved in drug abuse.

Later, the narrator saw his aunt across the road as he was driving past. He was not sure whether to give her a lift. In this poem, he sounds very disturbed and heart-broken by the loss of his mother and what life turned out to be, and he soon realized how important his mother was in his life. He needed someone to console him. Unfortunately, he was treated in a manner that the opposite of what he expected from his family. In this poem, the poem warns that in life, people should desist from ill-treating others because they may need them in future. This is demonstrated through the following lines:

*Ok, ngihlangana nomalumekazi endleleni imvula iyamnetha  
Angazi noma ngimthathe yini, ngenze njani?*



(Ok, I come across my aunt on the way and the rain is all over her  
I do not know if I should pick her up, what should I do?)

The poet reveals that an unpleasant relationship existed between him and his aunt. In the last stanza, the poet explains that his aunt is now a destitute and the children that she loved over him never succeeded in life. He is the only child who succeeded and even bought a car. The bad relationship manifests itself in the fact that while driving, he saw his aunt walking and opted to leave her behind. The poet finds himself at crossroads as he suffers from indecision. He is caught between two things whether to leave her or forgive her and offer her a lift. The message being portrayed here is that everybody is important and nobody should undermine the other person because nobody knows what the future holds. The poet has this to say:

*Uvuma namakholwa uvumela phezulu  
U-Amen etendeni esontweni  
Akekho ngisho noyedwa ongamsola  
Ubeyikhholwa futhi incwadi engcwele ithi ubeyikhholwa.*

(Her voice is loud amongst congregants  
“Amen” echoes in the church tent  
Not even one person can suspect her  
She was a believer and the holy book says she was a believer).

While this part addresses the theme of death, it can also be observed that apart from the death of his mother. The poet also depicts the hypocrisy of some church members. He portrays his aunt as a typical hypocrite. The hypocrisy manifests itself in the way she treated the poet, which is contrary to the values and virtues of Christianity. This simply means that trusting people at face value does not mean that what we think about their behaviour always goes in line with what we perceive. In some of his poems, Mpungose appears to be someone who believes in Christianity, but the devastation he suffered at the loss of his mother had impelled him towards scepticism and rejection.

The loss of one's loved ones is not easy to accept and poems in this study indicate that losing a mother is one of the worst things that can happen in a person's life. Bowlby-West (1983) contends that the loneliness that derives from losing a partner is not comparable to the loss of one's mother since the surviving partner may re-marry using an adaptive strategy known as replacement. As a matter of fact, the theme that revolves around death further indicates the painful reality that the deceased is practically irreplaceable.

Here is an example from a poem by Prince Lattifah Imbongi:

*Mama ngiyakhala elibeni, ngenze njani?  
Nalona owakuthembisa ukungibheka usengijikele.*

(Mother I am crying at the grave, what should I do?  
Even the one who promised you to look after me has turned against me).

Losing one's mother causes unbearable pain, and crying is almost inevitable. This line, on its own, shows that no one would ever find a perfect replacement for the place a mother occupies in a person's life. No matter how much one can try, a mother's position can never be filled. Prince Lattifah focuses on the devastating effect brought by those grappling with grief. We sense that the speaker has no hope by judging from his tone and the subject matter.

On the contrary, Mongameli Mazongolo tackles the issue of death in a different manner. It is apparent that most of the death poems, especially traditional poetry, would convey the feeling of sorrow and sadness. The poets would blame death for taking away their loved ones. In the following poem titled "Ukufa Kukamkhulu", Mongameli Mazongolo's raises several critical issues:

*Umkhulu ukusebenzelile ukuphila kwakhe,  
Wazisebenzela izingane zakhe  
Futhi akakhohlwanga umfazi wakhe  
Ekuhluphekeni kwakhe nasekuphumeleleni kwakhe.*

(Grandfather has worked for his life,  
He worked for his children  
And he also did not forget his wife  
Through his hardships and his success.)

In this poem, the poet presents his grandfather's funeral as an occasion for thanksgiving for what he did for the family. As the poem continues, he begs community members to emulate his grandfather. The mood and atmosphere he recreates seems to divert the audience's attention from sorrow to admiration. The audience had been listening attentively to the poem only to respond with a chorus of "mmmm" when the poem reflects sensitive topics. This creates the impression that not every circumstance surrounding death brings sorrow to the loved ones, but instead, there are times where people view the funeral of their hero or heroine differently; as a celebration of his or her achievements because of the impact his achievements had on their lives. In this poem, death is inspirational to those who are still alive, inspiring them to work

hard towards changing their lives and positively contributing to the development of the community in which they live, rather than feeling sorry for the deceased. Mongameli implores people to make peace and celebrate the life of his grandfather. Despite the pain that accompanies death, he believes that his grandfather did everything that he was sent for in this world and he equipped them with the relevant life skills to make them better people.

#### 4.2.1.3 Death of a lover

In performance art, not everything that expresses a state of mind originates from that particular mind. Poets can perform poetry that expresses sadness, without feeling sad themselves. Usually, this transpires when the situation being depicted is imaginary and therefore not poetically touching to the poets. Poets activate their imaginative powers and put themselves in someone's foot and imagine what they would say when they were given an opportunity to delve into the experiences surrounding their death. Hence, this poem is about a person who died due to a terminal illness and left messages to the living, particularly his wife. This is illustrated in the poem below by Nompilo Mkhwanazi:

*Ngivumeleni ngiphumule  
Ngilwile, ngizamile, ngihlulekile  
Ngivumeleni ngiphumule  
Kunginqobile ukufa amandla abengasekho  
Ngivumeleni ngiphumule.*

*Iminyaka ngigulile, ngizamile, ngehlulekile  
Bekungenhloso yami ngehlulekile  
Ngiyaxolisa bazali bami ngehlulekile  
Kunginqobile ukufa nibonile ngizamile  
Ngivumeleni ngiphumule.*

(Allow me to rest  
I fought, I tried, I failed  
Allow me to rest  
Death has defeated me, I did not have strength anymore  
Allow me to rest.

For years I have been sick, I tried, I failed  
It wasn't my intention, I failed  
I'm sorry my parents I failed  
Death has defeated me, you saw I tried  
Allow me to rest).

Here, death is portrayed as a source of relief from the worries of this world. Some people oppose the poet, arguing that death is a cruel occurrence that deprives man of the joys and

pleasures of the world and its precious life. Apparently, the deceased was tired and couldn't bear the pain anymore, and therefore to him, death comes as a relief. His positive feeling about what happens to him made the audience view his death in a different way. We are told by Nompilo Mkhwanazi :

*Mkami, s'thandwa sami, ngiyaxolisa ngehlulekile  
Uz'ungibhekele abantwana bami  
Uz'ungibhekele abantwana bami  
Uzuwuthande umndeni wami.  
Ngiyohlale ngikuthanda  
Ngivumeleni ngiphumule.*

(My wife, my love, I'm sorry I failed  
Look after my children for me  
Look after my children for me  
Please love my family.  
I will always love you  
Allow me to rest).

The deceased is pleading with his family to allow him to rest in peace after a long illness. He is trying to make his wife understand that he is unable to bear the pain anymore and so death has rescued him from the unbearable pain. At another level, he is asking the wife and the rest of the family to forgive him for leaving them behind. He does not only apologise to the wife for leaving her behind, but also for failing her. He implores his wife to look after the children and to love his family. In this poem, the deceased is blaming himself for failing his family as if he chose to die. This shows that he loved his family quite dearly but death has forced them to part. Chiwome (1996) avers that at funeral gatherings, people gather to recite and perform poetry to strengthen one another in times of grief and depression, and this is a reaffirmation of life. Therefore, poetry is a genre that is sometimes rendered instinctively. At funerals, many people use poetry to question death, which they view as ruthless and unfair. Other poets recite poetry to the grieving masses as a way of making them cope with the problems ahead of them and to come to terms with living without their loved ones.

#### **4.2.1.4 Death of a famous person**

Poetry depicts death as something that, in a weird way, unites people, regardless of their social status, race, religious orientation or country of origin. The inquisitive nature of humanity inspires countless famous poets to contemplate and write about death. When poets compose poems to pay tribute to famous persons, they do not aim at writing to appeal to the feelings of

individual persons. They empathize and put themselves in the shoes of everyone. Siyabonga Mpungose once recited the following poem to pay his last respect to the late soccer player, Senzo Meyiwa:

*Kwagqungqa eMzansi kwaba mnyama  
Walala uMagebhula  
Wathi uyazama ukukuvimba ukufa kwamhlula  
Wafela okungokwakhe.  
Bamdubula abanye nabanye babeka izinto, ezintini  
Amagwala ebulala uNozinti  
Isizwe sakhala  
Zagubuzelwa ifu elimnyama ezikaMagebhula.*

(South Africa just went dark  
Magebhula has gone to rest  
He tried to block death but it beat him  
He died for what was his.  
They shot him then others put things in poles  
Cowards killing the goalkeeper  
The nation cried  
The Magebhula's are covered by a dark cloud.)

Senzo Meyiwa was a goalkeeper for Orlando Pirates and Bafana Bafana. He was shot in cold blood while visiting his girlfriend, Kelly Khumalo, at her mother's house in Vosloorus in October 2014. As portrayed in the poem, the death of Meyiwa affected not only his soccer club Orlando Pirates, but also the nation at large. Following the news, one could actually sense that many people were still offended by the sad fact that hitherto, no arrests had been effected. Despite the fact that many people were touched by the death of this legendary goalkeeper, his girlfriend Kelly Khumalo was perhaps shattered more than anyone else. She later decided to compose a song to honour her late boy-friend. In the emotional track, the extroverted singer pours her heart out and declares that “no one will replace Senzo”. Kelly Khumalo admits that writing the song was like undertaking a proverbial journey back to the pain she felt on 26 October 2014 when her emotional pillar and soccer star was slain.

The passing away of Nelson Mandela resulted in much pain as evident in the following poem:

*Noma esibathandayo kanye namaqhawe nsuku zonke besishiya  
Mina angifuni emaZulwini ozongikhonondela  
Ingakho ngithi lala kahle qhawe lami  
Hamba kahle Madiba!*

(Even though the ones we love and our heroes leave us every day  
I do not want anyone in heaven to complain about me  
That is why I say rest in peace my hero

Go well Madiba!)

Artists use different ways to express their points of view in their works of art. In this poem, the poet expresses his emotional frustration and despair following the passing on of former South African President Nelson Mandela. Nelson Mandela, one of the most celebrated icons in the world died in 2015 at the age of 95. His death was mourned, not only by all South Africans but also by admirers from all walks of life and across the world. Even though this poem is about grieving, it simultaneously reminds us of the heroic significance of Nelson Mandela, especially to those who may not have been born at the time when the struggle for freedom was waged.

Besides Mandela, there are many other icons that poets mourn as evident in Siyabonga Mpungose's poem :

*Ngixolele Chris Hani ukuthi emva kweminyaka ewu-26  
Angikwazanga ukuthola umsunguli kwelokubulala itulo  
Isizathu enkululekweni yakho owayifela,  
Besisabanga imali, izikhundla kanye nezitulo.*

(Forgive me Chris Hani that after 26 years  
I couldn't find the mastermind behind the plan to kill you  
The reason is that in the freedom you died for  
We were still fighting over money, positions and seats).

.....

*Chris Hani, abantu abasha balahle ithemba akobe uyezwa.  
Ngizovota ngoba ngenqena ukubuyisela amandla  
Kubabulali bakho, nginonembeza.  
Kodwa ngiyazama ngikhuluma nabaphethe abezwa,  
Chris Hani, Chris Hani.*

(Chris Hani, the youth have lost hope, I hope you can hear.  
I will vote because I do not want to give power  
Back to your killers, I have a conscience.  
But I try to speak to the ones in charge, they are deaf  
Chris Hani, Chris Hani).

The poet mourns the death of Chris Hani, one of the icons of South Africa's struggle for liberation. Besides that this poem deals with death, it ostensibly presents the poet's view of South Africa's political elite. The poet courageously confronts the issue of the betrayal of the hopes and aspirations of the masses as some of the things that Chris Hani fought against, still exist in the new political dispensation. Blacks still live in poverty and financial oppression

despite the advent of democracy. What makes this poem peculiar to other poems that depict death is that it is more educational and focusses more on political realities in the country than in the death of Chris Hani itself.

Most of the young people in our country were born after the demise of Apartheid. Although they read about it, they never experienced the real struggle against this discriminative system. When one analyses this poem up to its end, one comes to the conclusion that Mpungose is seized with the quest to respond to the world as the spokesperson of the society. The way in which he frames the questions is a clear indication that the poet is searching for immediate answers to the unbearable situation that confronts young people out there, all in the name of democracy. The way he speaks or communicates with Chris Hani shows that people have been talking about these issues for so long with no solution in sight. Now he is begging Hani to rise from the dead, in the metaphorical sense, so as to do something to address the matter since he was part and parcel of the struggle against Apartheid.

Several scholars such as Gerber (1961), Thurman (1978), Mlondo (1994), and Zulu (1994) also reflect on the theme of death in poetry. In his analysis, Mlondo (1994) argues that Ntuli excels in conveying the message of death to the readers by employing stylistic devices such as metaphor and personification to express grieving. Mlondo further demonstrates Ntuli's same artistic skill in the poem titled "Ukhozi," arguing that literally, when you see the word 'Ukhozi,' you think about the bird. Mlondo's analysis clarifies the fact that Ntuli was not actually referring to a literal bird but to death. He just looked at how a hawk snatches away chicks from the family yard. He paints an imaginary situation that often occurs when the chicks experience the freedom and happy movement in the yard when the hawk surreptitiously strikes and snatches away its victim, with the swiftness of lightning. Subsequently, the hen moves around the yard crying. This is symbolic of what happens when death claims a member of the family.

Thurman (1978) makes a similar inference to the one above in her analysis of the themes of God and death in Stevie Smith's poetry. In her critical appreciation of this poetry, Thurman (1978) comments that Smith always personifies death as a god in her, but the god is kinder than the Christian one about whom she writes. She believes that in Smith's poetry, death offers a wonderful gift to Man. Precisely; Smith's poems about death reveal an acceptance and eager anticipation of her own death. All these thoughts and creativity show that the poet is indeed good at employing the appropriate poetic devices..

The most important aspect that stands out between the traditional poetic genre and contemporary performance poetry is that in the latter genre, the performance poets' depiction of the theme of death does not successfully exploit poetic devices like metaphor, personification and hyperbole under this kind of theme. Their portrayal of death is unequivocally overt and right from the beginning; no attempts are made at talking about death in a stylistic fashion. Sometimes the reader would even discern the gist of the poem from the title itself.

#### 4.2.2 Love

Undoubtedly, love is a timeless and recurrent theme in literature. According to Kovecses (1986:94), "love is a fire which burns everything, it is a flood which carries us away, it is a depth which swallows us up, and it is a fluid which fills a container and then overflows." The intensity of love always reaches its climax no matter the yardstick one uses to measure it. The subject is so incontrovertible that to some extent, a poet's individual experience and social background can influence his or her artistic works and attitudes towards love. IsiZulu poets, just like any other poets in this world, are influenced by love and its effect on people. In isiZulu poetry one finds a plethora of romantic tales that are devised by artists in order to depict the manner in which love influences humanity as a whole.

Most of the performance poems studied in this research communicate the theme of love as alluded to earlier on, but they depict the theme from a multiplicity of angles. The following poem by Minenhle Mthembu illustrates the point being raised here:

*Vuka njalo ekuseni umthumele umyalezo umutshale ukuthi,  
Awulalanga umcabanga  
Mqambele amanga, mfanise nenkanyezi nelanga nenyanga  
Msule izinyembezi ngezandla zombili uma ekhala  
Umchobe izandla kube sengathi umfundisa ukubala  
Uma kwenzeka nihamba, ungamshiyi ngemuva abazwani nokusala  
Uzokuvivinya-ke mzala, ukuphathisa isikhwama esimabalabala  
Phambi kwabantu mzala, ubosiphatha.*

(Wake up every morning and send her a message telling her  
That you kept awake, thinking of her.  
Lie to her, liken her to the stars, the sun and the moon.  
Wipe her tears with both hands when she cries



Play with her hands like you were teaching her to count  
If it happens that you are walking, don't leave her behind; they don't like that.  
She will then test you, my cousin; she makes you carry a colourful handbag  
In front of people, carry it my cousin.)

In the above-cited poem, Minenhle Mthembu guides men on how to behave in a romantic relationship in order to sustain it. The poet advises men to always love and praise their lovers. He also calls on men to remind their lovers every morning how much they love them. The poet emphasizes the point that a woman wants more attention in the relationship and men should take that seriously. Men believe that women are so complicated and in order to sustain the relationship, they need to understand their female partners very well and they should also equip themselves with the techniques on how to handle their everyday behavior. The poet continues:

*Yebo mhlasinge abanye babangane bakhe bayoba bahle kunaye,  
Lokho kuyokuxaka.  
Qina-ke mzala, khethile khethile hlala.  
Ukubalekele ukuphikisana,  
Ngoba onkabi bahlezi bevive ngamagama.*

(Yes, maybe some of her friends will be more beautiful than she is,  
That will frustrate you.  
Be strong then my cousin, you've made your choice, stay  
Do avoid disagreements,  
Because they always have words ready.)

Apparently, Mthembu's poetry dwells more on the preservation of love relationships rather than praising mere physical beauty. Through his love poems, Mthembu succeeds in expressing his inner feelings and imagination freely; not only to expose his innermost emotional disposition but also to help stimulate the same feelings in others:

*Nginenkani kwezothando  
Uma uhamba ngizokulinda  
Uma ukhala izinyembezi ngizokusula  
Uma ubuya inhliziyo isiphukile ngizovula  
Nginenkani kwezothando.*

(I am stubborn in love matters  
When you leave I will wait for you  
When you cry I will wipe your tears  
When you come back with a broken heart, I will open  
I am stubborn in love matters.)

What the poet is saying is a clear testimony to his unconditional love for his woman. The poem depicts love as always being more powerful than reason. The poet has already realised that he has fallen in love and has become immensely passionate in such a way that he is willing to go an extra mile to protect the love he has for the woman of his choice. Another typical example is Nonhle Mkhize's poem titled "Ningalunyakazisi'uthando":

*Madodana nani madodakazi ase-Afrika  
Ngezinsophe nangezindluzelekazi zasendle,  
Ngiyanincenga ukuba ningalunyakazisi uthando.  
Ningaluvusi uthando isikhathi singakafiki.  
Thina sabelethelwa emanxiweni akwaThando,  
Safika uthando seluthuthile sekusele igama.*

(Daughters and you sons from Africa  
By the springboks and the gazelle of the wilderness,  
I beg you to not temper with love.  
Do not arouse love before its time.  
We were born on the sites of Love,  
We arrived when love had departed and remained only in name.)

This poem basically warns young people against engaging in love relationships before they are mature enough. The poet narrates an unpleasant experience she encountered in a relationship she once engaged in at an early stage. Now, she urges others not to rush into love affairs. The poet is using the name Thando as a place when she says kwaThando, referring to the place where, metaphorically, uThando used to dwell, but left the place a long time ago. In this statement, she indicates that they had not found love since they were born. Nonetheless, young people still believe that love still exists, but according to the poet, they are talking about something they do neither understand, nor have experienced it. She says that the youth even died at Loveland.

Nonhle Mkhize's love poems express her viewpoint of love and the manner in which she presents her ideas and belief system concerning the effect of love on the human soul, which is based on her perceptions. Her poetry deals with love as a crucial facet of life, and she does also take into consideration the physical aspect of love and its effect on the individual's life. This poem is a demonstration of what love is and how best it should be understood. When she talks about love, she illustrates its effect on the human heart and soul, for men and women, a kind of transmutation that elevates them to a level only true lovers comprehend. Thus, her poetl experiences are evident in this poem. Mkhize depicts a gloomy picture of immature love that

the youth purport to have for each other. She believes that people need to be mature enough to commit themselves to their partners in a relationships so that they can feel the warmth of mature love. In the stanza below, the poet is meeting her love for the first time and thinks that he is the one, as shown by the way she trusted him with all her heart, envisaging a better future with him:

*Bengithi unguye umdobi wenhliziyo yami.  
Oqhamuke maqede ngambuka ngamsusa phansi,  
Ngamkhipha phezulu ngathi uyena lona.  
Ngakhipha inqina yamasosha enhliziyo yami.  
Ngakhipha iziketekete zokukhanyisa indlela,  
Ngoba ngithi unguye.*

(I thought you were the fisher of my heart  
Who appeared and then I looked at him from the bottom,  
To the top and then said he is the one.  
I sent an army of my heart's soldiers  
I sent lanterns to light the way,  
Because I thought he was the one.)

The poet expresses her steadfast love for one partner. She loves him so dearly that she calls him the 'fisher' of her heart. When one continues to listen and watch this poem on the video, one never thinks this relationship will end very badly. The love this woman had was so amazing that she gave herself to the man she loves, which suggests that this is the poet's first love experience. She has fallen deeply in love with her man who is portrayed as a good person at the beginning of their relationship, but he suddenly changes. The woman has to come to terms with the reality that she had been lying to herself all along by trusting a stranger, the man she just met on the street. Now she is narrating her story about how she felt about the man and how the feeling ended. At the end of the story, one is made to understand that the imagination of the woman was misguided as she was expecting a sustainable relationship that turns out to be turbulent and disappointing. The last line reaffirms that the poet was betrayed and disappointed by the man she thought to be her beloved, the real one.

Sbo Da poet's poems express the same sentiments when it comes to love. In "Uthando Luyahlanyisa" the poet seems to be very negative about love relationships, particularly married life which was a bitter experience for her. She suffered for so many years and had to contend with torture and abuse which became the main cause for her frustration. Her frustration and rejection could be understood through a brief analysis of the following lines:

*Okweqili kungibhangqa nodonga  
 Ngivike ngalo leli bhayibheli ngithelwe ngamanzi eshisa  
 Ngikhuleke kunjalo ngithi, “Nkosi yehlisa ulaka lwale ndoda.”  
 Ngivuke ekuseni ngithi namhlanje ngiyambophisa  
 Ngivukwe unembeza ngiwasule amacala.  
 Webafazi abakhulekayo ningabongikhohlwa emkhulekweni  
 Ngiyibambile insimbi ishisa.*

(Like a trickster, it hits me against the wall  
 I block blows with this very bible and be poured with hot water  
 But pray nonetheless, saying “God please pacify this man’s wrath.”  
 I wake up in the morning and say today I am having him arrested  
 My conscience prevails and I withdraw the case  
 Women of prayer please do not forget me in your prayers  
 I am caught between a rock and a hard place.)

The poet is narrating her experiences and feelings about love. Her marriage has brought nothing but disenchantment that has paved way for further pain in her life. For her, true love has proved to be only a fantastic dream, which can never really come true. The relationship is completely cold and characterised by violence. They have been married for a very long time but it seems like she has never received love from her husband. She prayed so that God would protect her household against disgraceful things from the community to the extent that she even defies the feeling of taking her partner to court for abuse. A further analysis of the poem reveals that the couple is still together although the relationship is devoid of any emotional attachment toward each other. Their hearts are empty and if anything, they are full of vengeance and anger. When one listens to the whole poem, one would see that this woman, like any other women, tried to live a peaceful life and even wished to become a good wife, mother and daughter but all these wishes never materialised. She has never been able to receive what she wished for.

Cheating in relationships is a recurring feature in many poems as can be seen in the following lines from Minenhle Mthembu’s poem:

*Ngempela ngempela uyifunani intombi yami ndoda.  
 Akoba kuhle ukuthi uhubhana neyami nje eyakho seyashona.  
 Ngoba uma kuwuthi isekhona ngizokuceba ndoda uzobona.  
 Nihlupha kabi nina madoda emali izwe niyalona.  
 Ezibayeni zamadoda niyaphuma niyangena ningomakhonya.  
 Ngizama ukwakha umuzi wena uyawubhidliza.  
 Uzomenzani ungekumlobole ngisho nokumlobola?*

(Really, really why do you pursue my girlfriend, man?  
 I hope yours is dead as you are busy chasing after mine.  
 Because if she is still alive I will report you, you will see.  
 You wealthy man are troublesome and destroy the world.  
 In other men's kraal you are in and out, calling the shots.  
 I'm trying to build a home and you are demolishing it.  
 What are you going to do with her because you won't even *lobola* her?)

This poem paints a disgraceful picture of rich men who ruin other people's relationship simply because they have money. The poet is depicted as someone who does not have money but has love and the willingness to pay bride prize for the woman he loves. An analysis of the message that the poem is conveying shows something that is rife in contemporary life. This is the era where the so-called "blessers" have taken the lead, especially among young women and girls. The sad part is that their money is accompanied by other packages, including unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. The poet addresses himself to the promiscuous man, not the girl. He understands that when all men behave in a morally unobjectionable manner and take good care of women, society will live in harmony. The poet views men as the ones who are capable of alluring women who are depicted as powerless and vulnerable.

Another example is found in Heavyweight's poem:

*Mfana indelelo yakho isingaphezu kwamandla ami  
 Isithanda ukungeqa ukhakhayi nami angisazi  
 Kodwa okusalayo angidlali  
 Ibeke la; ngicela inkomo kadadewethu s'bali.*

(Boy, your rudeness is beyond my powers  
 It is above my head I also do not know  
 But what remains is, I am not joking  
 Put it here; I want my sister's cow brother in-law).

This poem is in the form of dialogue, even though we cannot hear the two voices. Clearly, the speaker is addressing someone. One could assume that the reason we are not hearing any voice from the second person is that the first speaker does not allow him to say anything except to respond through actions. This person seems to be dating the first speaker's sister whom he gets pregnant. Therefore, the speaker wants this person to pay for the damages and there is no need for discussion. The dialogue shows that the characters speak for themselves to enhance interaction with one another. Through dialogue, the reader can learn about the poetlity of

characters through their words or through the conversation of some characters about other characters. The narrator is swearing that he is definitely going to pay.

In SimChina's poem cited below, a woman is meeting her love partner for the first time and she thinks he is the one and trusts him with all her heart. Because of the love she has for this man, she foresees a better future with him:

*Igalelo lakho nokwenza kwakho,  
Kungenze ngathi thokola themba amathunzi ayewukela.  
Mina bengithi unguye  
Kanti angibuzanga elangeni  
Ngikubuke ngakufunda ngeso lobuthongo  
Wena uyimpisi embethe isikhumba semvu.*

(Your contribution and hard work,  
Made me harbour some hope.  
I thought you were the one  
But I was wrong  
I looked at you with a sleepy eye  
You are just a hyena in a sheep's skin.)

Unfortunately, the woman's love and trust is betrayed. A further analysis of this poem indicates a mutual betrayal between the lovers. The poem commences by showing a woman who is overwhelmed by love, but later felt betrayed by her lover. The man also appeared good at the beginning of their relationship, but suddenly changed. The woman realizes that she had been deceiving herself all along by trusting a stranger whom she had met on the street. Now, she is telling her story about how she is feeling about the man and how the feeling ends. At the end of the poem, one understands that the expectations of the woman was unrealistic as what she was expecting turned out to be something else as the relationship continued to be marred by betrayal.

#### **4.2.2.1 Love between lovers**

Marriage is a highly valued institution across communities the world over. Most of the people hope to marry, and marriage is considered the most preferable living arrangement. Of the various milestones in an individual's life, the wedding ceremony is regarded as the most significant rite that binds the matrimonial relationship among amaZulu. In amaZulu culture, marriage is a contract not only between two individuals but also between families and clans. A

wedding is thus an open invitation to the entire community for it to witness and celebrate the matrimonial bond (Levine, 2005). There are many poems that depict love between lovers culminating into a wedding ceremony where marriage vows are exchanged. The poem titled “Sithandwa Sami” by Zamo Zulu depicts love between two lovers:

*Ngithi-ke kuwe s'thandwa sami,  
Lolu uhambo lwesethembiso  
Lolu uhambo lwesethembiso,  
Sokukuthanda ngothando lweqiniso  
Lolu uhambo lwesethembiso  
Sokukuthanda, sokukuphatha kahle,  
Ngezandla ezifudumele,  
Nangothando olupheleleyo.*

(I say to you my love then,  
This is the walk of promise  
This is the walk of promise  
To love you with true love  
This is the walk of promise  
To love you, to take care of you  
With warm hands  
And with complete love.)

This poem was recited by Zamo Zulu at a wedding ceremony that the researcher attended in Mtubatuba, KwaZulu-Natal on 25 November 2017. This young couple was getting married and enlisted services of a poet to recite a poem on this special day. The poem was crafted beautifully to remind the lovers to love each other continuously. Again, the poem revived love between old couples by encouraging them to hold on to their wedding vows. On the wedding day, the couples promised each other a lot of things, but due to the long metaphorical journey they have to travel, they tend to forget and breach most, if not all the promises. This part of the performance poem moved the audience as they could be seen nodding their heads in agreement with the poet's words.

Some poems that are about love between spouses are in the narrative form or in the form of storytelling. In one of Siyabonga Mpungose's poems, love is depicted through a narrative story. We are told:

*Siqale ndawonye eSifiso Esihle LP School  
Konje kwakusadlisa baphi abaculi:  
“It about time”... Boomshaka  
Vele ngase ngiyimbongi  
Ngoba ngangizishaya ngizikhiphe ngale izibongo zenkosi uShaka.*

(We started together at Sifiso Esihle L.P. School  
By the way which singers were popular:  
“It’s about time”... Boomshaka  
I was already a poet by then  
Because I could recite King Shaka’s entire praises.)

In this poem, the theme of love begins when the poet sees the physical beauty of the girl in their class. Since this beauty is a reflection of the ideal beauty, the poet begins to meditate, pondering on the imagined, inner and purified picture of the girl, a picture that is free from the flaws of external beauty. He then relates this new picture of the girl to the idea of beauty he idealises in his mind. His love becomes more of an appreciation of the spiritual beauty rather than the physical aesthetic value. This is found in the last stanza of the poem where the poet indicates that the lovers are no longer kids but a husband and a wife. The poem depicts the paradoxical nature of love, which is capable of growing as well as decaying. The poet does not doubt his love for this girl from the beginning; their love grows steadily and never declines. Even now that they are married, the poet appreciates and cherishes the presence of his wife considering the long metaphorical journey they have travelled together. The poet retraces the lovers’ journey when they were still young and at primary school. They grew older and older until they got married. The stanza cited below shows how far they have gone in life:

*Ngakho-ke abantu bangacabangi ukuthi Nontobeko,  
Ngoba sesigcine sishadile bekuyindaba yokudlala  
Usizi lwale ntokazi ngaluthwala  
Niyafuna ukwazi ukuthi ngamshela kanjani?  
Wena watholwa kanjani?  
Anotshela uNontobeko anifundise ikhadi lakhe le-Valentine’s.*

(So people must not think that Nontobeko,  
Since we ended up being married, it was just a walk in the park;  
I have carried the sorrows of this lady.  
Do you want to know how I courted her?  
And how were you swept off your feet?  
You must tell Nontobeko to let you read her Valentine’s card.)

In the poem above, the poet describes his strong love for his classmate. He only mentions the name of the girl towards the end of the poem. He also uses the male voice only, but even when we cannot hear the words of the woman, we can still sense the existence of the beloved one that the poet is longing for. However, the important point is that the poet presents a love story



between the partners. We are only made aware of his love with a woman because her name is mentioned in the middle of the poem. The poet presents the image of the woman as someone who was raised in an extremely conservative way because he never mentions anything about their dating. We only hear about his feelings towards the girl and that the girl is portrayed as being reluctant to commit herself to any relationship.

There is surprise when the poet reveals in the last stanza that they ended up married and that the poet had followed the right procedure in order to win this girl, which portrays the intensity of his love. The poet does not regret the time he lost while chasing after this girl and all the flops that occurred during that time because he believed that each phase in the life of a human being has its sweetness, just like the seasons of the year where autumn presents its special beauty.

According to Brooks et al. (1976), poetry extends our own limited experience through exploring the powers of imagination. Imagination sharpens our perception of the physical world on the one hand, and on the other deepens our sense of the emotional, intellectual and moral implications of human situations and actions. Abrams (1979) notes that we are all poets and we all are in the best imitation of a noble life. By implication, what is written in a literary work is a reflection of all the reality, nature, or one's good and bad things. Other than being a source of entertainment, poetry presents moral messages that can be used by the audience to reflect on society and individual poetlities.

This poem narrates the experiences of a man who had feelings towards one of the girls when they were still at primary school, but he was not aware of that reality. At its beginning, the poet employs suspense. How he is going to approach the girl and the girl's possible reaction are held in suspense. According to Sibiya (2003), suspense is the quality in a story, that makes the reader to ponder on what is likely to happen next or how the course of events will turn out, and that impels them to read on so as to find confirmation of the answers to these pertinent questions.

In the above examples, the audience has been supplied with information that helps in whetting their eagerness to know the outcome of the events. There is development of the character from being a young school boy, who had feelings towards a girl at school, but lacked the guts to expose his feelings. One may surmise that time and the environment might have caused this

lack of confidence. As a norm, children were not allowed to date at school. Teachers acted in the interest of parents and punishing learners was not a criminal act. Now, the poem makes a sharp contrast with the contemporary social context where children have numerous rights and freedoms. It can also be argued that the poet's allusion to the time of Boom Shaka is suggestive of a long time gone by. The scene begins from where the story started.

The poet did not give up even though it was not easy. The poet continued to develop even stronger feelings for the girl even though he was trying very hard to suppress them. He was extremely afraid of approaching her to alert her to his feelings for her. As if to hint at his cowardice, the poet then decided to dupe his friend into believing that they were dating. He loved the girl in such a way that he was not only imagining them dating, but in them, he was seeing a wife and husband:

*Kodwa manjalo kukhona okwakuxaka  
Ukuthi njalo uma kushaywa uNontobeko  
Ngangivele ngivukwe ulaka ngale Nkosazana  
From there sasesithandana kodwa yona ingazi  
But mina ngase ngizibona siyindoda nonkosikazi  
Esikoleni ngangivele ngithi intombi yami le.*

(Even then, something was strange  
In that, whenever Nontobeko was being beaten  
I used to get angry for this Princess  
From there we were already in love but she didn't know  
But I saw us as husband and wife  
At school I used to say this is my girlfriend.)

The story ends on an optimistic note as the man eventually won Nontobeko and they are now married. Here, both characters are grown up and they are married couple. Despite the punishment the poet went through as he was trying to show the girl his love, he did not allow anyone to stand in his way until he won her love. According to the poet, love is a remarkable aspect of the human soul and hence, the seed of love should be nurtured for it to grow in a proper atmosphere, otherwise it may yield an unpleasant result. In this poem, it is clearly indicated that from the onset, the poet had good plans for their relationship; hence, the relationship had a good ending.

#### 4.2.2.2 Lost love

As much as it is a beautiful thing that exists between two people, love is also lost for various reasons. Nonetheless, it also goes through the healing process in different ways. A poet composes poems as part of ways of fostering this healing process. In a love relationship, things often turn out to be very difficult especially when love has reached the break-up point which is the worst thing couple could ever wish for. The loss of a lover, whether because they have passed on or for any other reason, is portrayed as a heart-breaking experience.

Some break-ups never fully recover. Always, there might be a small place in one's heart that feels the pain of this experience. People go through this pain on a daily basis though they do not accept it as something natural. Love poems have much to offer in terms of educating people about life, the problems a person is likely to encounter in his metaphorical journey of love. This type of poetry cautions people about the more subtle realities that characterise love life. A critical analysis of love poetry confirms that this poetic genre indeed critically engages with these complex realities. In a poem by Silindile the poet found out that another woman had snatched her lover from her, and in that way, she lost her boyfriend through a break-up. When she feels defeated in this love triangle, she utters frustratingly:

*Okusalayo nawe usazokushiya  
Njengoba ubethandana nami  
Maqede washela wena.  
Nathandana naqomana  
Uthando lwenu lwabamnandi  
Kodwa ekugcineni kosuku usazokushiya;  
Angithi nami ukwazile ukungishiya wayothandana nawe?  
Nawe usazokushiya  
Lezi zinto ezincane akwenzela zona ezikujabulisayo  
Nami zazingijabulisa.*

(What remains is that he will still also leave you.  
As he was in love with me  
Then he courted you  
You fell in love  
Your love was nice  
However, at the end of the day he will still leave you.  
He was able to leave me and went on to be in love with you  
He will also still leave you  
These small things he is doing for you that make you happy  
Once made me happy as well.)

This poem deals with the subject of lost love. It talks about a lover whose heart has been thrown into the abyss. The poet has lost her beloved one, seemingly through a break-up. In this poem, the poet is no longer in the relationship but very concerned about how people behave when they are in love. When Silindile recites this poem, she warns women against dating other women's boyfriends. Silindile is sounding an alarm, scaring the woman who is dating her ex-boyfriend, warning her that men would never be satisfied as he left her for another woman and she further claims that his obsession will propel him to continue doing the same thing with the current girlfriend. Therefore, the girl must not be too complacent because she is going to cry foul sooner than later.

The above poem reveals that no matter how good the lady might appear in the eyes of her male partner, when he wants to cheat on her, he will do that without considering her feelings. The poet also gives an insight into the understanding that men use material things to lure women and leave them after using them. At the same time, this woman is seemingly jealous, as she is not prepared to face the reality that her ex-boyfriend is dating another woman and all the good things that she used to get will be given to somebody else. The interesting part is where she acts as if she does not care, but when one carefully listens to her voice, one would feel that she wishes she could get that love back. Regrettably, though, love is difficult to revive or retrieve once it dies a natural death. The poem paints a gloomy picture since once broken, love can never be mended. The poet consoles herself with the thought that nothing in this world is ever as perfect as one wants it to be and the girl will eventually lose.

In most of her poems, Silindile is grieving for the loss of a lover and she is indirectly making sure that she reveals the acts of promiscuity that an ex-boyfriend habitually performs to everyone who is dating him. The conclusion to be drawn here is that whatever Silindile unveils about an ex-boyfriend's infidelity has a double, negative impact, but more importantly, it metes out pain and suffering to the girl who is dating an ex-boyfriend. Therefore, the following poem has overlapping themes. We are told:

*We Phila! Ukungishiya vele wangishiya lokho angikuphiki  
Kubuhlungu ngoba usuhamb'uzishaya isifuba.  
Uhambe utshela abantu ukuthi  
Uma ungase unikwe elinye ithuba futhi ungaphinde uqale phansi ungishiye.  
Angisoze mina ngaphinde ngikunike elinye ithuba  
Ngoba iqiniso mina nawe siyalazi  
Inhliziyo iyona ongenayo*

*Awunayo inhliziyo yokuthanda  
Ukuthanda kuyakwehlula.*

(Phila! Leaving me yes you left me and I do not deny that  
It's painful because you go around bragging,  
You go around telling people that  
If you were to be given another chance, you would leave again.  
I will never give you another chance again  
Because you and I know the truth.  
A heart is what you do not have  
You do not have a heart to love  
Loving fails you.)

In this poem, the poet reveals that after a break-up, an excessive feeling of loneliness overcomes the victims of the break-up. For quite a long time, she felt that she had been part of something bigger than herself. Suddenly, the jilted lover realises that she no longer has that person in her life. Undoubtedly, the break-up is devastating to someone who was used to having someone by her side all the time and it is obvious that the girl is hurt although she has not yet given up. The fact that she is nagging her ex-boyfriend simply means that she is trying to heal the eroded relationship although she can hardly bring the man back. The poet says:

*Mina bengikuthanda, ngikunika eyam'inhliziyo  
Kodwa wena uyithathe uyidicilele le.  
Sengidabukela lo sisi osethandana nawe  
Lo sisi ozishaya isifuba,  
Ngokuthi uthando lwenu lunempumelelo  
Ekubeni uthando lwenu alunakusasa  
Ngoba ukuthanda kuyakwehlula;  
Hamba juba bayokuchutha phambili.*

(I have loved you, giving you my heart  
But you would take it and shove it away.  
I feel sorry for the woman who is in love with you now  
The lady who brags,  
Saying that your love is fruitful  
Whereas your love has no future  
Because loving fails you;  
One day you will find your match.)

Most of the poems that deal with love as an indispensable aspect of life portray different types of love relationships that exist in life. Some relationships are weak and fragile; some illicit and undesirable, while some are strong and passionate and bring prosperity and peace to humankind. Another important dimension that is shown in this kind of poetry is that of love being more important than any other earthly endeavours. In this context, we find an assortment

of views. In the poem cited above, the poet is desperately willing to give all her love as she searches for a suitable receptacle large enough to accommodate all her deep and sincere emotions of love. According to the poet, unconditional love is the only important thing that gives meaning to her whole life. It is clear that the man whom the woman loved is blamed for cowardice and selfishness since he could not understand her emotions and feelings.

#### 4.2.3 Education

Education as a topical issue that has gained momentum in the modern society. Carron and Carr-Hill (1991:56) summarise the distinctions in the types of education as follows:

... formal education ... (is) the institutionalised, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured education system, running from lower primary school to the upper reaches of the university, generally full time and sanctioned by the state; non-formal education comprises all educational activities organised outside the formal system and designed to serve identifiable clientele and educational objectives ... with all remaining educational activities being categorised as informal education ... (is) the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experience and exposure to the environment...

Poets celebrate the importance of education in people's lives and most poems often describe how blacks sometimes struggle to get access to decent education. Poets often remind those who have attained tertiary education about the challenges they encountered in their quest for education and during their studies. Sometimes the performer would be the one who is graduating and the aim would be to express the educational legacy she or he would like to pass on to the next generation. Some of the poems would be tokens of appreciation to the parent for presenting the precious and life changing opportunities to their children. On such occasions, the audience sometimes becomes emotional as well since they tend to identify with the poet's feelings. This is what Siyabonga Mpungose says about educational achievements:

*Ningathuswa izimoto, imali, umuzi omkhulu enginawo,  
Ngoba mina ngithwele.  
Ningathuswa izimoto, imali, umuzi omkhulu enginawo,  
Ngoba mina ngithwele  
Ngithwele kanzima bafowethu.  
Ibinzima impilo engiyiphilayo ingakho ngithi,  
Impilo inzima kakhulu bekezela nathi saqala lapho-ke,  
Kodwa asizange salahl' ithemba emfundweni sabambelela.*

(Do not be intimidated by cars, money, the huge house that I have,  
Because I am carrying a burden.  
Do not be intimidated by cars, money, the huge house I have,  
Because I am carrying a burden.  
I am carrying a huge burden, my brothers,  
The life I was living was tough that is why I say  
Life is very tough, be patient; that's where we all started  
But we never lost hope on education, we held on.)

Siyabonga Mpungose presents the theme of education mainly to preserve societal and cultural values and to prepare people to face the challenges presented by the future. Through education, the lives of children can be influenced in a positive way. The former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela once said that education is the most powerful weapon which one can use to change the world. As such, education is not simply the classroom experience of memorising facts. An analysis of Mpungose's poetry demonstrates that education is a phenomenon that cannot only change the individual's life but the base and superstructure of the nation as a whole, inclusive of its economic status:

*Ngifuna ungiyele le esikoleni  
Uzofica omunye umuntu abathi uthisha efundisa  
Elokhu ebhala ecacisa kulaba abangezswana  
Noma ungambona engenasithunzi kunami  
Kodwa kuyokusiza ukumhlonipha nokumazisa  
Ngoba uphethe ulwazi oluqukethe ikusasa lonke,  
Umvumele uma ekusiza.*

(I want you to go to school for me  
You will find a person called a teacher teaching  
And would be writing and explaining to those who did not understand.  
Although you might find them not more dignified than me  
However, it would benefit you to respect and appreciate them  
Because they carry the knowledge that secures the whole future,  
Allow them when they assists you.)

In this poem, a vulnerable mother is telling her child about the importance of education regardless of the impeding situation and unfavourable conditions at home. The mother is not educated, but due to her life experiences, she has learned that education is a tool to better her child's life. She believes that education helps unlock a prosperous future. The poet says:

*Imali, impilo engcono kuyobe sekulandela wena  
Kungasenandaba ukuthi wena usukhathele.  
Ngakho unganaki ukuthi ngikutshela la mazwi ngoba bengiswele.  
Mntanami ngiyavuma kukude lapho engikuthuma khona,*

*And kungenzeka ukuthi njengoba ngikuthuma manje ekuseni  
Uze ubuye ntambama kanye nelanga seliyoshona  
And kungenzeka khona ufile kukhona izikhokho zakhona.*

(Money and a good life style would follow you.  
Not bothered that you are tired already.  
So don't mind that I told you these words because I was poor.  
My child I admit that where I am sending you is far.  
And it might happen that as I am sending you in the morning  
You will come back in the afternoon when the sun sets  
And you might find the who's who of the place.)

Below is another example of Siyabonga Mpungose's poems that demonstrate the significance of education and the poet is emphatic that life could change for the worst if the opportunity is not exploited profitably:

*This is a story about my sister  
Uyafuna ukwazi ukuthi waphelaphi  
Zonke izifundo zakhe ubezishaya ngo A plus  
Ngaphandle kwe-Geography  
Ngicabanga ukuthi iyona kuphela ayithola u-79.*

(Do you want to know where she ended up?  
She was passing all her subjects with A-plus  
With the exception of Geography  
I think it's the only one where she obtained 79.)

In this poem, the poet reveals that it is possible for everyone to achieve their goals regardless of their poor background; but it all depends on one's willingness and passion as far as acquiring education is concerned. The poem also shows that education does not have to be forced on anyone, but it should be an individual's choice to pursue it. Parents may wish to support their children and do whatever they can to channel them towards the right direction in terms of education. The poem is also about the child who comes from a very disadvantaged single parent family. Under such difficult conditions that obtain at home, she manages to pass her matric examinations very well. Her mother is then obliged to render support to her. She is portrayed as an unemployed Christian. Therefore, church members try to pool their resources together for the child to go to university. When she is about to leave home, her mother sits her down and talks to her about how happy they are about her achievement. Her mother hopes that their struggle will finally come to an end when her daughter starts working. The most significant line in the poem reads: "this is a story about my sister." It has been repeated emphatically in



all the stanzas of the poem as a concluding line. One assumes that this line is presented for the sake of emphasis or to capture the attention of the audience:

*This is a story about my sister  
But sesithemba wena  
Ukuthi uyosiphakamisa  
And akunalutho oluyakuphazamisa  
Amazwi kamama okugcina esemqinisa.*

(However, our hopes are on you  
That you will lift us up  
And, there is nothing that would distract you  
Those are Mother's last words comforting her.)

This girl is aware of and understands the situation back home. However, by the time she gets to university she forgets everything about their condition back home. She gets involved in so many distractive activities that make her fail to finish her degree. This is a lesson to all the youth who come to university for a purpose but due to bad company end up diverting to misleading directions:

*Angisamboni kahle ngoba esese-University  
Kodwa isiXhosa nike nizwe sithi,  
Isisila senkukhu usibona mhla kugquthayo.  
Angisayiqondi impilo ayiphilayo.*

(I have some doubts about her now that she is at the University  
But you have heard isiXhosa saying  
People will only show you their true colours when you are in trouble  
I do not understand the life she is living.)

This poem details a story about the poet's journey in life. At the beginning, we are told that she was a brilliant child who achieved good results in Grade12. She didn't have the money to go to university, but her mother had to put resources together with the assistance of her fellow church members. She enrolls at the university but she is corrupted by the new environment and forgets about her background and the main purpose of going to university. She decides to associate with bad company that deceives her and leads her astray. Consequently she fails her studies and ends returns home empty-handed. Compounding the situation is the fact that, unfortunately, she is also sick. The situation gets worse when her mother passes away:

*I'm so sorry bafowethu ukunishiya le nkondlo ngingayiqedile  
But lolu cingo lungibikela ukuthi usisi emhlabeni usesishiyile  
Nengane yakhe...ayishiyile  
This a story about my sister.*

(I'm sorry my brothers to leave you before I could finish this poem  
However, this call informs me that my sister has passed away  
And the child ....she left  
This is a story about my sister.)

In another poem, Siyabonga Mpungose demonstrates the unpleasant result of failure to embrace education:

*Babekhuzwa abalalelanga  
Nasemgwaqeni sebekela nelanga  
Bathandana nelanga, bajika nelanga.  
Sebefisa sengathi impilo ayimanga  
Bebe beqamba amanga.  
Impilo iyiqiniso-ke ayimanga  
Esikoleni babegoloza bekipha imimese,  
Bethembisa othisha ukubagqobhoza  
Namuhla ikusasa labo lisemaweni, liyagobhoza.*

(They were warned and never listened  
Even on the street, they turn with the sun  
They are in love with the sun, they turn with the sun.  
They wish that life never stopped  
Whereas they are lying.  
Life is the truth not lies  
At school they were bullies pulling out knives,  
They threatened to stab teachers  
Today their future hangs on the cliff, it's slipping away.)

This poem portrays bratty children who despised their teachers and took their studies for granted. Eventually, they failed and dropped out of school to beg on the streets, unemployed and wishing life didn't come to a standstill for them. The poet doesn't necessarily mean to be insensitive about their situation, but to show that sometimes people get themselves into unpleasant circumstances that they can't live with. Here, the poet is emphasizing the importance of education and the negative impact of dropping out of school. Most of the learners who are deviant at school are portrayed as being at risk of failing to complete their education.

While some poets encourage learners to embrace education, others don't deny the shortcomings that permeate the education system. Siyabonga Mpungose has also this view even though he does believe in education:

*Wena wathi empini yokubulala inhlupheko imfundo iyisikhali.  
Kodwa namhlanje inhlupheko ayisabulawa ngemfundo sekumele udubule,  
Ngo-connection ugwaze nangemali  
Lena esingenayo Chris Hani  
Chris Hani, Qhawe lethu  
Washeshe wathula, okungenani vuka usikhulumele.*

(You said in a war to annihilate poverty, education is the weapon  
However, today poverty is not destroyed by education, you have to shoot  
With connections and bribe with money  
That we do not have, Chris Hani.  
Chris Hani, our hero  
You quickly went silent, at least wake up and speak for us.)

As much as Mpungose believes that education is the key to success, he exposes challenges that young people face every day despite having acquired their qualifications. Corruption is depicted as an insurmountable problem, especially in South Africa and it gets worse everyday. The poet further reveals that those who sacrificed their lives for their people to be liberated died in vain because their sacrifice is being abused.

Another poet who shares same sentiments is Imbongi engadumile in a poem titled "Madiba in me":

*Ngalel'igazi labant'abasha elaphalala eSoweto nibonile nitholeni?  
Nithole imfundo enhle enenqubekela phambili le abayifelayo  
Thina le esiyifela ngamathe angenanhlonipho,  
Sidelela othisha, sidla izidakamizwa siphath'izikhali esikoleni.*

(By the youth's blood that spilled in Soweto; have you seen what you achieved?  
You achieved good education with prosperity that they died for  
The one on which we spit in disrespect  
We disrespect teachers; we take drugs and carry weapons at schools.)

Violence in schools is a societal problem in South Africa, which requires all stakeholders to play their part to create a safe schooling environment and raise awareness that the killing of teachers on duty has become a serious problem in South Africa." Poets have been vocal about this issue, together with other community members. Imbongi engadumile voices concern about this problem and insinuates that the South African constitution has a huge impact in the

acceleration of the killing of the teachers. He bemoans that the government has banned corporal punishment in schools and learners seem to have more rights than educators, hence the undermining and killing of teachers. He is worried about what is happening in the Department of Education while there are people who died fighting for African people to have access to decent education. He says lives were lost for us to have education but now it looks like people are dying for rendering that education to “born-free learners.” He argues that the youth who died during Soweto uprisings sang the song “Senzeni na?” (what wrong have we done?) but now things have turned around because educators are now the ones singing the same song, voicing about their killing at schools.

The poet’s concern is that as much as the South African government valued education but it is failing to ensure security in school premises and protect educators. The poet laments that today’s youth does not value education as those youth who lived during the apartheid era. He encourages young people to emulate Tata Madiba who fought for his country while he was still young. He did not become a hero only when he was a president but had developed those qualities from a very young stage by being loyal and protective of his own.

#### **4.2.4 Religion**

Barber (1983:178-179) says poems on the theme of religion can be grouped into three basic categories as articulated in the following comment:

Some poems on religious themes are simple lyrics of praise or rejoicing...Other poems are for devotional purposes...Yet other religious poems deal with religious experience, including doubt and struggle...

Poems that are performed before congregations are usually not concerned with the congregants but about God Himself. These inspirational poems talk about the great love God has for all of us and how He wants his congregants to be resilient during times of hardship or anxiety and count on Him alone for sustenance. Many poets seem to reiterate this aspect and portray God as a source of strength in times of distress. Even in times of death, poets cling to a promise of a better life after death. The belief in life after death is a dominant theme in religious poetry and poets intend to remind listeners that there is better life after death and people must not worry about anything in this world because they will enjoy and celebrate their victory in heaven. This message is well represented by the very last two lines of Cheese-K’s poem:

*Musani ukukhathazeka ngezinhlopheko enizihlopheka kulo mhlaba  
Ngoba injabulo ayilinganiswa nenikubona lapha.*

(Do not be anxious about the miseries you suffer in this world  
Because joy is not comparable to what you see here.)

This poem was recited at a Youth Sunday service at Harvest Time Christian Centre on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 2019 by Cheese-K's. Young people were afforded an opportunity to participate in this event as part of Youth Day celebrations. The main thrust of this poem is a message of hope and a promise of a better life after death. The poet is assuring young people that even though things that happen in this world appear to be permanent, they are just transient tests of life. Arguably, a good poem evokes some emotional response from the reader or audience. In the case of this poem, the congregants were filled with optimism, which further bolstered their faith which revolves around a belief that even though life challenges them, they will eventually reap the benefits for their faithfulness and perseverance. Imagining and visualising good life and celebrating victory all bring joy and happiness. However, the poet emphasise that, to be able to reach this heavenly place, the audience needs to worship and believe in God.

In most cases, the religious sub-themes of the poems vacillate between faith in the mercy of God through Christ and a feeling of worthlessness that borders on despair. Religion forms an integral part of people's daily lives. According to Sibiya (2003), people have used religion in order to come to terms with daily occurrences, to find answers and comfort when confronted with many dilemmas that are a daily reality. We are therefore not even slightly surprised that isiZulu artists devote so much of their storytelling techniques to providing us with enchanting stories that have religion as their main springboard. This is evident in Siyabonga Mpungose's poem in which the poet's spiritual beliefs shine throughout the stanzas:

*Sinkwa sami semihla ngemihla  
Ngihlasela ngawe imihla nemihla  
Ngiphile ukuphila kwaphakade ngenxa yemikhuleko  
Ngithole inkululeko kwezami iziphambeko.  
Wen'ufana nalezi zigameko  
Intuthuko ngiyibona ngamehlo.  
Ekuphileni kwami nginqaba izehlo  
Bahluleka bengizamazamisa  
Nalaba abangangithandi, bebazamazamisa  
Ngikhathala amadolo kwehle izingelosi zizongiqinisa  
Ngomoya ongcwele mina ngizibona ngivuka*

*Ngiphumelela begcwele.*

(My daily bread  
I attack through you day by day  
And live eternal life because prayers,  
And find freedom from my wrong doings.  
You are like these incidents  
I see prosperity with my eyes.  
In my living, I defy incidents  
They tested me and failed  
And those who do not like me, were assisting  
My knees get tired and the angels come down to give me strength  
Through the holy spirit, I see myself rising  
I succeed in their midst.)

Undoubtedly, the poet is demonstrating the power of God. He is showing how God rescues him from his enemies and how God gives him the power to move on with life when his enemies are convinced that they have finished with his life. People who believe in God always think that surviving a difficult situation is only made possible through God's intervention. God is always on the poet's tongue and therefore, one is convinced that he is a staunch Christian believer. He refers to prayer as daily bread that enables him to conquer the world, which is indicative of the fact that he is still alive because of prayers. The poet expresses the awareness that it is through God's mercy that he is still alive. He could have died, had his life been at the mercy of the people. It is through His mercy, love and kindness that he is still alive. Subsequently, he urges people to always thank Him for this grace. This is exactly the message that the poet desires to convey to the audience.

The kindness of God is also applauded in SimChina's poem:

*Kwathi bonke sebengidelile;  
Igama lami sengiwudeliwe  
Igama lami sengiwulahliwe,  
Yena akazange angidele.  
Engani wangifel'eKhalivari.  
Ngaqala ngahuba amahubo athi,  
Ngizikhethela mina ukuhamba naye,  
Maqede wabuyisa ubusha bami njengoKhozi.*

(When all had given up on me  
My name had become the Rejected One  
My name had become the Forsaken One  
But he never gave up on me.  
He died for me in Calvary.

I started singing the hymns that say,  
It was my choice to walk with him,  
Then he returned my youth like an Eagle.)

The poet is evidently expressing gratitude and shows a very strong faith in God. Her faith made her believe that there is a loving God who cares deeply about her pain more than anyone else on earth. God is the one who made her see the good and the evil of this earth and He restored her life without judging her. The poet believes that even if the world could disown her, God would never give up on her. It is true that for a person with no hope in life, the Christian church is the only place where he can go to and feel welcomed. Such poems restore hope and show clearly that whatever situation that one is faced with for that moment, one will be able to overcome it.

In “Uyidwala” by Nkonzo Mayaba, the poet praises the Almighty for who He is. The poet expresses his appreciation of God's presence in his life. He cites a few of those worldly and heavenly bodies that show who God is, as conveyed in the lines below:

*Uyidwala esaqheshulwa kulo,  
Eselanqatshwa omakhi selaphenduka inhloko yegumbi.  
Mawukuye uJesu awuduki  
Hlala kuye ungasuki ngoba uSathane ulususile udosi  
Uyithemba lasemandulo eselavel'obala  
Yena owakhile ekusithekeni koPhezu konke  
Nohlezi emthunzini kaSomandla  
Uyisiphephelo sami, nenqaba yami uNkulunkulu wami engimethembayo*

(You are the rock from which we were cleft  
Rejected by the builders, but turned out to be the cornerstone  
When you are in Jesus you don't get lost.  
Stay with him and never move because Satan has removed the sting  
He is the hope from the past, which has come out into the open.  
He who resides in the sanctuary of the Highest one  
And sitting on the shade of the Almighty  
He is my shelter and fort, my Lord in whom I trust.)

In essence, this stanza is prayerful as it conveys a Christian outlook. At the same time, this poem is a “lyric of thanksgiving.” The tone of the poem is as interesting as it is practical. The natural expression of people in joy and in sorrow is through their own music and praise poetry. Since music and praise poetry mirror a people's past and present life, it is desirable that it should be recorded and preserved for progeny. Nkonzo Mayaba is known as Imbongi kaNkulunkulu

(God's praise poet). Most of his poems praise God. Praise poems can be described neither as simple, nor as lacking in linguistic artificiality. Praise composition is consciously an art as they display all the characteristics of poetry (Cope 1968). To this end, this poem portrays how faithful God is in people's lives.

The poet says that people should trust the Lord with all their hearts and desist from relying on their own understanding. In one of the lines, the poet demonstrates the love of God and says that those who trust the Lord shall not perish. This poem encourages believers to strengthen the relationship between man and God as the centre of their lives. This sheds light on the view that believers believe that there is no existence of man without God, and therefore, for them to face and conquer the world, they need to put God ahead of anything else. The poem reveals how God remains faithful all the time and that without God's unconditional love and his liberating hands, there is nothing Man would do on his own. The poet regards God as a source of strength and courage.

It is noteworthy that poets don't share same sentiments regarding religion, with some portraying the good side of religion while others feel having reservations about it, bemoaning hypocrisy and greed permeating it. Another aspect of religion is clearly demonstrated in Brian Gwamanda's poem titled "Isambulo esisha":

*Ngaphambi kokubheka ephalamende  
Ake sibheke endlini yesonto umkhwabanisi omkhulu ungaphakathi  
Umemeza uhaleluya khona, mina angisafisi nokuya.  
Kunesambulo esisha esithwebula imiqondo yabantu esisebenza ngokubaqola  
Ngizimbilaphu zigcwele umzimba yisilonda esisenhliziyweni.  
Ubuhlungu obuphethe imbongi  
Ila manyala engiwabona evangelini;  
Abazalwane baphenduka izinambuzane ezingancinzi muntu  
Ezondla umfundisi maqede bafuthwe nge-doom  
Banikela ngeyokugcina usizi olusemakhaya  
Esontweni badliswa utshani baphuziswe u-petrol.*

(Before we look at the parliament  
Let's look inside the church where the biggest fraudster is  
He is screaming hallelujah there and I for one don't wish to go there.  
There is a new revelation that hypnotizes people's minds by defrauding them  
I have tumors in my whole body due to a wound in the heart.  
The pain from which the poet suffers  
Is this disgrace that I observe in believers;  
The brethren are becoming insects that don't sting anyone



Which feed the pastor and then are sprayed with doom  
They give out their last money but there is poverty at home  
In church they are fed grass and made to drink petrol.)

The poet castigates pastors for using the Bible not as an instrument for worshipping God, but as a device that leads to the defrauding of poor people for personal gain. Here, defrauding poor people does not necessarily mean to deprive them materially, but it also entails treating them in a degrading manner as well as indoctrinating them. When one listens to the message in this poem, one really feels the pain of being exposed to the exploitation that is pedalled by pastors as they fleece people in the name of Christianity.

The poet feels provoked by the recent case of one Nigerian Pastor Omotoso who has been accused of rape. It is alleged that the pastor deflowered about 30 young women, his church members. He allegedly used them as his sex slaves who would be called into his bedroom as and when he had interest in one of them at a specific time. The most saddening part of this story is that most of the church members did not give those girls the support they needed. Instead, they protected the accused.

According to reports, a 22 year-old female university student bravely testified against the pastor before she was sternly warned that she would be killed by God for she had acted against the man of God. Her decision to testify in open court captured public attention. She was publicly hailed for her bravery. In his poem, Brian Gwamanda seems to be very upset, as he demonstrates zero tolerance to such unscrupulous behaviour. He believes that Christianity is a pyramid scheme that is here to make pastors rich at the expense of the poor congregants. He argues that a normal person would not eat grass and drink petrol. Hence, he believes that these pastors use the Bible to fool and manipulate people in order to exploit them.

In this poem, Brian Gwamanda explores the effect of religion on Africans. His perspective on religion is unequivocally pessimistic as he gives us the darker side of the Christian religion, which he views as a disgrace. This poem shows us how churches are used as a powerful instrument to mislead innocent people. In this poem, the message is clear, that Man is vulnerable in this world. There is no "space" where one can stand and claim it to be his shield. Brian Gwamanda is sounding an alarm, warning Africans about the calamity that accompanies the Christian religion. If people fail to discern the truth from the lies being pedalled by the false prophets, then the whole country will plunge into disaster. This means that those who fail to

take the warning will eventually bear the consequences of their stubbornness. In the fourth stanza, Brian Gwamanda fails to hide his emotions as he says he would prefer not to be a Christian for fear of being conned in the name of Christianity.

Gwamanda shares the same sentiments with Smith whose religious poetry was studied by Thurman (1978). In his study of the theme of God and death as depicted in Smith's poems, Thurman (1978) found that Smith, as much as she was a Christian, would often write poems, which confidently reject God. She proves to be an atheist expressing an approval of the decline of organised religion, strongly attacking both the Catholic and Anglican churches. In her typically atheistic poems, she vehemently rejects God and Christianity as untrue, and if possibly true, then cruelly unfair. Smith wrote many atheistic poems advocating the rejection of Christianity by the modern world, viewing the religion as an embodiment of much harm.

Further, Tsambo (1999: 19) shares the same sentiment with Gwamanda regarding the matter when he notes that:

In South Africa and elsewhere in Africa, religious protest stems from the imposition of Christianity on the indigenous people while their traditional ancestral beliefs and deity are suppressed. Protest against Christianity does not only advocate a return to ancestral worship, but it also pleads for those who choose to remain atheistic. The main objection to religious institutions is ecclesiastical hypocrisy and deceit, as well as the use of Christianity as an instrument of oppression by the ruling class.

In winding up the critique of the theme of religion, the researcher would also like to acknowledge the fact that the religious aspect is not a new phenomenon in poetry. It has been there since time immemorial, but it is apparent that even today, poets still have the interest to explore it further as religion cannot be separated from humanity. Some of the poems show striking similarities in terms of approach and the manner in which poets view the issue of religion. However, other poems also reveal new paradigms that are characteristic of organised religion today, which others consider as the religion of the last days. Regarding portrayal of religion in Ntuli's poetry, Mlondo (1994: 137) says:

Ntuli, apparently, under the pressure of this command from the Lord, did contribute a few poems on this religious theme. He did so that all his readers are also exposed to the Biblical message.

Some of Ntuli's religious poems analysed by Mlondo (1994) are an expression of gratitude to God. For example, in the poem titled "KuMvelinqangi," the poet wishes to express his thankfulness to God the Almighty for having created him. This is evidence of the fact that these kinds of themes are still prominent even in contemporary poetry. In his attempt to analyse the implication of Ntuli's poem, Mlondo (1994) discovers that the poet's main intention is to remind people that God created them in His own image. Therefore, they always need to thank Him for this precious gift. This shows that no matter how the poet approaches the theme of religion, the bottom line is to thank God for the gift of life. God is portrayed as the one who gives people the chance to live and therefore deserves to be praised and glorified. Over and above that, Mlondo's analysis of the poems reveals that even if people are Christians and believe so much in God, Satan is also at work, claiming his own to bring them back into his sinful fold. The example he provided here uses a metaphoric expression "Isiphepho sabahlwithela kwaXovudaka" in addressing Satan who is portrayed as leading people astray.

#### **4.2.5 Protest**

This type of poetry was born out of oppression and the discrimination of Blacks by Whites and it exposes the frustration that characterised the life of a Black person. Nevertheless, this poetry gives Blacks a sense of belonging and a sense of solidarity in the struggle. For quite a long time, this type of poetry was suppressed by Whites (Tladi, 1996). Every poet lives in a particular society and his perception and ideas derive from it. A poet writes what he feels and sees in his immediate surroundings. If the poet does not project into what the community feels, then that piece of writing would have failed in its task of making people aware of what is happening around them. Hence, the theme of protest has been given so much attention in performance poetry. Tsambo (1999: 9) says, "Protest writing among the Black South African writers was produced during the period of the struggle against the Apartheid hegemony and class inequalities and also within the constraints imposed by censorship laws. Their works, therefore, whose intention was to sharpen the consciousness of the readers in pursuit of justice or change."

##### **4.2.5.1 Protest against oppression**

Kumashiro (2000:25) explains oppression as a "situation or dynamic in which certain ways of being (e.g., having certain identities) are privileged in society while others are marginalized." Adding to that point, Maphalla (1984) regards oppression as stemming from lack of truth. He

further says that oppression is the source of conflict and in the process, one blames the other. According to Feinberg (1980), poetry and songs are the most popular and readily accessible means of creative expression and communication. It is this brutal oppression, with its unique codification of racial discrimination, which has generated the immense engagement and passion of the South African song and poetry. This is also evident in contemporary performance poetry through which poets express their condemnation of oppression. For instance, in most of his poems, Brian Gwamanda protests against human rights abuses, inequality, nepotism and poor service delivery among other societal discrepancies. Protest against oppression is also evident in Brian Gwamanda's poem, "Bayifunani i-Afrika?":

*Basidlela umhlaba nengcebo sasala sifunga amagugu.  
Basilobela oweth'umlando safundiswa okungesikhona,  
Basishayanisa ngamakhanda sajikelana sodwa.*

(They took our land and wealth we were left swearing by our treasures.  
They wrote our own history and we were taught what is not true,  
They confused us and made us turn against each other.)

Admittedly, throughout ages, Blacks have been oppressed and victimised. This poem was not written during the time of slavery, but it re-invokes the African past and the sudden spread of Black people all over the world. Slavery and colonisation spearheaded the spreading of the Black race all over the world, giving them a new home, while the mother and the children cried for losing their father and breadwinner to ungrateful people. Brian Gwamanda's poem educates the young generation about how the Apartheid government manipulated Christianity to oil its oppressive machinery. This poem depicts Christianity as having been imposed on Black people and hence, they had no grounds to question it. The mood in the poem is apparently angry. The poet sounds very aggressive and confrontational.

In an attempt at addressing the above historical challenges, mainstream media sites are awash with news reports confirming government's efforts to reinforce land expropriation without compensation. Political parties have different views on the land issue. Among others, the African National Congress and Economic Freedom Fighters believe that existence of the human being rests on their access to land while the Democratic Alliance seems to be against this notion. The Democratic Alliance party is dominated by White people. So, one can conclude that history is repeating itself. Scelo Mpungose expresses his feeling towards the issue of land expropriation as follows:

*Dear Khumbul'ekhaya  
Ngibhala le ncwadi sicela ukubuyiselwa umhlaba  
Owathathwa ondlebe zikhay'ilanga  
Sinethemba uyobuya ngelinye ilanga.*

(I write this letter pleading for the return of the land  
Which was taken by Whites  
We hope it will return one day.)

Scelo Mpungose is one of the proponents of land expropriation without compensation. However, the general fear is that if land expropriation without compensation was implemented, it would have drastic effects on the economy and result in deep recession and escalating budget deficit as well as soaring debt levels. On the contrary, traditional authorities are supportive of land expropriation without compensation, arguing that the move will bring harmony among the Black South Africans because they would have land and benefit from equitable distribution thereof. Therefore, taking land away from the traditional leadership would be tantamount to taking their power away. The current generation may not understand the issue of land because they were not there during Apartheid when the White minority acquired land from Black people through force and unjust laws.

The above poem is a record of what exactly transpired during that era and one comes to the understanding that Black people are justified in claiming their land back. When one considers the lifestyle the black people lead, one observes that after the arrival of the missionaries, their lives completely changed. Black South Africans abandoned their culture to embrace European culture. The impact of Apartheid on the lives of Blacks child has been very enormous. The South African government is exploring possible avenues of closing the gap that was created by the Apartheid system though it is impeded by a number of challenges:

*Ngaphambi kokuthi aboshwe wayengumshayi sibhakela  
Yingakho ngaphambi kokuba bambophe baqale bamfinqela sona isibhakela  
Wabheka phezulu komkhulu kakhulu uNkulunkulu,  
Maqede waphakamisa sona isibhakela phezulu wathi "Amandla ngawethu!"  
Izizwe kwakungezethu kodwa amandla kwakungesiwona awethu.*

(Before his arrest, he was a boxer  
That is why before they arrested him they showed him the fist  
He looked up upon the greatest one, God  
Then raised his fist and said "Power is ours!"  
The nations were ours but power was no longer ours.)

Apparently, Siyabonga Mpungose's exploration of this theme is very serious. His feelings, which are representative of those of all the helpless Black South Africans become sombre when they think that they are slaves in the land where they have a birth right. Mpungose reveals the fact that Black people anticipated that they would gain the power and freedom they craved for, but a feeling of betrayal looms as these did not come to fruition. Siyabonga Mpungose's protest also stems from his critical observation of the conditions of the Black majority. According to the poet, this resistance is being necessitated by a demand for change. He feels that the time that Nelson Mandela and other heroes fought for has come. An angry mood pervades Siyabonga Mpungose's presentation of his protest poetry. His tone sounds very angry especially at the fact that the aim of the oppressor was to torment Black people by dispossessing them of their land and plundering their wealth. For arresting all the heroes who were fighting for freedom, Apartheid authorities wanted to subject Black people to perpetual submission and enslave them forever.

As an art genre, poetry predates literacy. In the preliterate society, poetry was frequently used as a means of recording oral history, storytelling, genealogy, law and other forms of expression or knowledge that modern societies might expect to be expressed in prose. Recording history through poetry actually keeps the information about that particular society for the next generation. The young generation finds it easier to access performance poetry which enables them to know and understand their history as compared to written books which most people do not like reading. Historical information appears to be the preserve of certain people such as politicians and those who are doing it as a career.

Poets seem to feel obliged to remind the audience about the atrocities of the past. This is evident in the poem titled "Sinezibazi" by Siyabonga Mpungose:

*Base bethi izidomu lezi aziphathe odompasi  
Okubi sasingakufuni sasikukhafula  
Sagcina sesiqanjwe amagama ngalokho kukhafula  
Kwathiwa singama...kwamanje lelo gama lisangihlula  
Uma nifuna sikhohlwe okwenzeka  
Sibuyiseleni abazali abahamba  
Beyosebenzela thina emadolobheni.*

(Then they said these are the dim-witted and should carry pass books  
We spat out the bad things we didn't want

And ended up being called names because of that spitting out  
We were called.... even today that word is still hard for me to pronounce  
If you want us to forget what happened  
Bring back the parents that left  
To work for us in the cities.)

The word “izibazi”(scars) in this title carries connotation of a soul broken, made hopeless, or wounded by the past. Literally, the poet does not have a wound, but in his heart the pain he feels metaphorically represents a wound. A wound in the heart suggests emotional pain that never ends. Siyabonga Mpungose points out that during the Apartheid era, indigenous people were driven off their land on which they were born and bred. The poet blames the Apartheid government for the suffering of these people. They are now wanderers who do not have homes and land of their own.

In this poem, Siyabonga Mpungose further conveys a strong message about the Apartheid government in South Africa. The aim of this protest poem is to arouse some feelings of contempt and hatred. The poet expresses his feeling about the wound that Apartheid caused in the lives of indigenous people. Those who caused the wounds act as if these indigenous people are forgotten. The oppression, which took place over many years, has had a brutalising effect on the Black people and left an indelible mark in their lives. The question that lingers is whether the biblical teachings such as forgiveness and forgetting ever apply in the South African context, or whether Blacks will ever forget about the wrongs done by their fellow White South Africans under the Apartheid regime.

Mpungose makes it clear that White people have forgotten what they did but Blacks will never forgive them. Even though poor Blacks were not overtly forced to go and work in the mines, circumstances dictated that they had to fend for their families and survive on that meagre income.

#### **4.2.5.2 Protest against abuse of women and children**

This is another theme that poets regularly explore, particularly nowadays when human rights issues have become topical in socio-economic and political circles. The stories that are told through poetry reflect aggravated abuses and painful experiences encountered by individuals and these continue because of the legacy inherited and perpetuated by people. Physical abuse

is among the most common concerns that are articulated by poets. For instance, in her poem, Nonhle Mkhize recites a sad story about men who unashamedly abuse women, yet in the natural sense, men are the ones who are supposed to protect women. Her poems that have captured public attention are those which are perceived as vehicles for the advancement of the cause of women and the denouncement of their abuse. Such poems are vocal about men who do not respect women's rights and abuse their powers when dealing with women and children rather than protecting them:

*Muntu wesilisa, kanti kutheni?  
Kutheni isihluku esingaka kowesifazane?  
Kawuzalwanga yini owesifazane na?  
Bantu besilisa sicela intethelelo,  
Madoda, sicela nisivikele.*

(Male person, what is wrong?  
Why so much cruelty to women?  
Weren't you born by a woman?  
Male people, we ask for forgiveness,  
Men, please protect us.)

This poem chronicles women's observations of their own everyday struggle in life. On the other hand, some of Nonhle Mkhize's poems present the perceptions of women who stand to defend themselves against men, but paradoxically begging for protection from the same men. Many women and children are killed every day in South Africa for their body parts, supposedly needed for ritual purposes, wealth acquisition and other unknown reasons. Women feel that they have been left to their own devices as society no longer protects them since men are the ones who kill them. This poem is like a prayer to God, asking for forgiveness for the brutal killing of South African women which is being experienced every day. The poet is concerned about the cruelty of men, yet ironically, women rely on them for protection. The poet feels that there is no solution to this crisis, besides prayer. She says that men need a serious prayer because what they are doing is excessively inhuman. Listening to this poem, one feels that the poet's feelings stem from the deepest part of her heart. Apparently, one comes to the conclusion that probably she has also been a victim of the abuse perpetrated by men.

However, hearing the poem from the woman's point of view is not the same as hearing it from a man's point of view. The poem assumes a defensive tone whereas if women's cause could be told from the point of view of men, the discourse would have a huge impact on the attitudes of other men. Women seem to be trying to win the protection they cannot get from men, yet they



still believe that they are the ones who are supposed to defend them. Another example of poems that castigate the abuse of women is cited below:

*Sengisele ncingo losizi  
Lolu ucingo ebengithi luzokhazimulisa lusus 'usizi.  
Khumbula, wena bewuth' ungicsha phansi njengoshukela,  
Bewuthi ungifundel' eduze njengencwadi  
Kodwa konke lokho kushabalele njengamazol' ebon' ilanga*

(I am left with a ring of sadness  
I thought this ring would shine and remove misery.  
Remember, you said you were head over heels in love with me,  
You said you read me closely like a book  
But all of that has just vanished like dew during sunrise.)

In this poem, Thobeka Mncwango is exploring the plight of a woman who is married to an abusive man. Initially the man had promised to love and take care of the woman, but now he beats her up in front of the children. The woman is concerned about her son who will also grow up only to emulate this abusive behaviour. According to the poem, when people get into a relationship, they hope for better life and good communion but on the contrary, nowadays we have seen so many cases where men abuse their partners and spouses.

Similarly, Sbu Da Poet's poem "Uthando Luyahlanyisa" carries connotations of complaining:

*Okweqili kungibhangqa nodonga  
Ngivike ngalo leli bhayibheli ngithelwe ngamanzi eshisa  
Ngikhuleke kunjalo ngithi, "Nkosi yehlisa ulaka lwale ndoda,"  
Ngivuke ekuseni ngithi, "Namhlanje ngiyambophisa,"  
Ngivukwe unembeza ngiwasule amacala.*

(Like a trickster, it hits me against the wall  
I block blows with this very bible and be poured with hot water  
And pray nonetheless, saying "God please pacify this man's wrath."  
I wake up in the morning and say, "Today, I am having him arrested  
My conscience prevails and I withdraw the case.)

The acts of physical abuse are outlined in the first line where the woman laments her husband's abusive character. Here, the emphasis is not only on the woman being subjected to thrashing, but also on the manner in which the action is performed. The poet deliberately uses words that demonstrate the degree of the assault. Precisely, the action actually means assaulting

the woman, overpowering her and throwing her to the wall and resultantly, she is severely lashed on the face. The poet paints a gloomy picture of a woman who contends with staying with a violent and abusive husband. What is noticeable in the poem is that these people, in most cases, find it very difficult to report such cases and get their husbands arrested. The contradiction is that they want the community to sympathise with them.

#### 4.2.5.3 Protest for basic needs

Poems and songs are the most popular and accessible means of creative expression and communication in South Africa. Indeed, to the vast majority of South Africans, these art forms are often the only means of expressing feelings about life, history and societal ills. Poets are bent on expressing their dissatisfaction with and grievance about particular oppressive systems that concern them or their communities as a whole. One of the examples of contemporary protest poems is Brian Gwamanda's "Fees Must Fall" In this protest poem, the poet vents anger and frustration:

*Bewuphansi ngezikweletu zemfundo  
Ezisifaka kwa-Debt collectors  
Singakasebenzi nakusebenza.  
Zinhlungu zokudliwa i-system  
Ezivuka njalo mhla ubuka isithombe se-graduation.  
Ungafezanga vision na-mission ngephupho lemfundo yakho.  
Maqede kwehle izinyembezi.*

*1976 umlando bawuqopha  
2015 siyawuphinda  
Okusanda kwehlela abazali bethu eMarikana,  
Noma kungasifika emaNyuvesi asinandaba siyazidela  
#FeesMusFall  
Ikusasa lethu asijiki sikuyo le nto.*

(You were low with education debts  
Which take us to Debt collectors  
Even before we have started working.  
The pains of being consumed by the system  
Which you always feel when you look at the graduation photo  
You have not fulfilled your vision and mission by your educational dream  
Then tears roll down.

1976, they created history  
2015, we are repeating it  
What has recently befallen our parents in Marikana,  
Even if it reaches us at the Universities we don't care, we surrender ourselves.  
#FeesMusFall

This is our future, we wont retreat.)

This poem alludes to the student-led protest movement that began in mid-October 2015. It was started by the University of Witwatersrand's Students Representative Council of 2015. The students were responding to an increase in fees across South African universities. The protests started at the University of Witwatersrand and spread to the University of Cape Town and Rhodes University before rapidly spreading to other universities across the country. The 2015 protest ended when the South African government announced that there would be no tuition fee increases for the year 2016. The protests erupted again in 2016. They began when South Africa's Minister of Higher Education announced that there would be fee increases capped at 8% for 2017 (Linden 2017). However, President Jacob Zuma nullified the announced rise in university fees in 2016. This simply meant that the students' voice had been heard and the response was positive. They were not only concerned about the rise in the fees but they even demanded free education in all South African universities.

Brian Gwamanda states that the problem with South Africa's educational system is that even if a student borrows money through the National Student Financial Aids (NSFAS), the latter wants it paid back before the debtor gets employed. They even send the debtor's name to debt collectors. The people of South Africa believe that their government understands one language in order to respond to the issues and that language is protest. Felman (1995) suggests that working through a crisis can be done by offering testimonies of the experience of going through the crisis (that is, by revisiting it in other ways). She argues that change can only really take place through entering and working through crises.

Similarly, through Brian Gwamanda's presentation, real experiences and identity are shared through performance poetry. Inequality in South Africa has not been removed but it is being messaged to dupe Black people into thinking that it is now history. The argument here is that the cries of students at the formerly Black, disadvantaged universities are overlooked while their middle-class counterparts gain so much attention. These protests are significant in so far as they remind us that transformation is an ongoing process and that the ways in which society is to be transformed depends on the places and times we find ourselves in. In this context, performance poetry cannot claim to bring about all these transformations single-handedly. However, intercultural public art practices can make singular contributions to the transformational challenges the country still faces in this post-apartheid dispensation.

Black people's protest poetry has come to be construed as synonymous with people's poetry as it speaks against the oppression of Blacks. It is not peculiar to isiZulu poetry, but it also characterises most of the poetry that has emerged from South Africa today. Protest poetry appeals to people's feelings and perceptions about the world. As the poet finds himself caught up in an oppressive situation, his aim therefore is to make his oppressed fellows aware of their circumstances. Mpungose aims at sensitising his fellow oppressed about their emasculation for them to pay their attention to the pain of oppression. This can be seen in Mpungose's poem titled "Dear Khumbul'ekhaya":

*Kunondlebe zikhany'ilanga  
Abafika e-Afrika ngelinye ilanga,  
Baqhwaga umhlaba bengawucelanga.  
Manje uma sithi siyawufuna,  
Bathi okungcono bangasidayisela  
Kodwa kithina abawucelanga bazithathela.*

(There are white men  
Who arrived in Africa one day  
They confiscated the land by force without permission.  
Now when we say we want it  
They say the option is to sell it back to us  
Whereas they took it without our permission.)

President Cyril Ramaphosa proposed the amendment of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa to the effect that land can be expropriated by the State without compensation. This proposed amendment has caused some concern with the public. The issue of land expropriation without compensation raised so many questions and concerns in South Africa that led to so many discussions. Even traditional authorities came forth to convey their feelings on the matter.

Poets also demonstrate their views in their respective communities through poetry. Scelo Mpungose is one of the poets who is also vocal about the issue of land. He says that White people stole the land belonging to Black people and when Blacks demand it back, Whites say that they must pay for it. The poet says that Whites took the land belonging to Blacks by force, yet now they want Blacks to negotiate with them as if Whites legally own the land. People were not on the same page about this issue, as some were demanding the land back, while others were not supporting the proposal. Those who opposed the land expropriation without

compensation were worried about the lack of skills to use and sustain the land. Poets whose poems formed part of this study's data seem to unanimously support those who demand the land back to its rightful owners.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

The chapter discussed thematic preoccupations and message portrayal through performance poetry. The chapter has unveiled the five different categories of themes predominantly explored in contemporary performance poetry. Among these categories, the theme of love and the diverse dynamics thereof emerged as the most predominant one and many examples of such poems were cited to bolster the analysis of these themes. Further, protest poetry came up as the second largest, with educational poems emerging as the smallest category. It didn't come as a surprise that poets would be preoccupied with the theme of death but the observation was that poets seem to repeat themselves in terms of unpacking causes and impact of death on daily lives. The recurrence of love as the dominant theme indicates that Zulu poets have a propensity for love. One can assume that this is because of their social experiences as the target group. While many poets demonstrate beliefs and embrace Christianity, some poets express disillusionment and dissatisfaction with how religion has been used to exploit people and how some have enriched themselves through religion.

The next chapter explores the ethno-poetic theoretical vein, in order to develop a useful conceptual framework for the analysis of performance poetry. The following chapter also provides background information to the poetic features and stylistic devices that are employed in performance poetry. Such features include imagery such as similes, metaphors, personification and hyperbole and all these underpin contemporary isiZulu performance poetry.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **STYLISTIC DEVICES AND TECHNIQUES IN PERFORMANCE POETRY**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter is an analysis of the stylistic devices and techniques that poets employ in performance poetry. Such features underpin the structure of performance poetry, figurative language and linguistic dynamics of contemporary performance poetry. Interest in unpacking such devices arises from the belief that the abundance or absence thereof in a poem is usually a yardstick that poetry lovers use in determining the artistic ability of a poet. The approach in this chapter will be to give an appraisal of standard ingredients that poets make use of in enhancing the appeal and enjoyability of their creative endeavours.

#### **5.2 Stylistic devices**

Verdonk (2002:4) argues that appreciation of poetry is influenced by “the analysis of distinctive expression in language and the description of its purpose and effect.” Stylistic techniques are a significant characteristic of any form of poetry. The use of these techniques determines the level of the poet’s skill and success as an artist. The beauty that is created by the use of these poetic devices is an accomplishment that contributes towards its appeal to the audience. It should be borne in mind that not all the poetic techniques and elements are found in every performance poem. Each poem is unique, with its own structural patterns. Stylistic devices are the means by which a poet creates his or her own distinctive style and technique, conveying the intended meaning in their peculiar manner and this conscious employment of poetic style has an effect on the audience’s ultimate appreciation (Galperin, 2015).

Style is generally defined as qualities that make an artist stand out from the rest of his peers or contemporaries. These may be discernible in choice of words and the general execution of a performance in terms of dress code, mannerisms, voice, gestures and so forth. While there are elements of style that may be unique to a poet and can be interpreted as signature or trademark, there are common stylistic features that are expected to permeate every composition across artists or poets. Thus, there are stylistic functions which rely on the figurative language in the

form of words or expressions with meanings that are different from the literal interpretation. There are various aspects of figurative language, but for the sake of this research, only a few were considered because they are the most commonly employed in contemporary isiZulu performance poetry. As such, the study focuses on imagery, simile, metaphor, personification and hyperbole. This section commences with a brief examination of imagery. Arguably, without imagery, there is no poetry.

### **5.2.1 Imagery**

Imagery refers to the way in which images are created in the audience's mind and plays an important role in giving form to a piece of poetry. Cox and Dyson (1965:18) define imagery as:

Anything descriptive and evocative in poetry which helps the readers/audience to visualize a sense of situation.

Damanhuri (2011) states that imagery is usually called a mental picture in a poem, where readers can experience what the poem says since essentially, the true meaning of a poem lies in the total effect that it has on the readers. Poets frequently employ imagery in poetry and this immensely enriches the poetry and makes more enjoyable and memorable. Imagery is primarily drawn from nature and a wide spectrum of cultural norms and artefacts. Nature, in particular possess particular attributes which carry specific cultural connotations to the reader (Gule, 1990).

Poets exploit various stylistic means in which sensory experience is conveyed through linguistic prowess that depicts images that appeal to the reader's senses. The use of imagery stimulates feelings in the minds of the readers and this resultantly arouses their emotions. Imagery exploits figures of speech such as similes, metaphors, personification, hyperbole and symbolism, which are significant poetic devices that poets can hardly do without. These figures of speech are closely scrutinized in the analysis of contemporary performance poetry.

Msimang (1980:75) commenting on imagery as the dominant aspect of isiZulu praise poetry says:

It is bound up with the Zulu culture without the knowledge of which, it might be difficult to understand and correctly interpret the images used. Equally important is the Zulu history since the majority of the images are allusion of such history.

According to Fogle (1962) cited by Mtumane (2000:227), imagery is broadly defined as an analogy or comparison, having a special force and identity from the peculiarity of the aesthetic and concentrative form of the poetry. It is to be judged according to its creative power, the connotative richness of its content and the harmonious unity and fusion of its elements. Gong (2015) argues that imagery is the most frequently used poetic technique, which helps the poet to achieve the desired poetic effect and to produce aesthetic pleasure. Complementing views by other scholars, imagery can be viewed as the figurative use of language where the poet uses images instead of ordinary words (Tabu, 2007). Using imagery is an effective way of communicating an idea that is not easily understood because of its complexity. These images enable the listener to create mental pictures that reveal the object the poet is referring to in his poetry. The reader may feel the sense of sight, touch, smell, hearing and taste through imagery. Essentially, imagery is every word that creates vivid imaginary pictures in the listener's mind. Such images can be created vividly through figures of speech such as simile, metaphor and personification.

Wellek and Warren (1963:191) hold the view that:

Imagery basically appeals to the senses, but this does not mean that it calls forth only visual response, i.e. that the reader 'sees' what the image is referring to, imagery also evokes a response to the sense of smell, of heat and movement.

The definitions given above validate the proclamation that imagery is a pivotal stylistic device in poetry. Leech (1981) has classified figurative meaning into 8 types. They are: personification, simile, metaphor, hyperbole, irony, litotes, metonymy and oxymoron. For the sake of this research, the focus is placed only on imagery, which are; simile, metaphor, personification and hyperbole. These devices denote form in contemporary Zulu performance poems.

#### **5.2.1.1. Simile**

The word simile is a derivative of the Latin word *simile*, meaning 'resemblance and likenesses'. Technically, it implies the comparison of two objects with some similarities. According to Shamisa (1983), a simile is the claim that there is likeness between two things in one or two



attributes. At the level of metaphor, the comparison of two things is imbedded as the things are brought together and asserted to be one. In a simile, two things are brought together, but the association, in terms of meaning is made very clear to the reader by the use of the words such as 'like' or 'as'. This means there is no intriguing element of identity, neither is there the immediacy of a metaphorical connection. This has made critics regard similes as a poetic device of less worth than the metaphor (Gill, 2004). Similes are commonly employed in a variety of poems as an explicit comparison as opposed to the use of metaphors whose comparison of two phenomena may resemble differences in all respects except for one characteristic that unifies them.

According to Shipley (1970: 304), a simile is:

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...

Ntuli (1984) warns that whatever external device the poet wishes to employ must not only be decorative, it must be meaningful and be a means which best expresses the poet's feelings and thoughts. Israel et al. (2004:127) defines a simile as follows:

As a figure of comparison, similes serve the basic rhetorical functions of description and evaluation. This is largely a consequence of their form, and the fact that a simile necessarily features a comparison construction predicated of an explicit target. Basically, a simile is just a way of describing a target by asserting its similarity to some unexpected entity. The figurative nature of similes, however, has consequences which set them apart from literal comparisons. Most obviously, similes may be evocative in a way that literal comparisons cannot, prompting associations which go beyond whatever property they explicitly highlight (cf. Section 4, below). Moreover, similes may be interpreted in ways which differ systematically from literal comparisons.

In contemporary isiZulu performance poetry, the use of similes can be best studied under the two sub-headings: common similes including idiomatic expressions and extended and or compounded similes.

### 5.2.1.1.1 Common similes

Similes are not usually easy to recognize and interpret because some of them are over-used in daily language, which makes them become more common and ordinary. Similes are sometimes misleading because all the elements, which comprise them, have connotative meanings. In isiZulu metaphor is explicitly expressed through such words and formatives as *njenga-*, *-fana na-*, *kuhle kwa-*, etcetera. Zulu (1994) points out that there are cases, however, where such words and formatives are not used, but other grammatical forms of comparison are employed to constitute implicit rather than explicit similes. Ntuli (1994) further says there are comparisons, which have lost their effect through repeated use and now felt to be ordinary idiomatic language which any person can use. This is found in SimChina's poem titled "Inhliziyo":

*Kwezinye izikhathi ubungiphathisa okukaNdlunkulu,  
Kwezinye izikhathi ubungiphathisa okwenja uqobo lwayo.*

(Some other times you used to treat me like a queen  
Some other times you used to treat me like a dog itself.)

This kind of simile is very common and often used by anyone. Hence, it does not sound poetic because of its regular usage. In this case, we can also observe that even the poet was not aware of the simile; she was just conversing with her ex-lover. This is evidence that some similes comes naturally in people's daily conversation. In this poem, the poet is talking about her past relationship. She is conversing with her ex-lover about how she was treated. SimChina uses similes in both lines to compare both the good and bad times. The word Ndlunkulu (Queen) is referring to the woman who rules the country because she was born in the royal family or she is married to a King. The use of this simile gives us the sense that she was once treated well and with dignity. However, she also reveals that there were times when she felt that she was treated badly.

Comparison with an animal is apparent where the treatment of the poet by her ex-boyfriend is likened to that of dog, which gives the audience a clear picture of how the girl was treated. A dog is an animal, which is sometimes treated spitefully and is regarded as inferior to human beings. The poet views the way the poet was treated in her relationship and equates the treatment to that of a dog. This also serves to highlight that relationships are not always rosy.

Another example of a common simile is found in SimChina's poem cited below. In this example, the poet uses the formatives – 'njengo' when she compares her youth to an eagle:

*Ngizikhethela mina ukuhamba naye,  
Maqede wabuyisa ubusha bami **njengoKhozi**.  
Uma ungakholwa buz'ugogo.*

(It was my choice to walk with him,  
Then he returned my youth like an Eagle.  
If you don't believe ask my grandmother.)

SimChina compares the returning of her youth by God after accepting Christ as her saviour as having occurred without delay or quickly as if done by an eagle. The use of this imagery creates a vivid picture of the swiftness characteristic of the manner in which God could possibly restore the life of a repentant sinner. However, the use of the simile in the above extract is not convincing, since the poet does not clarify her preference for it. The association between her returned youth and the eagle does not seem to contribute any meaning to the poem unless one is a Christian who understands this biblical connotation. The rationale for employing the simile is to give multiple meanings and enhance understanding. However, in this case the poet could have described her condition and feeling without employing this kind of simile because even though the poet herself conveyed her message, the meaning leaves unanswered questions and creates more confusion.

Nonhle Mkhize preferred to use *-sa-* when comparing the difficulties that characterise life to the rock or stone:

*Ngiyakunxusa ungaphezi  
Ukungikhulekela,  
Impilo **salitshe** inzima.*

(I beg you to not stop  
Praying for me  
Life is as tough as a rock.)

This is a unique way of using similes, but the image of life becoming hard is effectively understood through the comparison with a rock or stone. This kind of comparison cannot be understood by everyone, but only those who have experienced some hardships in life. The use of this simile challenges the listeners to use their imagination to think deep in order to be able to associate life with the rock.

What has been demonstrated above is the fact that isiZulu poets are quite innovative and are able to create common similes. The next section presents discussions on compounded and extended similes in seeking to demonstrate their inventiveness with the use of similes.

#### 5.2.1.1.2 Compounded and extended similes

Some of the similes used in performance poetry are compounded and extended. Even though most poets employ common similes, this may be generally regarded as an unconscious occurrence and can't necessarily be regarded as a deliberate stylistic element. An observation is that the manner in which poets employ similes is not consistent, which gives the sense that it might happen that they do not apply it as one of the devices or techniques but it naturally features as a component of everyday language. The above statement resonates with the extract of the poem cited below:

*Vele ubucwib'obuhle obuhamba ngabubili,  
Njengamajuba thina siyohlala sobabili.  
Wena uligugu lakwamhlaba.*

(Yes, the best things go in pairs,  
Just like pigeons, it will always be the two of us.  
You are the treasure of the world.)

Here the poet extends her simile in order to give a clear picture about the love she shared with his lover. The poet compares the relationship with the love between doves. When poets juxtapose the character of their love with that of the dove, it simply gives the impression that they are so deeply engrossed in love for each other that they hang on together inseparably. The effectiveness of this imagery lies in the sense that the behaviour and the character of the two doves and the belief that when people are always together, they are like romantic doves, creates a scenario that is symbolic of true love. This poem is highly reflective of romantic love, oneness, imagination and the feelings of the poet towards his lover. This simile enriches the poem as it generates multiple meanings and new perspectives of love.

In one of his poems, titled "Xenophobia" Siyabonga Mpungose says:

*Amazwe bawaqamba ngamagama  
Bathi asifani nabafowethu beqamb'amanga.  
Njengezinkomo esibayeni  
Basivalela ngaphakathi,*

*Amanye amazwe bawavalela ngaphandle  
Sawabiza ngamazwe angaphandle.*

(They gave names to countries  
And told lies by saying we are not the same as our brothers.  
Like cattle in a kraal  
They locked us in,  
They locked other countries out  
And we called them foreign countries.)

The poem portrays the impact of colonialism on Blacks. The poet reveals that Whites made Blacks fight each other by separating and placing them in different countries. The poet talks about the issue of xenophobia where Blacks fight each other. He compares how South Africans treat people from other African countries. He compares people to cattle grouped together in a kraal, yet some black people are left outside simply because they are from African countries. The poet gives all the details of the event to enhance clarity.

Although his comparison is not very clear, it makes sense when the poet extends his poem to mention that foreigners are regarded as outsiders to show the damage caused by Whites. If one grew up in a rural area they would understand the simile, where the locking in and out of cattle results in chaos and distress on the cattle. The poet suggests that the impact of colonialism had the same effect on Blacks and confined them in spaces where movement was restricted and interaction with fellow Blacks was impeded.

### **5.2.1.2 Metaphor**

The word metaphor is derived from the Greek word *metaphoria*, which means ‘to carry over.’ In a metaphor, a word or expression that in literal usage denotes one kind of thing is applied to a distinctly different kind of thing, without asserting a comparison (Abrams, 1999:97). It is a kind of condensed simile whose parts, like the topic or similarity indicators are concealed to convey the meaning connotatively. Poets employ metaphors as a figure of speech in which one phenomenon is linked to or identified with another. Metaphors and similes are features of everyday speech. In employing this figurative language, the poet does not just compare one thing with another, but takes one thing to be the other. Through metaphor, an idea may be transmuted into an image that is vividly perceived through the human senses, for it seems that readers hardly understand abstract things unless they know their physical appearance, what they feel or sounds like (Simpson, 1972). The metaphor, like the simile, has its basis in a point

of similarity between two things. Whereas a simile states that one thing is like another, a metaphor identifies the phenomena completely. Hawkes (1972: 01) defines metaphor as:

A word which comes from the Greek word metaphor derived from "*meta*" meaning "over" and "pherein" (to carry). It refers to a particular set of linguistic processes whereby aspects of one object are 'carried over' or transferred to another object, so that the second object is spoken of as if it were the first.

Molefe (1992:113) explains the difference between metaphor and symbolism thus:

Metaphor is a comparison without specific comparative word such as 'like' where the reader is invited to make a mental link such as 'fierceness or courage' in the metaphor 'Shaka is the lion of Zululand' symbolism on the other hand is not a comparison between two things but rather a figure of speech where one thing stands for another, as in "the pen is mightier than sword" where 'pen' represents literature or power of writing while 'sword' stands for battle.

The categories or sub-headings under which poets use metaphor in as far as this study is concerned will be discussed, focusing on structural and ontological metaphors:

#### **5.2.1.2.1 Structural metaphor**

In this kind of metaphor, the source domain provides a relatively rich knowledge structure for the target concept. In other words, the cognitive function of these metaphors is to enable speakers to understand target A by means of the structure of source B. For example, the concept of time is structured according to motion and space (Tomei, 2017:13).

Alluding to the above definition, this kind of comparison has been observed in Brian Gwamanda's poem titled "Ntokazi":

**Mlilo wentokozo, mfudumezi wekhaya,  
Mbali eyigugu ensimini yekhethelo elinywa ngenhliziyo yejuba  
Thina sohlala sobabili njengamajuba.**

(Fire of joy, warmer of the home  
Precious flower in the special field that is being ploughed with a soft heart  
We will stay together like doves.)

We are quite familiar with how hot the fire is and how pretty flowers look. This choice of words coupled with the skilful employment of imagery is most effective and makes the audience understand the meaning conveyed. Comparison with fire is metaphorical, creating the impression that her presence in his life brings the fire of joy and happiness. One can imagine the intensity of their love without having to know and see them in person. Moreover, the use of the word “flower” symbolises love, and it is consequently interpreted to mean that the whole poem is a declaration against anything that makes joyful love impossible. In his comparison, the poet vividly presents the beauty of his lover. The flower and fire metaphors graphically create a vivid picture of their romantic relationship. The poet also uses metaphor of pigeons to convey eternal love and commitment. In his poem, Senzokhaya Khambule also employs the similar metaphor when he says:

*Amathemba ayafiphala ngoba naye uvele waphela emoyeni njengtuthu  
Vele abafowethu bebishilo bathi lona **umlilo wamaphepha.***

(Hopes are fading because he also just vanished into thin air like smoke  
Even my brothers did say that this thing was fire made from papers.)

A fire made from papers doesn't last on as the one made from wood or coal. This metaphor gives us an impression that the two lovers fell hurriedly in love, which made their love short-lived since it didn't have a firm foundation. A similar metaphor is also found in SimChina's poem titled “Ngingowesifazane”:

***Ngiyinsimbi kayigobi  
Ngiyinsimbi engagobi  
Ngiyitshe elingaqhephuki.***

(I am an iron that doesn't bend  
I am an iron that doesn't bend  
I am an unsplitable rock.)

The poet has a strong understanding of iron and her poem employs metaphors to refer to her situation. The metaphorical meanings attached to this poem draws from strong iron which does not bend. SimChina is referring to a resilient woman as an unbendable iron and unsplitable rock. Iron is a strong metal that is mostly used in the construction and manufacturing industry. In the context of this understanding of iron, readers tend to realise that the poet does not view herself merely as an iron, but the metaphor portrays the role of a woman in the family as akin to building and manufacturing. Another typical example is demonstrated below:

***Ngiyitshe elingaqhephuki  
Ngiwuthando.***

(I am a rock that doesn't split  
I am love.)

The poet appreciates women so much that her poems demonstrate the treasures hidden in them. She believes that women can do much to defend themselves. This instils the feeling that no matter what happens to them, women's fighting spirit remains unbreakable. The poem also depicts the poet as having achieved her goals through education. The rock metaphor creates a vivid picture of a strong and unshakable woman. It may be surmised that probably, the poet is bent on portraying women as so powerful that nothing can ever defeat them. As rocks can be found on as well as beneath the ground, this metaphorically paints a picture of omnipresence and that she is the kind of a woman capable of surviving in all situations and circumstances. The metaphor creates the image of boulders, which are normally so immovable that they need much effort. In this sense, the poet is putting across the insight that a strong woman cannot be moved by whatever force that comes her way. Another use of metaphor is demonstrated in Nkonzo Mayaba's poem titled "Idwala":

***Uyinsika yomlilo emini abe yinsika yefu ebusuku  
UnguNkulunkulu ophezu konkulunkulu,  
Ngob'uNkulunkulu uma ukuye awusoze, waduka awusoze wabhubha  
Uyindlela neqiniso nokuphila.***

(He is the pillar of fire during the day and the pillar of cloud at night  
He is God above all gods  
For when you are with God you will neither get lost nor perish  
He is the way, truth and life.)

A pillar is pole that props the roof of a hut so as to prevent it from falling. Here, the poet is giving a sense that when someone has God on their side, they never fall. God is metaphorically portrayed as a pillar that gives light when it is dark and guidance during the day to whosoever believes in him. Unlike written poetry, performance poetry has a unique way of demonstrating the metaphor in a more vivid and dramatic manner. In performance, the listener is able to create a clear picture based not only on the uttered words but also on the performer's facial expressions and gestures. The use of metaphor is also demonstrated in the following poem by Thandeka Gumede:



*Ngikubuke ngakufunda ngeso lobuthongo  
Wena **uyimpisi** embethe isikhumba semvu  
Mina bengithi unguye.*

(I looked at you and read you with a sleepy eye  
You are a hyena wearing a sheep's skin  
I thought you were the one.)

The poet metaphorically accuses her lover of the hypocrisy and laments that her lover is no longer the same person she met before. The opening stanza in this poem depicts the poet as having been attracted to this man who, at face value, acts like a good person but eventually, his true colours manifested themselves. The skilful use of metaphorical language is very apparent as the poet takes her boyfriend for a hyena. Expressing her dismay, the poet honestly laments that what she sees before her is a mere hyena concealed in a sheep's skin.

Apparently, this romantic partner is clandestinely acting innocently in her presence yet he pretends to be what he is not. Symbolically, a sheep is an unblemished, calm and harmless animal, contrasting sharply with a hyena which is known to be dangerous and capable of eating other animals and even people. This metaphor provokes the feeling that when one is in love with a person, they can scarcely see the true colours of their particular partner. The poet is blindfolded by love and she gives away all her love to the lover. The poet uses visual imagery to make the audience see how dangerous that person is in the life of the poet. She wants the audience to have a clear picture and also feel what she is feeling about her lover. All in all, the poet's relationship with her lover is unequivocally strained and ambivalent. Therefore, the nature of the relationship features as one of the major topics or subject matters the poem grapples with. As the lines quoted above suggest, the poet has sadly come to the realisation of the truth about her relationship and she is trying to escape from the emasculating relationship by convincing herself that her lover acts more like an animal than a human being.

#### **5.2.1.2.2 Ontological metaphor**

Ontology is a branch of philosophy that has to do with the nature of existence. Ontological metaphors provide much less cognitive structuring for target concepts than structural ones. In general, an ontological metaphor enables us to see more sharply delineated structure where there is very little or none (Tomei, 2017:14). For example, personification involves

understanding nonhuman entities or things in terms of human beings and is regarded as a type of ontological metaphor (Filiz Dur, 2006:56).

This is well demonstrated in Zamani Mzobe's poem titled "Ngiyinsizwa":

*Ngiwukhokhovula **wenkanyamba**  
Uma ngihamba **ngiyisiphepho**  
Ngibhekisa okwemamba.  
(I am a fierce tornado  
When I move, I am a storm  
I have eyes of a mamba.)*

The poet here mirrors his unstoppable liking for someone he happens to love. He reveals that when he is in love with a girl, he does not relent. Literally, a storm is a strong and forceful wind that destroys obstacles on its way. The difference between what the poet says and the literal meaning is so huge that the audience understands the hyperbolic utterance at its face value. Literally, associating love with a hurricane seems far-fetched as love is usually associated with gentleness and kindness. The poet intends to convey a positive attitude, but in a metaphoric manner that carries adverse connotations. However, the poet succeeds in conveying a positive attribute. Thus, the resultant meaning differs from the intended meaning mentioned above. The storm metaphor can be interpreted literally, as an approximation, hyperbolically or metaphorically (Carston and Wearing, 2011). There is no clear cut-off point between those possibilities. The same can be seen in a poem by Zamoh Zulu:

*Intokozo yami ukuguquguquka **kwesimo sezulu** sanamuhla  
Ukuthanda **umthwalo**.*

(My happiness is the ever-changing today's weather  
To love is burdensome.)

The poet talks about love but the way he expresses it, it is like something that is not pleasant. Rather, it is a burden which depresses. As human beings, we regard love as a beautiful and pleasant feeling. Many people run after it but this poet shows that even though love is pleasant, sometimes it depresses those who are in it. He says love turns us blind and leads to a cliff. He displays marriage as a cliff in that people enter marriage in good faith but realizes its danger when they are inside. The comparison between happiness and weather does not convey literal meaning, but how relationships work. This gives a clear picture that it is not always pleasant since one minute things are fine and another minute things are sour. Change of weather is not

something that is always predictable and can be planned for because it changes unexpectedly. Being in love is a choice that one makes and is not meant to hurt and depress. But once you are attached to someone, whatever they do will affect you in one way or the other.

### **5.2.1.3 Personification**

Personification is a kind of figurative expression in which an animate object is given human qualities. According to Abrams (1999:99), personification entails “either an inanimate object or an abstract concept [being] spoken of as though it were endowed with life or with human attributes or feelings.” Personification occurs when language accords human qualities to non-human things. Wolosky (2001) contends that personification is figurative speech, which attributes human qualities to an animal, an object or an idea. Personification is the language of literature which makes all the objects subject to interpretation. In addition, Nasaru (2013) maintains that personification becomes interesting and lively through giving many interpretations for the reader because personification in poetry describes an idea, experience in life or society. Sense and feelings are provoked in poetry which makes the reader get a clearer picture of what is happening.

Poetry is the most practical medium which essentially expresses meaning in figurative language. Poets also use personification to describe and relate concrete ideas through equating them to human beings, although such particular things are not human. This means that personification does not only animate the inanimate but also endows human attributes to other animate but non-human objects, like animals. The effectiveness of this poetic device lies in the fact that a thing that is not human is nevertheless regarded as human. The poet does this in various ways. Sometimes an object can be made to talk or engage in activities that are specifically performed by people. At other times, poets give entities human feelings and thoughts. The poet may also attribute parts of the human body to the phenomena being personified. There are many poems in which poets employ this figure of speech to convey certain messages.

#### **5.2.1.3.1 Human action**

This is how Ntuli (1984: 173) explains this feature of personification:

Inanimate things are sometimes made to do what is normally done by human beings.

This type of personification abounds in contemporary isiZulu performance poetry. There are not so many instances where human actions are captured through personification. In Brian Gwamanda's poem "Uju Lwemizwa" the poet artistically uses human actions through non-human objects. The poet feels imprisoned by the romantic feelings he has for the girl. This love is animated through human characteristics like hands which are capable of trussing the poet with a rope. Love is not supposed to be a symbol of enslavement, but here the poet reveals the notion that when a person is in love, they are vulnerable to slavish feelings and thoughts that accompany one's commitment to the romantic relationship. Readers know that trussing is an action that someone could perform to someone else as a way of punishing or killing that person. It could only be done by someone with hands, whereas love is only a feeling devoid of hands. Interestingly, the poet believes that love is capable of shackling a human being:

*Ngiboshwe wuthando lwentombi selwangiphendul'isigqila semicabango.  
Ngikhaliswe yiminkenenezo; kubantu sengaphenduk'isilima.*

(I am shackled by the love of a girl; it has turned me into a slave of thought.  
Melodies reduce me to tears; to people I have turned into a fool.)

Gwamanda effectively employs personification, and the deliberate use of this type of figurative language which confers human characteristics to non-human entities enriches the poet's special ability to appeal to human senses in a way that makes everything seem human and lively. The use of this kind of personification allows the audience to share the same feelings with the poet. Even the tone that is used by the poet makes the audience imagine how painful it is to become a slave because of love.

In "Ungapholisi maseko," Mngqobi Madlala addresses death as a human being or Devil capable of fighting and defeating people:

*Ngathi sofa silahlane.  
Ngiyakhumbula mhla sisehlane  
Sithi siyothola ingane siyethe sithi ngu-Asande.  
Kodwa namuhla **kungehlule** ukufa;  
Ungabe usakhala sobuye sibonane.*

(I said till death do us part  
I remember when we were in the wilderness

We said we will get a child and name him Asande.  
But today death has defeated me;  
Do not cry anymore, we will see each other again.)

Madlala personifies death and accuses it of killing people mercilessly, crushing and derailing the poet's promises to his lover. The poet appeals successfully to the audience's sense of sight. Through the use of personification, he allows the audience to visualise and experience the whole situation with the poet.

Nonhle Mkhize also employs personification in her poem titled "Ningaluvus'uthando":

*UThando kudala lwemuka kwasala igama  
Bheka kuze kube namuhla lesi sizukulwane,  
Sisebenza ngegama kodwa umnikazi wegama uphelele emoyeni...bheka.*

(Love left long time ago, only the name remains  
Look, up until today this generation,  
Operates by the name but the owner of the name vanished into thin air...see.)

The poet personifies love as a human being capable of moving from one place to another. In true sense, love is transient and immediately comes to an end. Love is a romantic emotion toward a person or something else. Emotions can be shown when someone feels love, anger or fear of something. The poet seems to be talking about someone who stays somewhere and people know that she lives in that particular place. But when people visit this person at her place they find that she has left without notifying them. Yet people still go to that place to look for love. The poet depicts love as a lady who lives in the society, and when he utters the word, one gets the impression that *uthando* is the name of a girl, and not a mere romantic feeling. So, it can be argued that the poet successfully personifies the word *uthando* as a female being.

In this poem, the poet laments that people still believe that in order to attain happiness and love, they have to enter into a relationship with someone and stay in that relationship even when there is no more love. When one listen to the poem to its end, one finds that way back in time, true love once existed but things have since changed. According to the poet, the contemporary generation heard about true love but never experienced it, hence they keep on searching.

Minenhle Mthembu also demonstrates the use of personification in poetry:

*Ngimbethe ingubo yenduduzo ngizama ukuvika izinhlungu  
Kodwa imicabango **idudula** ingubo iyilahlele emsamo  
Ngisale ngigodola ngikhumbule yena.*

(I am covered in a blanket of comfort, trying to ward off pains  
But the thoughts push the blanket and throw it to the back  
Leaving me feeling cold and missing him.)

The poet personifies thought as having hands to push his blanket away. Here the poet is talking about his lover who broke up with him, and he feels cold when he thinks about the situation. When one watches the video clip of this performance, one identifies with the heartbroken poet, although he does not blame love for their break up. He still believes in love. Thought is a feeling a person has for something or someone else and to push someone or something forcefully is a human action which could be performed by humans with their powerful hands. Nonetheless, in this poem, the poet uses the word push and associates it with thoughts. This means that the poet uses the word push to explain that he cannot stop thinking about his lover; not by choice but because of the pain that he feels inside. The poet uses the word push in a personified way to make thoughts seem alive and powerful.

This is how Nompilo Mkhwanazi uses personification:

*Ngivumeleni ngiphumule  
**Kunginqobile** ukufa amandla abengasekho  
Ngivumeleni ngiphumule.*

(Allow me to rest  
Death has defeated me, strength was gone  
Allow me to rest.)

The poet personifies death by giving it human qualities to depict the indomitable power that death possesses over human beings. Literally, it is impossible for a non-living thing like death to fight. This form of personification has been used by the poet to humanise death. In the literal sense, death is inanimate and incapable of fighting and winning a battle. It could be argued that death has been personified by the poet to demonstrate in vivid terms, its inevitability. Another example of personification is found in SimChina's poem that talks about the death of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. We are told:

*Kunedwala elikhulu ebeliyinsika yomhlaba elizwakale liwa **kabuhlungu**  
Amehlo akhe abebhalwe imfudumalo*

*Onhliziyo encane ebithwele isiZwe sonke.*

(A big rock, which was a pillar of the earth was heard falling painfully  
Warmth was written in her eyes  
Who had a small heart but carried the whole Nation).

SimChina uses personification in her poem to emphasise the degree to which the death of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela rocked the whole nation. She seeks to measure the contribution Winnie had made by using different figures of speech such as personification to express her feelings. She eulogizes Winnie Mandela and depicts her impact as an African political icon and uses personification to paint a vivid picture of the amount of love Mama Winnie endowed to the South Africans during her life time. Her heart is given human qualities of being able to carry the whole nation. Of course this personification is a gross exaggeration since the heart cannot carry the whole nation, literally and the nation itself cannot be carried or lifted up. The scale or size that is given to the heart is extremely big, enabling the poet to craft the message she intends to convey to the listeners.

There is yet another example of human emotions suggested in these lines from Smart Black's poem titled "Snenhlanhla":

*Ngihlangane nephupho lakhe selifake inzilo emnyama  
Nalo lithi alizikhethelanga  
USnenhlanhla nguye owazikhethela izindlela zobumnyama,*

(I met up with her dream wearing black mourning clothes  
It also says it was not its intention  
Snenhlanhla is the one who chose her dark ways.)

The emotions presented above constitute an important part of Snenhlanhla's situation that the poet attempts to describe. The poet creates some of his boldest personification in his attempt to paint a clearer picture. Mourning clothes are worn by a widow after losing her husband. In fact, Smart Black chooses the appropriate diction to depict the state of Snenhlanhla's dream and it becomes obvious that her dream will no longer be achieved no matter the circumstances. Unlike a human being, it is not possible for a dream to wear something, and when someone is dead, they do not come to life again. The poet feels irritated by the person he is speaking about. He exaggerates her situation as someone who is at her death bed, which should not be the case. It might be surmised that the poet is warning other women about the consequences of throwing themselves at men.

### 5.2.1.3.2 Human body parts

In some poems, poets give to inanimate objects physical characteristics which are found in human beings, as can be seen in Minenhle Mthembu's poem titled "Sithandwa Sami Seminyaka":

*Inhliziyo **ingivuse** kuqala  
Ngiphaphame ngiqamele phezu kwedamu lezinyembezi.*

(The heart woke me first  
I woke up with my head resting on a dam of tears.)

In this poem, the poet blames his heart for waking him up, only to realize that he had been crying. This signifies that one hardly sleeps when one has something bothering them. For emphasis, the poet also employs hyperbole with regard to the amount of tears, which gives the impression that he is crying so much that he can hardly hold his tears. Another example of personification is found in Mxolisi Mtshali's poem "Nonzwakazi":

*Hhayi ngoba ngiyithatha  
Kodwa i-smile sakho  
**Singithatha singibeke phezulu.***

(Not because I am precocious  
But your smile  
Takes me to the top.)

A smile is bereft of human characteristic but the poet personifies this action as if it were a person capable of taking someone else from one level to another. Only humans with hands could move objects from one place to another. Incipient in this personification is the fact that a smile from someone one loves could brighten up one's day, only if the poet is referring to the change of mood after seeing a smile. In this case, there is use of personification in this extract. In the same poem, Mxolisi Mtshali further employs a wide range of personification:

*Izolo bengilalele izinkanyezi zikhuluma  
Zibambe umhlangano zikhulumela phansi  
Uzibona ukuthi zikhathazekile ukuthi kwenzekile kanjani  
Ukuthi omunye wazo awele phansi emhlabathini.  
Ngaleso sikhathi bengibheke ngakuwe  
Ngoba ubulokhu ukhanya empilweni yami:*



*Wena uyinkanyezi!*

(Yesterday I was listening to the stars talking  
They were holding a meeting speaking softly  
You could tell that they were worried how it happened  
That one of them fell to the ground.  
At that time I was looking at you  
Because you were busy shining in my life:  
You are a star!)

Mtshali employs both metaphor and personification but the one more noticeable is personification. He personifies a star. He describes her as the right star that brought light to his life. A star is a beautiful thing that appears only at night. Apart from decorating the sky, the star gives light when there is darkness. The poet reveals the beauty of his lover and the positive impact that she has had on his life. Literally, stars cannot talk, let alone holding a meeting. Only human beings can hold meetings and discuss issues together; this attribute cannot be found in non-human things. There is another poem by Mxolisi Mtshali titled “Vrum”:

*Uma ngikubhekile ngizwa inhliziyo yami ishaya ngamandla  
Uma ngikubhekile ngizwa umoya wami **ukhulumela** phansi.*

(When I look at you, I feel my heart beating faster  
When I look at you, I feel my spirit speaking softly.)

Interestingly, most of Mxolisi Mtshali’s love poems employ imagery. Like the rest, these two lines also reveal another form of personification where the poet seems to be communicating with his heart. He says that his heart beats very fast and his soul talks in a very low voice. The communication between a person and his or her heart could only occur through feelings and not physical actions. In this instance, the poet gives his heart a mouth and soul a voice to talk. The poet is conversing directly with his lover, expressing his feelings on how his heart responds. One should mention that personification is more dramatic when a poet uses dialogue as exemplified in Gubhela Mkhize’s poem titled “UNembeza”:

*Ungidonsele eceleni wathi, “Lalela ndodana ngikuhlebele,”  
Ngathi, “Sheshisa anginaso isikhathi.”  
Wathi, “Ngizoba mfushane; empeleni mina nginguNembeza,”  
Ngathi, “Unembeza kabani lona omncane kangaka?”*

(It pulled me aside and said, “Listen son, let me whisper to your ear,”  
I said, “Be quick, I don’t have time.”  
It said, “I won’t be long; in fact I am Conscience.”

I said, “Whose conscience that is so small?”

The poet reveals the truth about people’s conscience which, arguably, is based on their everyday reactions. He shows that it is not that people lack conscience, but they choose to disregard it. He seems to engage in dialogue with conscience. This is undoubtedly a very artistic form of personification in that the poet seems to extend the existing personification with which conscience is always associated. In other words, everyday speech alludes to the ability of conscience to speak or nudge a person towards some direction. For dramatic effect, the poet adds to this quality by endowing conscience with dialogue and ability to engage in conversation.

#### **5.2.1.4 Hyperbole**

Hyperbole is a trope that, to date, has received less empirical attention in comparison to tropes like metaphor and simile. It is argued that the effectiveness of hyperbole lies in its ability to dislocate the originations of typicality and truth. It draws the reader or listener’s attention by grasping the inconceivable. Its approach is rooted in overstatement of truth in an overt manner. Any word or articulation can be considered a hyperbole when it is deliberately exaggerated or overstated to provoke the thoughts and feeling of individuals. As a stylistic device, hyperbole serves to amplify and intensify particular properties of an object or phenomenon (Galperin, 1981).

Hyperbole is a figure of speech that involves a conscious exaggeration of ideas for the sake of emphasis, making it an exaggerated description of people and non-human things. This poetic device exploits exaggeration to express strong emotion, stress a point or evoke humour. According to Abrams (1993:85), “hyperbole is bold overstatement or extravagant exaggeration of fact or possibility which may be used either for serious or comic effect.” It is a term used to represent an overstatement of meaning. In poetry, this figurative language is deliberately employed by the poet to amplify objects beyond their real or natural magnitude or size (Arvius, 2003). The most typical hyperbolic circumstances are connected with the need to unmask the unreal character of events and situations. Three categories of hyperbole will be discussed in the following analysis, which are; overstatement, metaphoric hyperbole and expressions of numbers.

#### 5.2.1.4.1 Overstatement

An overstatement is where a small thing is made extremely big. This could be done for the sake of emphasis or to express emotion and not to be taken literally. According to Clark (1996: 143), hyperbole can be seen as a violation of the maxim of quality which gives rise to conversational implicatures. That the literal utterance violates the maxim of quality is a property that hyperbole shares with such figures of speech as irony. This is well demonstrated from Zamo Cofi's poem about death through poverty:

*Ngisho nengane encane isiyalazi iHubo likaDavide, "Nkosi ngihawukele."  
Okungenani ngibhadle ejele ngifele into engiyaziyo,  
Kunokubulawa indlala.*

(Even a small child knows David's Hymn, "Lord have mercy on me"  
I would rather rot in prison and own up to my wrongdoings  
Than starve to death.)

The poet laments that people are dying as a result of poverty because they can hardly fend for themselves, hence some of them end up committing crime in order to provide for their families. Though it is impossible for a person to die of hunger, the poet uses the expression to convey the magnitude with which hunger and poverty wreak havoc on communities. Of course, this statement is deliberately hyperbolic, with the poet intending to convey a different meaning, which is less exaggerated than what has been uttered. This is supported by Arvius (2003) who defines hyperbole as a figure used by someone who has desire and expectation to the things that happens to make an object greater than the real object.

Another example of hyperbole is found in Scelo Mpungose's poem titled "My cute ex-":

*Ukuthandana nawe akuhlukile nokukhokhela intela  
Shuthi inhliziyu yakho iyi-hostela ngoba sihlala sibaningi,  
Nokuhlala kuyo kuya- rentelwa.*

(Being in a relationship with you is not different to paying tax.  
Which means your heart is a hostel because there is a lot of us staying in it.  
Even to stay in it you have to pay rent.)

The poet mentions a hostel to allude to the generosity of the heart of his lover when it comes to accumulating men, thereby portraying an image of someone who is in multiple relationships with different men. This hyperbolic expression is also metaphoric in that the lover's heart is represented as an apartment, which can possibly accommodate a number of people. Literally, a hostel is a huge complex that brings many people together as a family. Therefore, this is an obvious exaggeration to state that the human heart can be as huge as a hostel. This is supported by Aristotle (1976:165) who contends that "exaggeration is a representation of something in an excessive manner to make it more noticeable, or as being larger, better, or worse than it really is." In other words, exaggerating means saying something beyond the restrictions of truth.

The overstatement hyperbole is also expressed in SimChina's poem titled "Inhliziyo":

*Inhliziyo yami ifele ezandleni zomuntu ebengimthanda.*

(My heart broke in the hands of a person I loved.)

The poet is talking about how much love she had for her boyfriend who destroyed her trust. The bad treatment she received from her lover in the name of love made her realise that true love is simply a wishful thinking. When a person's heart stops beating, that particular person cannot be able to live. Literally, the heart cannot die but can be painful instead. Thus, the poet portrays how the man she was in love with inflicted pain by not keeping his promises to love her. This is artistic indeed because the poet chooses this hyperbole to suggest that she stopped loving after this disappointment; since a dead heart can't function any longer when it comes to matters of the heart.

#### **5.2.1.4.2 Metaphoric hyperbole**

In defining hyperbole, some scholars state that hyperbole is usually defined as extreme exaggeration, however, in most cases it is a metaphorical exaggeration as well. This can be found in SimChina's poem:

*Lo wami izolo ubeyindoni yamanzi  
Namhlanje akampofu ngathi umbeth'ilanga.*

(This one of mine was a dark beauty yesterday.  
Today she is light in complexion as if wearing the sun.)

This is a metaphoric hyperbole simply because the poet is exaggerating the way his woman looked. She might change the complexion but she cannot be compared with someone wearing the sun. That alone is a form of hyperbole because the sun cannot be worn. However, to understand how this word has become a hyperbole, it is important to understand the meaning contained in both lines that are provided above and also include real-world knowledge about the specific comparison that is discussed. People who use lotions to lighten their skin cannot be compared to those who are light by nature, and they are often allergic to sunlight.

The above is also well demonstrated in the poem below by Imbongi Engadumile:

*Ngizamile ukuyiphakamisa impilo yami  
Kodwa njengensipho yashibilika.*

(I tried to lift my life;  
But like a soap, it slipped away.)

In this poem, Imbongi Engadumile is pleading for help. He feels like he is at a stage where ending his life is the only solution. He has lived a difficult life and tried to reach out to various platforms for assistance. He even tried to publicise his poems through UKhozi FM but couldn't attain any recognition. He claims that even politicians were reluctant to aid him simply because he was not their fellow party member. He approached local business owners in the neighbourhood and local area, to no avail. Hence the allusion to a slippery soap, through which the poet is trying to explain that every opportunity that he pursued seemed to disappear before he could grab it. In essence, the poet is trying to reveal the seriousness of the state of his current situation by exaggerating the prevailing conditions.

Another example is found in Senzoh dapoet's poem titled "Ungiphoxile":

*Ungixolele kodwa lolu thando olwalusenhliweni  
Ngenkathi ngithi ngizishaya isifuba ngawe  
Selwaba yihlule eselehlela ezinyaweni;  
Manje sengishaya izinyawo kuwe.*

(Forgive me, but the love that was in the heart  
When I thought I could brag about you  
Has become a blood clot that has dripped to my feet;  
So now I am hitting my feet on you.)

The poet is talking about someone he used to love wholeheartedly. However, his heart gave up, due to many disappointments. The blood clot suggests that he does not have a soft spot or love for his lover anymore. The heart is a small and fragile part of the human body, which in reality cannot be compared to the clot. The clot is dry blood that stopped moving and collected in one place. When the blood doesn't move in the human body, it becomes a problem because it is supposed to move and circulate in the whole body. The metaphoric hyperbole gives an impression that his feelings about his lover have become numb and he is no longer interested as he was before. The poet was successful and effective in giving a clear picture of the state of their love because the blood is useless when it has become a clot, it is useless and cannot be returned to life. This simply means that their relationship is as good as dead and is unrepairable.

#### 5.2.1.4.3 Words of a hyperbolic nature

Claridge (2011) classifies the words of a hyperbolic nature as universal quantifiers. Siyabonga Mpungose employs this kind of hyperbole in his poem titled "RIP Senzo Meyiwa" in which he laments the death of Senzo Meyiwa, a soccer legend:

*Amagwala ebulala uNozinti  
Isizwe **sonke** sakhala  
Sagubuzelwa ifu elimnyama ezikamaGebhula.*

(When cowards killed a goalkeeper  
The whole nation cried  
Magebhula's were covered by a dark cloud.)

The poet is hyperbolic in his claim that the whole nation cried when Senzo Meyiwa passed away. To the contrary, only those who knew Senzo and his role in the community and country at large as a Bafana Bafana soccer star were moved by his demise, and were perhaps crying. The exaggeration in this poem implies the extension of a particular measure unit to an extreme point on the degree scale that is considered unrealistic in a particular context. The same aspect is observed in the poem titled "Uhambile" by Sensokhaya Khambule:

*Ngamnikeza **lonke** uthando ebenginalo empilweni,  
Wangithembisa wathi akasoze wangishiya.*

(I gave her all the love I had in life,  
She promised that she would never leave me.)

The main aim of the poet is to demonstrate how much he loved that woman and how much he dedicated himself in their relationship. However, it's gross exaggeration to claim that he gave her all his love, which would mean that he didn't love anybody else, including family and friends. Literally, even if you love someone a lot, you cannot give them your whole heart. If thus was the case, people would not move on to other relationships after breaking up with their first lovers. Claridge (2011) says that there are nouns or verbs that require the whole sentence to present the hyperbolic meaning. This example is found in SimChina's poem titled "Uthando":

*Izithembiso zakho uhlulekile ukuzigcina  
Ukuthanda ngawe mina ngiyagcina.*

(You have failed to fulfil your promises  
With you, I am done with love.)

The poet is grieving over a lost love and asserts that she will never fall in love again, evidently because she is still hurting. This can't be realistic, considering that she is still too young to take such a critical decision not to commit herself to someone again. However, in order to be able to identify the hyperbolic word, the entire sentence was needed. This kind of hyperbole is not easily identifiable because it seems to be common and understood as a part of everyday language. Another example is found in Scelo Mpungose's poem titled "My ex-":

*Yazi ngiyavuma you are my cute Ex-  
Kodwa uthando lwami nawe lulaste two weeks njenge-cutex.*

(You know, I agree you are my cute Ex-  
But our love lasted for two weeks like cutex.)

In this instance the hyperbole is in the form of reduction or minimization. The poet suggests that the relationship was short-lived but exaggerates when he specifies the amount of time it lasted. This confirms an assertion by Mora (2009) who defines a hyperbole as "a form of extremity, an exaggeration that either magnifies or minimizes some real state of affairs". It is quite interesting to note that the poet artistically juxtaposes hyperbole with irony in that he refers to the ex-girlfriend as cute which contradicts the brevity of time that the relationship lasted.

It is also noteworthy that hyperbole by expansion permeates poems where poets bemoan a lost love and seem to still harbour regret at how events unfolded, resulting in the break up. In such cases a poet will exaggerate and claim to have loved wholeheartedly or invested too much into the relationship. In cases where the poet resents the break up and feels deceived, the tendency is to belittle everything that has to do with an ex-lover and exaggerate by irony, reduction or minimization.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

This chapter analyzed several stylistic techniques and their impact on effective message portrayal in performance poetry. and their effectiveness in performance poetry. It transpired that figurative language is the most commonly (but not exclusively) employed in poetry. Since the poetic form is characterized by brevity and compression in terms word choice, diction assumes unequivocal significance. Poetic devices that many performance poets adopt are highly urbane and complex and draw heavily from the postmodern literary techniques. Ntuli (1984) considers imagery as the hallmark of fine poetry, arguing that any poetry devoid of imagery has a glaring shortfall. Essentially, meaning and emotion in poetry are the construct of separate words and clusters of words artistically chosen to evoke sensory images in the mind of an audience. The metaphor, simile and other poetic devices are embodied in most of the poems analyzed in this chapter. Even though not all the poems comprise these devices, the choice of poetic devices depends on the nature of the poem and the message that it intends to convey. Undoubtedly, proficiency and familiarity with basic poetic requirements play a critical role in enhancing the appeal of a poem and success of its performance. Observation and analysis revealed that up and coming poets are more prone to expressing their inspiration in simple and less stylistic manner whereas seasoned poets tend to flavor their compositions with more admirable stylistic ingredients.



## CHAPTER SIX

### SOCIO-LINGUISTIC DYNAMICS IN PERFORMANCE POETRY

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores sociolinguistic aspects in contemporary isiZulu performance poetry. According to Myers-Scotton (1998), there are several styles of speaking that characterise every speech community. In fact, each speech community has at least two different speech variants, and many communities have more than one language and more than one dialect is spoken in each particular language. All the linguistic codes or varieties have social and psychological connotations as negotiated and shared by the speech community in which they are used.

The linguistic situation in which isiZulu poets find themselves, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, speaks to the reality that isiZulu and English do not merely co-exist, but are both integrated into single communicative events and speech acts. English is taught both as the first and second language, apart from it being used as the language of business and communication in most companies with employees belonging to diverse linguistic backgrounds. As a result, most poets are bilingual and are capable of communicating in both isiZulu and English. Although isiZulu is both the mother tongue and the language of preference for most of the people resident in KwaZulu-Natal, there is a tendency among them to add English into their casual, everyday conversations and this has an influence on the poets' diction when composing their poems.

Apparently, an analysis of isiZulu performance poetry reveals frequent code-switching involving these two languages. Most poems display a unique fusion of the two languages to which poets have been exposed in their everyday communication. Therefore, these bilingual poets are clearly engaging in code-switching. Poplack (1979a:588) suggests that "since code-switching is becoming a norm in bilingual and multilingual communities, it is important to have a large degree of linguistic competence in two or more languages so as to satisfy this norm." Borrowing or code-switching is a unique characteristic of South African performance poetry and accordingly, this feature will be discussed below to illustrate this uniqueness.

## **6.2 Socio-linguistic implications in performance poetry**

Poetry is by definition a very selective genre in terms of word choice and forms of expression that poets use in their compositions. Poets come from diverse background even if they belong one common language family such as isiZulu and this manifests itself in the manner in which poets express themselves. Linguistic choices and differences are usually discernible in accents, dialects, mannerisms, idiom and many other language related forms of expression. For purposes of this study, only a few aspects of socio-linguistic dynamics will be explored. Emphasis will be on aspects that prevail the most in compositions and performances and which seem to be gradually becoming the main characteristic of contemporary performance poetry.

### **6.2.1 Code-switching or code-mixing**

Code-switching simply means switching from the use of one language in a single conversational setting to the use of another language as a result of change in composition of participants or topics. According to Akmajian et al. (2003: 209), “Code-switching refers to a situation in which a speaker uses a mixture of distinct language varieties as discourse proceeds.” This occurs quite frequently in everyday speech. In the context of this study, the term “code-switching” refers to the frequent shifts from one language to another within a single piece of conversational speech acts, often involving switches within a single speaker’s turn or a single sentence.

Code-switching is distinguished from a number of related phenomena which are manifest in bilingual conversations. Firstly, code-switching differs from borrowing, which entails “the incorporation of lexical elements from one language in the lexicon of another language” (Muysken, 1995: 189). It is often reflective of communicative competence, which entails the ability by the speaker to select and apply expressions and phrases that best reflect the social norms of the group with whom he or she is interacting. Speakers who apply code-switching arguably do so intentionally for purposes of effective communication. Thus purposeful and appropriate code-switching “can be viewed as an expression of communicative competence” (Cheng and Butler, 1989:296).

Myers-Scotton (1993a) defines code-switching as the mixing of different linguistic codes by speakers in the same conversation. Switching may occur at any level of linguistic

differentiation (languages, dialects, styles or registers) and the codes range from word units to sentences. Hymes (1974) views code-switching as a term that qualifies the use of an alternative language or more languages, varieties of a language or even employing varieties of speech styles. Code-switching often takes place in a dialogical conversation where one interlocutor uses one language and the other answers in a different one. A speaker may start conversing in a particular language and then change to the other one in the middle of their utterance or sentence. Furthermore, Hornberger and McKay (1998) state that when two or more languages are in use in a community, interlocutors frequently switch codes, that is, they change from one language to another.

Linguistically, code-switching occurs when the speaker switches by adding a sentence or a clause from another language between sentences. For the sake of this research this will be analysed based on the code-switching that occurs mostly in lines and stanzas during performance poetry. However, most of the definitions of code-switching and code-mixing refer to the code-switching that occurs in sentences as they were taken in the field of linguistics. The researcher does not discuss these socio-linguistic features in detail because they do not constitute the core of the study. The main aim is to demonstrate the prevalence of this phenomenon in performance poetry.

Bokamba (1988:23) avers that:

Code-switching is the mixing of words, phrases and sentences from two distinct grammatical (sub) systems across sentence boundaries within the same speech event...code mixing is the embedding of various linguistic units such as affixes (bound morphemes), words (unbound morphemes) phrases and clauses from a co-operative activity where the participants in order to infer what is intended, must reconcile what they hear with what they understand.

Other scholars view the term code-switching as synonymous with code-mixing because a thin line differentiates the two phenomena. Muysken (2000:28) states that “code-switching is a process of interchanging languages during a single speech event whereas code-mixing is an all-encompassing term that extends to the interchanging of languages to grammatical features and lexical items.” Code-switching also differs from code-mixing in terms of the location of the point at which the language switch occurs. The main distinction between the two is usually seen between inter-sentential and intra-sentential switching (Saville-Troike, 2003). Inter-sentential switching consists of language switches at phrasal, sentence or discourse boundaries

while extra-sentential code-switching is the insertion of a tag from one language into another language (Abdollahi, Rahmany and Maleki, 2015: 848). Intra-sentential switching is a shift in language in the middle of a sentence, usually performed without pause, interruption or hesitation.

The subsequent sub-sections endeavour to determine the manner in which code-switching occurs in performance poetry. The approach in this analysis puts into focus the two types of code-switching proposed by Myers-Scotton (1993b), that is, intra-sentential and inter-sentential switching. However, it is not worth the effort to attempt to establish the motivation behind each type of switching. It has been noticed that code-switching and code-mixing are not considered as something appropriate in the composition of the poem as it is happening within sentences.

#### **6.2.1.1 Inter-sentential code-switching**

Inter-sentential code-switching constitutes a switch occurring at the level of a clause or sentence boundary where each clause or sentence is in a different language. In inter-sentential switching, a speaker switches from one language to another between different sentences. By implication, when the speech of an individual speaker is divided into sentences, one sentence appears in one language while the other manifests in a totally different one. Eldin (2014) and MacSwan (1999) concur that since inter-sentential code-switching takes place within the same sentence or during turn-taking between interlocutors, the phenomenon is demonstrative of the interlocutors' fluency in both languages such that the speakers are able to follow the rules of the two languages. As poetry does not have sentences this kind of switching occurs in lines and stanzas.

In a poem by SimChina, cited below, the poet starts her poem in isiZulu, but later completely switches to English. Both code-switching and/or code-mixing are done either deliberately or otherwise as the poet seeks to ensure that the message is conveyed to the audience as intended. Seemingly, the poet employs code-switching deliberately and not for the sake of giving any clarification, but merely for emphasis. She does a stanza in English and as one follows her message in English, the poet suddenly switches to isiZulu. This is reflective of the fact that code-switching has become a habitual linguistic occurrence for most bilinguals who speak isiZulu and English, and as such, habits are not easy to change. It can be deduced that

contemporary poets are introducing a new poetic style that is reflective of the multilingual nature of the modern South African society.

The above phenomenon is evident even in everyday speech acts in which some people hardly speak pure isiZulu throughout their conversations. According to Bouchard (2015), the level of code-switching is determined by the levels of multilingualism among the interlocutors. For this reason, the degree of bilingualism was not evaluated on the basis of fluency only, but rather on the language used in everyday communications. Multilingualism is defined by Zirker (2007) as either the speakers' ability to communicate naturally and fluently in more than one language in all aspects of life, or the ability that allows language users with minimal competence in a second language to squeeze into the bilingual category. Bilingual poets recite performance poetry in both English and isiZulu languages for deliberate purposes, such as in cases where they feel that the message should be presented in both languages so that no one in the audience will feel left out. This reality is demonstrated in SimChina's poem:

*Ngiyitshe elingaqhephuki  
Ngiwuthando,  
Ngiyabekezela;  
Ngiyigolide ngiyabekezela  
Ngingowesifazane  
Ngimuhlekazi.*

I am a woman of prayer  
I pray  
Even when men make me supplicate  
I kneel down to God and pray  
*Ngingowesifazane  
Ngiyinzala bantu.*

(I am a rock that doesn't chip off  
I am love  
I am patient  
I am a gold, patient  
I am woman  
I am beautiful.

*Owesifazane womkhuleko  
Ngiyakhuleka  
Noma ngabe abesilisa bangenza ngikhuleke  
Ngiguqa phansi kuNkulunkulu ngikhuleke  
I am a woman  
I am a matriach.)*

In this poem, the reason for code-switching is not clear, but the researcher assumes that the poet was comfortable in both languages and also knew that the audience is conversant with the two languages. It is also worthwhile to consider the definition that code-switching is also motivated by psychological factors. It marks a change of subjects, to express certain emotions as an indication of anger, annoyance and authority reinforcement (Gumperz, 1970). In this type of code-switching, the poet uses the two languages in the second stanza but maintains the autonomy of the grammatical structures of each. In the above example, both isiZulu and English lines are used according to their own grammatical and syntactic rules. The code-switching being employed is inter-sentential since it occurs between lines. It should also be mentioned that the excerpt of the poem cited above was recited during a poetry session at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Edgewood Campus. The youthful audience comprised mostly students of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Some students who had been invited to the poetry session had attended English medium schools and as such, had not been exposed to isiZulu as their first language at school. It may be surmised that by virtue of being university students, the audience could understand both languages.

Arguably, the poet succeeds in her use of the code-switching to respond to the needs of the target audience and this obtains even in conventional conversations. One could also conclude that the poet appeals to everyone because the language of the poem, especially the parts presented in isiZulu may poses difficulties to some sections of the audience in terms of understanding, but the moment the poet switches to English, it may become easier to understand the context of the whole poem. According to Cheng (2003), a speaker may code-switch in order to show solidarity with the person being addressed. Das (2012) adds that code-switching is often employed as a tool to execute communicative functions and relay the intended message in the manner the speaker would want it relayed. Besides accommodating each other, it may be argued that perhaps words or phrases that were replaced with English ones in the poem were absent in isiZulu or not lucid enough to convey the meaning in the poetic sense.

A similar trend is observed in Makhafula Vilakazi's poem titled "Glen Dlamini":

Dear queen Elizabeth  
 I write this letter in the hope that it shall find its way to your heart.  
 .....  
*Queen Elizabeth uma ngicabanga ngawe inhliziyoyami ivele igiye*

*Ngigcwal'intokozo umzimba wami ngathi uyancibilika.*

.....  
*Kumele wazi ukuthi ngi-feeler kanjani*

You see Queen Elizabeth, I am like a lion without a queen.

(Dear Queen Elizabeth

I write this letter in the hope that it shall find its way to your heart.

.....  
Queen Elizabeth when I think of you my heart dances

I am filled up with joy and my body feels like it's melting.

.....  
You have to know how I feel

You see Queen Elizabeth I am like a lion without a queen.)

This poem is the same as the ones above where the poet doesn't seem to have a valid reason to code-switch. Most of Makhafula's poems employ code-switching but it's not clear why he switches between languages, other than the fact you find that he knows and speaks both languages fluently. His poems are mostly humorous, even the way he recites or presents ensures that the audience laughs from the beginning until the end. Perhaps code-switching for him is more of a stylistic element than a linguistic consideration.

Another example is found in Ntokozo Ngcobo's poem cited below:

*Bayothi bakhangwa ubuhle bakho.*

*Ubuhe bakho bumoshakale ngomzuzwana nje*

*My sister don't be fooled by oldest tricks in the book*

*Ngikutshela ngemigulukudu, amasoka amanyala.*

(They will say they are attracted by your beauty.

Your beauty would be ruined in a second

My sister don't be fooled by oldest tricks in the book

I am telling you about hooligans, hardened playboys.)

The poet starts off in isiZulu and, in the middle of the stanza, slips into English for only one line and switches back to isiZulu. In this case, when one looks at the content and the message of the poem, one assumes that the reason for code-switching is to emphasise the poet's theme to the audience and also because there is no equivalent idiomatic expression in isiZulu. The speaker is very fluent in isiZulu and she could have possibly finished without mixing the two languages. This line, "the oldest tricks in the book" idiomatically suggests that something has been done repeatedly, and although one ought to be on the lookout, one falls for it again. This line carries the weight of an English idiom and as if to preserve its original meaning, the poet

refrains from translating it into isiZulu, hence the poet's choice to use it as it is. As mentioned earlier one feels that poets use both language for stylistic features since code-switching can be also used for stylistic purposes (Alvarez, 1979).

### 6.2.1.2 Extra-sentential code-switching

Holmes (2013) states that this type of code-switching is simply an interjection or a linguistic tag in the other language, which serves as an ethnic identity marker. Sometimes referred to as tag switching; extra-sentential code-switching is the insertion of a tag from one language into another language (Abdollahi, Rahmany and Maleki, 2015). It is an expression or choice of words which are inserted during a conversation to complete a sentence at the same time relaying certain information about the speaker. In most of Siyabonga Mpungose's poetry, this type of code-switching recurs, such as in his poem titled "Umalumekazi":

*Ok besifihla ngoMgqibelo, namhlanje uMsombuluko kuyasherishwa  
Siyabamba siyayeka, siyacenti siwasha izitsha  
Ngisacwebise amehlo phela  
Ngisayikhumbula phela le ntokazi isanda kugqitshwa.  
Indaba yaqala kancane kwathiwa, "Ngisayolala, ngehora lokuqala ubongivusa  
**And** uhlukane nokulokhu usicefezelela ukhalela umama wakho  
Asazi noma uzomvusa yini  
**And** uhlukane nokuqedela izingane zami isinkwa  
Laph'ekhaya ikwami..."*

(Ok, there was a funeral on Saturday, today it's Monday we are sharing  
We are busy, cleaning the yard and washing dishes  
My eyes are drooling since  
I still miss this woman and she has just been buried.  
The matter started slowly, it was said, "I'm off to sleep, wake me up at 1 o'clock  
And stop irritating us by crying for your mother  
We wonder if you will wake her up  
And stop eating up my children's bread  
This home is mine..."

The intra-sentential code-switching is evident in the poet's using of the English words. The poet switches a little bit within the sentences, but continues in isiZulu. When Mpungose recites this poem, and even in other poems, he mixes both English and isiZulu. Even though his poems are largely in isiZulu, he does not stick to one language until the end of the poem. This shows the element of linguistic versatility in performance poetry, which also reveals that poets are



less concerned with the use of language, than with the thematic preoccupations in the poem itself. The poem depicts further examples of inter-sentential switching because only one word in the whole sentence is in English and the poet places this word presumably without even minding the switch in the language. Thus, even the audience may not take note of the switch in the language.

The researcher had an interview with Siyabonga Mpungose during the Poetry Africa 2017 festival that was held at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre from 16 to 21 October 2017. The conversation was about the impact of poetry on his life and the researcher discovered that poets of his ilk are not so much emphatic on the rigours of language since they assume that their audience does not have problems with language. He even mentioned that he does not do performance poetry for formal educational purposes, but for entertainment and informal education, hence his presentation style transcends the conventional language formalities that underpin poetry as an artistic genre. This shows that indeed poets consider their target audience when composing their poems. One may also argue that poets do this deliberately to reflect linguistic realities that permeate their communities in which code-switching is a normal, if not fashionable trend.

Here is another example of intra-sentential code switching in Nokulunga KaMajola Hlabisa poem:

*Uthi udla ubusha bakho,  
Siyahamba isikhathi.  
Waze walichitha ixesha lakho  
Babambe ulayini ka-NSFAS  
Wena ubambe ulayini ka-SASSA  
Uyofuna imali yeqolo  
Bayobuya sebashayela ama-Polo.*

(You say you are enjoying your youth,  
Time is running out.  
You are wasting your time  
They are on the queue for NSFAS  
While you are on the queue for SASSA  
To apply for a social grant;  
They will come back driving their Polo's.)

This code-switching is not similar to the one that is presented in the above example. Here code-switching occurs for the sake of finding a short and suitable word as a result of a lack of Zulu

terminology. Since the poem is a rhyme verse, a quick translation of these English acronyms would pose a problem. Even when one is conversing with another, the above acronyms are better called like they are, not necessarily due to difficulty, but because there are no synonyms in isiZulu which could possibly be used appropriately. The researcher assumes that it is the same reason the poet uses them as they are in this poem. Ramsay-Brijball (1999:167) notes that “although Zulu counterparts may exist for taboo words such as sex and prostitutes, speakers often opt for English terms rather than the Zulu terms in informal conversations.” It is the same thing that obtains and when it comes to composing poems, the poet simply uses those English words.

It is interesting that in this poem, code-switching happens between isiZulu and isiXhosa when the poet uses isiXhosa word *ixesha* instead of isiZulu word *isikhathi*. Again, it’s not clear why the sudden switch when an equivalent exists in isiZulu. This in its own brings forth an argument that perhaps code-switching is an unconscious rather than artistic element in compositions, in that one suspects that there are cases where poets seem to throw in words and lines without serious linguistic consideration. For poets, emphasis seems to fall more on message portrayal than on word choice.

### **6.2.1.3 Intra-sentential code-switching**

This kind of code-switching includes insertions, alternations and congruent lexicalisation. In the case of alternation, there is an overt switch from one language to the other and that involves both grammar and lexicon (Muysken, 2000). On the other hand, the term code-mixing is used by linguists to refer to intra-sentential switching. To distinguish the two terms, it is appropriate to assert that code-switching within a sentence includes borrowing and code-mixing while inter-sentential switching involves all the three (Backus, 2000). Intra-sentential code-switching involves cases in which speakers switch some clauses and single-morphemes of given languages within the same sentence or clause. Winford (2003) aptly reiterates that code-switching involving a single-morpheme is typical of intra-clause code switching, which is very common across bilingual communities.

Poplack (1979a) points out that this intimate mode of code-switching is the most favoured type of tag-like switches. This requires intimate knowledge of both languages being switched. Intra-sentential code-switching occurs within a sentence and it accounts for the greatest syntactic

risk as words or phrases from another language are inserted into the first language within one sentence or utterance. This type of switching enables speakers to switch from one language to another within the same sentence. Thus, a single sentence is made up of two or more languages. The intra-sentential code switching seems dominant in isiZulu performance poetry.

Here is an example that depicts intra-sentential code-switching in Siyabonga Mpungose poem:

*“Kwaze kwamnandi ukunidiba  
Sondela ngikubambe ithambo...kwaze kwamnandi ukukubona Mr Tambo  
**Even though** impilo ibheda namuhla kodwa kusasa izobe i-sweet like honey  
I am promising you Mr Hani  
**Even though** bengisejele,  
Kodwa kimi ifikile imibiko,  
Yokuthi bebengazibekile phansi o-Mr Steve Biko...  
My name is Nelson Madiba.”*

(“It is so nice to put you together  
Come closer, let me shake your hand...it is so nice to see you Mr. Tambo  
Even though life is bad today but tomorrow it will be sweet like honey;  
I am promising you Mr Hani  
Even though I have been in jail,  
Reports did arrive  
Saying that the Steve Bikos were vigilant...  
My name is Nelson Madiba.”)

Intra-sentential switching abounds in this stanza. Siyabonga Mpungose begins the sentence in English before switching to isiZulu and reverting to English. There is no code-switching in fourth line as the entire utterance is in English. However, in fifth line, intra-sentential switching oscillates between isiZulu and English. Another intra-sentential is demonstrated by Siyabonga Mpungose in his poem cited below:

*Ngalez'izinkondlo siyofika sebeqediwe  
Okwenhlabathi sebegqibile, sebe **complet-ile**  
Kodwa umsebenzi kaThixo bengawu **complet-ile**  
Ngoba thina njengezimbongi sifanele ukugcwalisa imibhalo  
Ngakho ngiyangena neziyalo, ngingene nezivalo.  
Ngalez'izinkondlo sizokutshela ukuthi  
**UNKulunkulu is the master of ceremony**  
Kukuwena-ke ukuthi uyamlandela noma usele moni.*

(With these poems we will arrive when they are finished  
They will have completed the burial  
But they will not have completed God's work.

Because we as poets are supposed to fulfill the scriptures  
And so I enter with teachings, and force entry.  
With these poems we will tell you that,  
God is the master of ceremony  
It is up to you sinner whether you follow him or are left behind.)

To some isiZulu-English bilinguals, code-switching has become entrenched and occurs subconsciously when speaking with fellow isiZulu speakers regardless of them being bilingual or monolingual (Ndebele, 2012). Code-switching of this form is evident in situations such as public addresses, formal discussions and informal conversations with fellow isiZulu speakers. In the above example, the poet starts his poem in isiZulu and switches to English, but it is not clear why the poets employed code-switching. One would assume that the poet intentionally switches codes since the poem is addressed to university students who are, after all, predominantly bilingual. The following excerpt further exemplifies the foregoing:

*I'm so sorry bafowethu ukunishiya nale nkondlo ngingayiqedile  
But lolu cingo lungibikela ukuthi usisi emhlabeni usesishiyile  
Nengane yakhe...ayishiyile  
This is a story about my sister.*

(I'm sorry my brothers to leave you before I could finish this poem  
But this call was informing me that my sister has passed away  
And her child ....she left behind  
This is a story about my sister.)

This poem was recited by Siyabonga Mpungose on UKhozi FM radio station during the *Back to My Root Show*. UKhozi is strictly isiZulu medium station and the use of English is not encouraged on radio stations like UKhozi FM which broadcasts in isiZulu. There is some exception on the *Back to My Root Show*, when they give poets an opportunity to recite their poems, and restrictions imposed on language are relaxed. Some poets use both languages in one poem while others recite their poems in complete English versions. After all, people actually interact in more than one language on a daily basis, at school, work or other social interactions. This renders it impractical for them to stick to one language even if they are inclined to do so. Wardhaugh (2006) states that people are expected to choose a language to be used in a particular situation, which suggests that choice of language is deliberate on the part of poets, and by implication on the part of audience as well.

Another example is found in Thubelihle Mthembu's poem "Uchwepheshe":

*Ngizobanika izinombolo ezahlukile ngamunye  
Omunye udinga inombolo yomunye ukuze athole inombolo yomunye;  
Kufanele aqale afake izinombolo zomoya  
Bese bethintana ngezinombolo emoyeni  
Athi umkhulu, "Hhayi khona **these people are too clever.**  
Musa ukungixoxela inganekwane emini ngizomila izimpondo."*

(I will give them different numbers each  
One needs the other one's number to get the other one's;  
One has to load airtime numbers first  
Then they will contact each other through numbers  
My grandfather says, "No ways, these people are too clever  
Do not tell me a fairytale during the day because I will grow horns.")

The poet is conversing with his grandfather, eulogising the advent of technology. He is describing how technology works and how it has eased difficulty in human life as compared to the ancient times. Interestingly, it is the grandfather who does the code-switching; which may suggest that the poet intends reaffirm soaring levels of literacy in our communities and that even older generations are conversant in both languages and switch codes with relative ease. This is echoed by Jenkins (2009) who maintains that speakers who have more than one language at their disposal may code-switch or code-mix apparently as a matter of choice, but also for other pragmatic or expressive reasons. This confirms Das' study (2012) which shows that code-switching can be used as a strategy to fulfil certain objectives which include to minimise and emphasise differences between interlocutors, signal language preference, obviate difficulties caused by failure to find the correct referential terms in one language, convey cultural-expressive messages and so forth.

### 6.2.2. Slang in performance poetry

Slang is a very informal variety of language and can be offensive to other interlocutors if used in conversing with other interlocutors outside of a group of people who are intimately related. Slang is mostly used in verbal utterances rather than in writing. This kind of register refers to particular words and shared meanings which involve longer expressions and idioms. It is also influenced by different languages, cultures, accent or tone of voices and so on. Historically, slang has been connected to crime and is still often assumed to be spoken by criminals, though lately, it is also as a form of communication among intimate friends and peer groups. slang

seems to be one of the most important language formations that have greatly influenced changes in standardised languages. Slang is arguably context driven and its intention is to create deliberate ambiguity which causes confusion to the outsiders. The motivation behind its use is not lack of vocabulary, but rather the need to develop a shared identity that is specific to a social group, to the exclusion of non-group members.

Ellis (2002) defines slang as a variation of language used in certain contexts by means of which people express their sense of belonging to a particular group within the community which is not specific to any geographic location. Eble (1996: 11) also defines slang as an “ever changing set of colloquial words and phrases that speakers use to establish or reinforce social identity or cohesiveness within a group or with a trend or fashion in society at large.” Rousseau (2007) argues that although people in all circles use some slang of one sort or another, they still judge each other on the basis of the slang they use. Some of the slang has been incorporated into the mainstream linguistic framework thus, becoming more acceptable in various settings.

While slang is used mostly in natural and predominantly informal conversations, the researcher observed that poets also use slang in their poetry composition, which is a relative new development indicative of the contemporary socio-linguistic dynamics in our societies. which is something new when you look at the culture of poetry.

Language purists tend to complain that prevalent use of slang encroaches on the beauty and richness of the language. Mojela (2002:208) says:

“We are fighting a losing battle since the use of slang terminology within our languages grow at an alarming pace. This type of terminology is used not only by the youth in high schools and tertiary institutions, but also by some of the teachers, academics, doctors, language specialists and many people whom we regard as professionals and custodians of the "purity" of the standard languages”.

Interestingly, some scholars regard slang expressions as an art that is worthy of appreciation. For instance, Lighter (2001) notes that some authors emphasise the artistic and aesthetic appeal of slang, calling it “the poetry of everyday life” and “the poetry of group dynamics.” De Klerk (1995: 268) suggests that inherent in slang is “some delight in language as an expressive, almost poetic medium,” adding that its effectiveness lies in its widespread use of alliteration, metaphor, onomatopoeia and other devices associated with verse. Lighter (2001: 222) goes on

to assert that “slang blossoms in ‘same-sex groups composed of peers of comparable age and social status.’” These traits may determine who belongs to a particular community of slang users and who does not.

Slang generally fall under two broad categories, mainly over-used slang and relatively new slang.

### 6.2.2.1 Hackneyed slang

Some slang words and expressions become hackneyed or commonplace through over-use or extensive dissemination. In this case they somewhat lose their slang status and graduate to everyday language. While Ndlovu (1963) contends that slang is used extensively by both educated and uneducated, cultured and uncultured and urban and rural classes of isiZulu speaking people, it should be emphasised that slang is meant for covert communication within an exclusive group. This can be in the form of using existing isiZulu words in which semantic shift or extension serves to obscure meaning. In some cases, slang may be in the form of certain numbers that have acquired new meanings. Borrowing from other languages also plays a role in creating slang words in order to confuse those who are not familiar with the source language or who can't appreciate the word's new meaning in a slang context. Such slang words or expressions tend to become familiar through overuse.

There are poems that use slang words that have been over used in such a way that everyone understands their meaning:

*Ngale nkondlo, ngithi qaphela  
Onezindlebe uzongilalela  
Walahla i-side impilo yakho izophela.*

(With this poem, I say be careful  
The one with ears will listen to me  
Once you make a wrong turn, your life will end.)

This poem by Siyabonga Mpungose addresses young people, drawing their attention to the reality of life and pitfalls that permeate it and warns that there are times when a person does things according to plan, but one miscalculated move derails the entire course of life. Literally, *ukulahla* means to throw away, misplace or lose something. In slang it means to do something that invites humiliation and about which one will be regretful as time goes by. This slang word

has been in circulation for quite a while and is now understood across backgrounds and ages groups.

Slang in the form of semantic shift is also observed in Zamani Mzobe's poem:

*Ngoba kuyahlupha ukujola **nomakhwapheni** ongenaye umaqondana  
Ngoba uzojaha utalagu uthi ukhathele ukuba umakhwapheni.  
“Ubungizwe ngithini?  
Udlala ngegeja kuziliwe!  
Usugijima mawala, usuthi angishiye umfazi?”*

(Indeed it's bothersome to have a side chick who doesn't have a straight  
Because you will chase the wind and say you're are tired of being a side chick.  
“Did I make promises?  
You are playing with fire!  
That's too much; you say I must leave my wife?”)

*Ikhwapha* is an isiZulu word for armpit, a body part found in a hidden place. This justifies why slang uses this word, and interchangeably with *umakhwapheni* to denote a side kick or secret lover whose existence, by definition, is supposed to remain hidden from the public. The poet also uses the slang word *ukujola*, dating, to refer to a situation in which a person is in a relationship with someone whom they are not intending to be serious with. Both these, while they are not regarded as standard language as such, have been used so much that they have been intergrated into everyday use and no longer qualify as slang in the strictest sense of the word.

Another example is also demonstrated in the poem below by Imbongi engadumile, where a number is used as slang:

*Angisabi-ke mina neqiniso;  
Even uSathane engafika lapha  
Ngizomtshela **9-9**.  
Kodwa ngiyazi abalaleli boKhozi banazo izindlebe  
Bangizwile ukuthi ngitheni.*

(I am not evasive with the truth;  
Even if Satan could arrive here  
I would tell him 9-9.  
But I know UKhozi FM listeners do have ears  
They have heard what I said.)

The slang word 9-9 means to defy or square up to someone and tell them in straight-forward terms, without evasiveness, reservations or fear. If a person says something 9-9 one would have



told that particular person bravely in their face. This word is sometimes used to compel someone to do something. The word is commonly used in contexts like prisons and townships and no longer serves the purpose of hiding or obscuring information or meaning. One should mention that it is not clear why this number was chosen to convey this meaning. This word has also lost its covert status and is commonly accepted and understood by all and sundry now.

The use of slang has both negative and positive impact on the development of the vocabulary of standard languages. The negative influence is associated with the so-called “contamination” of the vocabulary of standard languages. The “pureness” of the language (IsiZulu) is destroyed by the borrowing of many words from foreign non-standardised “registers”. The use of such social media platforms as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp and so on has taken its toll on standardised languages. These platforms have a huge negative role to play in destroying languages because the unconventional kind of communication used has become a part of people’s everyday life. The role of slang is to communicate quickly, briefly and frequently through a lot of Slang words without regard for grammatical rules.

Borrowed words also feature as slang as demonstrated in Scelo Mpungose in the poem below:

*Ngase ngikholwa ukuthi wena unjengoJesu ungangifela  
Kanti sonke lesi s'khathi wena ubufana noJudas  
Sonke lesi s'khathi wena **ubungimaketha**.*

(I was believing that you were like Jesus and would die for me  
But all this time you were like Judas  
All this time you were deceiving me.)

*Ukumaketha* is borrowed from “market” and the slang meaning suggests that hoodwinking is rife at the marketplace, such that when someone dupes you they are said to be playing market tricks on you. The poet trusted the girl to a level of even thinking that she could die for him, but to his utter dismay, he realised that he was lying to himself. It’s quite remarkable that the poet juxtaposes Judas to the assertion that the woman was “marketing” him; a relevant allusion, considering how Judas betrayed or sold Jesus to the Jewish religious leaders. This expression has also lost its slang appeal through overuse.

Another interesting form of borrowing is found in the following lines in Siyabonga Mpungose' poem cited below:

*Ayikh'ivari lana*  
*Ayikh'ivari lana;*  
*Nginikeni ipensela lomsizi*  
*Ngibhalele u-Andile kuKhumbul'ekhaya*  
*Angitholel'iqiniso.*

(There is no truth here  
There is no truth here;  
Give me a lead pencil  
For me to write to Andile from Khumbul'ekhaya  
So that she can find the truth for me.)

*Ivari* is borrowed from Afrikaans *waar*, meaning truth. Noteably, slang doesn't change the original meaning but relies on the fact that the meaning will be lost to someone who doesn't understand Afrikaans, which could be an obvious case in a province such as KwaZulu-Natal where Afrikaans is spoken by a minority. Undoubtedly, this meaning was very elusive in the past when literacy levels were very low, but with the current generation having gone to school and enjoyed some relative exposure to Afrikaans, the word *ivari* is no longer foreign or obscure and has circulated widely enough for it to retain its pure slang status.

Mojela (2002:208) claims that:

“We are fighting a losing battle since the use of slang terminology within our languages grow at an alarming pace. This type of terminology is used not only by the youth in high schools and tertiary institutions, but also by some of the teachers, academics, doctors, language specialists and many people whom we regard as professionals and custodians of the "purity" of the standard languages”.

Lighter (2001) notes that some authors emphasise the aesthetic appeal of Slang, calling it ‘the poetry of everyday life’ and ‘the poetry of group dynamics.’ De Klerk (1995: 268) suggests that inherent in slang is ‘some delight in language as an expressive, almost poetic medium,’ adding that its effectiveness lies in its widespread use of alliteration, metaphor, onomatopoeia and other devices associated with verse. Lighter (2001: 222) goes on to assert that “slang blossoms in ‘same-sex groups composed of peers of comparable age and social status’”. These traits may determine who belongs to a particular community of slang users and who does not

in the offline world, they are often indefinite online unless a user chooses to reveal them. This is demonstrated in Siyabonga Mpungose's poem:

*Ayikh'ivari lana  
Ayikh'ivari lana;  
Nginikeni ipensela lomsizi  
Ngibhalele u-Andile kuKhumbul'ekhaya  
Angitholel'iqiniso.*

(There is no truth here  
There is no truth here;  
Give me a lead pencil  
For me to write to Andile from Khumbul'ekhaya  
So that she can find the truth for me.)

Some of the slang words do not seem to have any meaning at all and have also enjoyed widespread use, resulting in them shifting from informal and exclusive use that usually characterise slang. An example is found in Zamani Mzobe's poem cited below:

*Uma kwenzeka ufikelwa ukungiteketisa  
Ugangibizi mina ngo-honey, sweetheart  
La magama asenokungixaka  
Ngibize **ngosimadzadza**  
Ngibize ngesiphalaphala  
Ngibize ngozime  
Ngibize ngesipawupete.*

(If it happens that you feel like calling me sweet names  
Do not call me honey, sweetheart  
These words have come to confuse me  
Just call me *isimadzadza*  
Call me beautiful one  
Call me the goddess  
Call me gorgeous.)

*Isimadzadza* is an affectionate word for a beautiful woman. However, the origin of this word is dubious and its morphological qualities defy word formation rules that apply to isiZulu. Slang words are only meaningful when they are used by those who understand them and adherence to linguistic rules is not always a priority to slang users. This may explain the inclusion of this word in slang vocabulary. Like many other slang words, *isimadzadza* has become commonly used in everyday language and no longer qualifies as pure slang.

### 6.2.2.2 Emerging slang

Slang, like any other linguistic expression forms, is not static and blends in with the changing circumstances and recent developments that permeate speech communities. While the main aim of slang is to obscure meaning and exclude non-group members, there are cases where slang vocabulary comprises familiar words whose semantic qualities have shifted. In most cases this is in the form of new concepts and developments that have emerged in the society, resulting in new slang vocabulary. There are instances when slang is used, not for the sake of hiding meaning but because of the popularity of a particular word. This confirms a view by Barnhart and Barnhart (1986) who say “slang refers to words, phrases, or meanings that are new, flashy, and popular, usually for only a short time.”

An example is found in Thubelihle Mthembu’s poem “Uchwepheshe”:

*Ngizobanika izinombolo ezahlukile ngamunye  
Omunye udinga inombolo yomunye ukuze athole inombolo yomunye;  
Kufanele aqale afake izinombolo zomoya  
Bese bethintana ngezinombolo emoyeni  
Athi umkhulu, “Hhayi khona **these people are too clever.**  
Musa ukungixoxela inganekwane emini ngizomila izimpondo.”*

(I will give them different numbers each  
One needs the other one’s number to get the other one’s;  
One has to load airtime numbers first  
Then they will contact each other through numbers  
My grandfather says, “No ways, these people are too clever  
Do not tell me a fairytale during the day because I will grow horns.”)

This poem alludes to notions of recent technological developments that have resulted in emerging slang vocabulary that refers to innovations such as networks, airtime and so forth. In this case, giving a person a wrong cellphone number is a slang expression for deceiving a person. Interestingly, the title of the poem is “Uchwepheshe” which translates as “technologist” in English, suggesting a recent phenomenon in our societies. New technology has resulted in new slang words that were non-existent before in pre-modern times.

Mbatha (1998) reveals that slang results from the changing environment. This language is mostly created by people who want to marginalise others in communication and they find

simple ways of circumventing communication barriers, they end up communicating with others using slang. It might be due to the fact that some of the people from whom information is hidden can hardly pronounce some of the English words that form slang vocabulary. Some of those words lose their original meanings and interestingly, even those who are coining those words do not seem to understand their exact meanings. An example is found in Siyabonga and Scelo Mpungose in their poem cited below:

*Ngalezi zinkondlo sizohaya  
Sizokhumbuza abantu ukuthi uMdali kuphela o-high  
Sobafica **behwaya**, abanye **bechoma**.*

(With these poems we will sing  
We will remind people that it is only the Creator who is high  
We will find them mocking, others showing off.)

The meaning of *ukuchoma* is to prick but in this sense the poet is using the word to mean boasting. Further, the word *ukuhwaya* in simple terms means *scrap* a thing, but in this sense *ukubhingqa* (mockery) are two different words with different meanings but in action they have a similar sense. When a person scraps another, the victim feels the pain, yet the perpetrator claims to have helped that person. The same thing obtains when a person mocks another and as such, the mocked just feels hurt though indirectly. The poet uses this Slang to hide the overt and original meanings because the main purpose for using this variety of language is to conceal the meaning of the word to those whom the speaker does not want to understand what they are saying at the same time allowing those few individuals belonging to the inner circle to understand. In correctional institutions like prisons, inmates often use Slang to communicate with each other without being understood by the prison warders. Zamani Mzobe uses the same word *ukuchoma* (to boast) in one of his poems:

*Nanithi uthando aluboni  
Seluyabona ngoba senalobola ngisho ekamelweni  
Angithi nina senaphenduka izichomane*

(You were saying love does not see  
Now it sees because now you pay *ilobolo* in the bedroom  
You have turned out to be the show-offers.)

### 6.2.3 Borrowing

Linguistic borrowing is a phenomenon that involves the transferring of linguistic constructions (lexical, phonological, morphological and syntactic) from the “donor” language to the “recipient” language. This occurs as a result of contacts between communities speaking different languages. Borrowed words are found in all languages and in contrast to cognate relationships, borrowing relationships may exist across unrelated languages (Tsetkov, 2015). In linguistic contact situations, borrowing processes, which consist of the adoption by one language of linguistic elements from another language, are very common. Linguistic borrowing involves both borrowing the word directly and the adaptation of the word into the phonetic-phonological and grammatical system of the receiving language. According to Campbell (1998), lexical borrowing is the process by which one language acquires words from another language and adopts them as part of its own vocabulary. Bloomfield (1967:444) describes borrowing as:

The adoption of features which differ from those of the main tradition, which the speaker continue to adopt from his fellows throughout his life.

Kemmer (2013:44) describes borrowing as a process through which a word is firstly used by some speakers of the borrowing language and then develops into a widely used loanword. Hudson (1996:55) says:

Whereas code-switching and code-mixing involve mixing languages in speech, borrowing involves mixing systems themselves, because ‘item’ is ‘borrowed’ from one language to become part of the other language.

Hudson’s (1996) definition implies that borrowed words become totally integrated into the recipient language and are accepted as part of its repertoire. According to Hoffer (2002:1), “borrowing is the process of importing linguistic items from one linguistic system into another, a process that occurs any time two cultures are in contact over a period of time.” Contemporary performance poetry in isiZulu and English seem to employ a great deal of linguistic features. The lack of the relevant vocabulary to express realities is another factor that often compels multilingual speakers to borrow words from one of their spoken languages to another. Some of the words have been accepted as established isiZulu borrowed words, since they do not appear only in isiZulu lexicon but are also known and used by isiZulu speakers and practitioners.

Borrowing takes many shapes and poets seem to draw from a wide range of borrowing options in their compositions, as can be discerned from the following examples.

### 6.2.3.1 Established borrowing

Poplack and Meechan (1995:208) define established borrowing as “the adaptation of the lexical material to the morphological and syntactic (and usually, phonological) patterns of the recipient language.” This is demonstrated in S’bo Da Poet’s poem titled “Zulu Love Letter”:

*Ngifuna **ipeni nephepha**  
Ngifuna ukukubhalela i-Zulu love letter engab**hori**  
Hhayi inkondlo cha, ngeke ngize ngiqale  
Phela wena siqu nje uyinkondlo yothando.*

(I want a pen and paper  
I want to write you a Zulu love letter that is not boring  
Not a poem no, I won’t even start  
That is, you personally are a love poem.)

*Ipeni* and *iphepha* are borrowed from the English words pen and paper respectively. Interestingly, isiZulu have adopted and use them in such a way that they sound like authentic isiZulu words. While there is *usiba* which is an isiZulu equivalent of pen, preference has fallen on the borrowed counterpart, thus rendering the original word a tad archaic. Some would argue that had the poet used the original word, that would have enhanced the aesthetic value of the composition. However, there are cases where borrowing is justifiable, particularly when an entity or concept is foreign in isiZulu and doesn’t have a corresponding term in isiZulu. This can be seen in Sbo Da Poet’s poem cited below:

*Sihlezi-ke la **etafuleni** sidla isidlo sakusihlwa  
Kuthulekile akekho okhulumisa omunye  
Uhlezi ngaphesheya nami ngingaphesheya **kwetafula**  
Silokhu sintshontshana ngehlo.*

(We are seating here at the table, having an evening meal  
It is so quiet no one is talking to the other one  
He is sitting across and I am sitting on the other side of the table  
We keep stealing glances at each other.)

*Itafula* is borrowed from Afrikaans *tafel*, table; a piece of furniture that didn’t exist in isiZulu, pre-colonialism and hence an absence of equivalent term, making borrowing compulsory. This

means that it's not frowned upon or regarded as unartistic for a poet to include such a borrowing in his composition.

### 6.2.3.2 Temporary borrowing

There are cases where borrowing occurs when there isn't an isiZulu equivalent for certain English words or expressions. The researcher's observation was that poets seem to just use whatever word comes first. In other words, they use borrowing more out of habit than for lack of equivalents; a notion that borders on sloppy regard for their artistic obligations. Temporary borrowing therefore refers to cases where there are possibilities of substituting borrowed words with originals, should the artist decide to find a suitable word. This usually happens there hasn't been standardisation of an equivalent, or in cases where a speaker decides on their feet regarding words to use in a sentence and uses a borrowed word or expression. The latter instance is usually influenced by code-switching tendencies.

This is well demonstrated in Scelo Mpungose's poem titled "My cute ex-":

*Kodwa kungcono khona sihlukane vele besingafani **ama-interest**.  
Wena kulo luthando ububheke **i-interest**  
Nami kulolu thando ingakho bese ngiqala uku-**loser i-interest**.*

(But I would rather we broke up, afterall our interests weren't the same.  
You in this love were looking for interest  
That is why in this love I was starting to lose interest.)

The use of the word "interest" has not been induced by absence of an appropriate isiZulu equivalent that the poet could have chosen, but it appears that the word was chosen because it came first as one that can best convey meaning in very clear terms. This is also a manifestation of literacy demographics as well as linguistic gaps between rural and urban poets and audiences. In other words it's easy to tell from word choice that the poet is educated. Also, one can't expect the poet to use the same words in a performance that comprises a rural or illiterate audience. This kind of borrowing is reminiscent of the poems performed by, and unique to isiZulu speakers in townships and urban areas, and not those who originate from remote rural areas. In urban areas, isiZulu shares the linguistic scene with other South African languages such as English and Afrikaans. Poole (1999:113) supports the above argument when he claims



that “city-dwellers may speak a language differently compared to those who live in the surrounding rural areas.”

### **6.3 Conclusion**

An analysis of performance poetry indicates that it owes its unique features and appeal to the linguistic dynamism embedded in its composition and presentation. Literacy levels and linguistic backgrounds of both poets and audience plays a critical role in the word choices that permeate compositions and performances, as well as audience response and reception. For instance, an urban poet will usually be bilingual and more prone to using code-switching and slang, while a rural poet is likely inclined and more conservative regarding preservation of language purity. With regard to the audience, an urban audience will be more comfortable with bilingual performance or mixing of languages, while a rural one will prove more traditional and conformist.

From the data analysis, it was also found that there are two types of code-switching commonly used by most of the performance poets, and these include inter-sentential code-switching and intra-sentential code-switching. However, the most commonly employed was the intra-sentential code-switching and obviously the least used was the inter-sentential code-switching. The researcher’s assumption is that poets consistently switched codes because they were not always aware of their own code-switching and that this code-switching was not deliberate but occurred unconsciously. These findings are an indication that bilingualism has become a norm that even manifests itself in performance poetry in isiZulu and English.

The use of slang has both negative and positive impact on the development of the vocabulary of standard languages. The negative influence is associated with the so-called “contamination” of the vocabulary of standard languages. The “purity” of the language is compromised by the borrowing of many words from foreign non-standardised “registers” that pervade compositions.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **ELEMENTS OF ISIZULU POETRY PERFORMANCES**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

Performance poetry avails an opportunity for poets and audiences from all backgrounds and identities to assert their voices by expressing their inspirations, experiences as well as their appreciation of human conditions and the prevailing social systems. Performance poetry sessions have fostered intercultural connections among cosmopolitan communities through live performances as a medium of poetic expression. This chapter explores elements of isiZulu performance poetry that derived from observations that the researcher made during the course of the research. Amongst a myriad of issues this chapter examines are the organization of the poetry sessions, performance space and venue set-up, the performer's mood and ambience, the nature of the audience during performance sessions, the performance dress code and lastly the issues around the marketing and publicity for performance poetry.

#### **7.2 Organising poetry sessions**

According to D'Abdon (2014b), performance poetry has become a prominent and very effective means of expression among the South African youth in the post-apartheid era. This assertion holds sway especially when one considers the extent to which performance poetry has been functioning as a form of "conscious-raising art." As a "conscious-raising art," performance poetry has been able to ensure that young people converge and foster community dialogue on common issues that concern them as a group. Hosting is an art; an imaginative undertaking that requires incredible execution abilities and an engaged feeling of the audience's compassion. The host's task is to act as a conduit that links the audience and the poet, ensuring the smooth running of the show. A great host is capable of speeding things up when the night appears to be dragging and realises when to loosen up and thrive when things are not functioning properly.

Metaphorically, organisers and hosts are the eyes and ears in performance poetry scene and become many things at once, juggling countless functions as they establish and maintain performance poetry in the local community. They perform a myriad of tasks such as coaching and counselling, providing inspiration and objective criticism to the developing poets. They

often assume the duty of booking agents by contacting touring poets and inviting them to the local community. When one wants to book a poet to perform at a given event, organisers and hosts sort out the costs and all other logistical issues. Sometimes they assume the role of managing the affairs of the emerging poets.

According to Odendaal (2017), hosts also play an important role during performances as they prepare the audience ahead of the planned performances in addition to ensuring that the audience returns to an orderly, quiet and focused state before the next poet comes onto the stage. Thus, the host helps to establish an environment of mutual respect between poets and their audience. Alluding to the same view, van Wyk (2016) asserts that hosts have to help create the adequate space for everyone to feel comfortable enough to perform on stage. For them to succeed in creating a comfortable space, the host often allows members of the audience to share their own poems before the beginning of the actual programme.



*Figure 1: Brian Gwamanda, poet and Chairman of Word Architect*

### 7.3 The poet or performer

To qualify for performance, any piece of poem must contain something of artistic beauty in it. This beauty lies in the choice of words the poet employs and the manner with which he handles himself on stage. Out of the linguistic resources at his disposal, the poet selects what is most appealing to the audience and puts it together. The art of being creative with sounds in an artistic fashion comes out so powerfully owing to the use of idiophones, alliteration, assonance, rhyme, rhythm and so forth. In some poems, words are not expressly meant for semantic communication but for artistic expressions. According to Canonici (1996), good performers are passionately interested in the culture of their people and are proud of it. This deep pride is evident not only in the employment of idiomatic expressions, but also in the desire to represent isiZulu customs and worldview in the performance poetry settings.



*Figure 2: Siyabonga Mpungose, a poet*

A good performer succeeds in using language that touches people's emotional faculties to an extent where even their state of mind, psyche and lives are transformed. In most cases, social change is positive as people change for the good. Resultantly, as the change takes place, it naturally influences the people around. According to Gule (1990), producers and performers of recited poetry, including traditional poetry, are the senders of the messages imbued in poetry in the sense that their communication takes place in the presence of recipients.

IsiZulu poetry performers are very enthusiastic and confident about performing on stage, in front of a spellbound audience. Their unique ways of introducing their poems is crucial in drawing the attention of the audience. In their introduction, some poets would sing a traditional song or any other song capable of appealing to the audience's interests. They use a very strong rhythm that makes their poems more attractive and fascinating, thus making one actually feel that they spontaneously exhibit inspiration and creativity. The rhythms that characterise isiZulu performance poems distinguish the poems as distinct and attractive and sometimes repetitive, thus creating space for words while simultaneously maintaining the tempo of the recital. The repetitiveness of the rhythm accords space for both creativeness and possible interjections from the audience, then leading back to the rhythm of the poem.

During his interaction with the audience at a poetry performance session, Minenhle Mthembu revealed that all he writes about in his poems is based on his personal experiences. He also ensures that no matter how gloomy and painful the poem might be, there is always humour that provokes the audience into laughter. When he was asked about how he manages to infuse humour while exploring pessimistic situations, he had this to say:

“I learned from my mother because no matter how bad the situation at home is, she will find a joke out of it. She is of course a strong woman that I love so much and I wish I could be like her one day.”

From this response, one gets to understand that indeed poetry brings people together in order to share pertinent messages. This message-sharing technique is not as formal as one would expect, but rather occurs in a spontaneous and uninhibited way. Poems sometimes tend to rhyme giving out a rhythm that in turn makes appreciate the artistry at play. Some poems are also infused humour, but despite being hilarious, poets avoid deviating from the main aim of disseminating messages.

#### **7.4 Performance space and set up**

Contemporary performance poetry has become a very populous space in recent years, which is an appreciable thing and reaffirms that performance poetry has secured its place as a genuine art form and a communal event. Performance space exists and provide an indispensable platform that allows the sharpening of performance skills and the creation of audience bases that are critical in developing the performing poets. There is a sense in which poetry sessions are regarded as providing a space for the gathering of people in order to share ideas and to reflect on some other communal issues.

Performance poetry does not have specific venues, as it simply occurs anywhere depending on the occasion or the needs of the audience and performers. Venues can be large, open spaces such as community entertainment halls, churches, arts theatres, university lecture theatres and so on. They almost always feature on a raised stage, where the poets and the Programme Director sit, while the audience sits a short distance away. This seating arrangement differs from the traditional setup where performance would take place in a cleared space or kraal during communal ceremonies or at homes where participants would sit in a circle on the floor around a fireplace.

During performances, a single microphone is passed around and a poet approaches it in order to recite a poem. Performers have also embraced the use of sound systems to create a good atmosphere within the live performance space. The amplification of sound enhances the liveliness of the whole performance, including the interjections from the audience. This also ensures a two-way communication between the poet and the audience during the performance. In this way, the audience might be asked to sing or repeat a few lines in the poem along with the poet.





*Figure 3: Audience filling up before a poetry session, BAT Centre Art Gallery*

#### **7.4.1 Community entertainment venues**

Venues for general entertainment often take many forms. The researcher attended a unique performance space for poetry during a session that took place in Durban at The-Joint where Minenhle Mthembu hosted a solo poetry performance show on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June 2018. The show started round about half past seven in the evening. Ten minutes were set aside for an interval during which the audience could stretch their feet and freshen up with soft beverages on sale at the venue. During break time, nice *Gqomu* music was played by the Disc jockey and those who could, started dancing. The time was also for mingling purposes and anyone could chat with the poet regarding the performance. Although the poet said that it was his first one-man show, the attendance told a different story. The venue resembled a bar, as people were able to buy soft beverages and other stuff to cheer them up during the performance.

This event was not only beneficial to the host and the audience, but also to the owner of the venue as guest numbers boosted sales. Gradner (2008) also observes the notion that in recent years, more traditional venues like university lecture halls, libraries, pubs, and even churches

have opened up to poetry performance. The advancements in technology offer new possibilities and opportunities as well. For instance, Minenhle performed live on Facebook for his friends who were not in attendance at the venue to watch everything that was happening there. One could tell that organising that session called for a lot of planning, commitment and costs which all resulted in the audience receiving a memorable performance that was worth their time and money.

#### **7.4.2 Performance at funerals**

Funerals are highly revered events among Africans and amaZulu are not an exception regarding attitudes and behavioural patterns during funerals. Death brings deep sorrow to members of the grieving family, friends and the community at large. The recent past has seen an emergence of performance of poetry during occasions such as funerals. These performances often help to console mourners during times of grief. In this context, performance poetry takes place on the day of the funeral proceedings. Usually, performance poetry sessions that occur at such events are informal. Everyone can perform at such occasions because the main purpose is to mourn the deceased and console the grieving family, relatives and friends.

Family members and close friends are usually the ones who recite poems on such occasions. Thus, they perform as part of their general familial responsibilities and their audiences hear and admire their performances as one aspect of the funeral rituals rather than as a specialist aesthetic occasion that requires financial compensation to the artist. Performance programmes meant for such gatherings are very short and the duration differs from one area to another as in some areas organisers allocate specific time within which the performer should finish the programme to allow mourners to lay the body to rest. The researcher attended one of the funerals held at Bhamshela in Uthongathi, north coast of KwaZulu-Natal. The funeral service was held in a big white tent at the home of the deceased. The performance took place after few speakers had delivered their speeches. The performer was the deceased's younger sister who was pregnant at that time but was strong enough to stand beside the deceased's coffin.

The performer and her siblings sang a song as they were approaching the open space where the coffin stood. They struck a slow tune, which depicted their feeling of loss as they paid their last respect to the deceased. After singing and dancing, the performer's siblings evacuated the stage and left her behind to recite her poem. The poem mainly touched on how good the



deceased was to the family and how strong and exemplary her love for God was. Often, the reciting of a funeral poem creates feelings of melancholy which results in people crying. Nevertheless, the poet's consoling words made everyone strong and optimistic that indeed, the deceased had rested peacefully at a better place.

### **7.4.3 Large community spaces**

This kind of space is usually used during political events such as rallies where popular poets and artists are roped in to recruit huge audiences in order to ensure good attendance. These performances often take place at sportsfields where artists have ample space to move freely as they sing praises to the political leaders, acknowledging the impact of their leadership in the community. Such praises are deliberate attempts to influence the audience or community by painting a positive picture of the politicians or government of the day so as to convince the community into continuing to trust them and vote them into power in the next elections. Poets sometimes recite poems that convey a message that affirms a particular political leader's passion and commitment to service delivery and addressing of pertinent issues the community faces. For example, poets often lament lack of job opportunities, poverty and many other social ills but emphasise politicians commitment towards alleviation of such problems.

Besides political rallies, there are also events that are hosted by national and provincial departments such as awareness campaigns and celebrations that feature artists and poets to provide entertainment to guests. Usually, performance takes place before the programme of the day begins and provides a welcome distraction when the programme doesn't start on time due to some delays. While the poets' role during such events is to entertain the audience, the content of the poems tends to lean towards the theme of the event so as to enhance awareness or reaffirm the need and importance of a particular celebration.

### **7.4.4 Theatres**

Theatre is a collaborative form of performing art that typically uses live performances. Performance in such a space usually takes place during the afternoons or evenings. Like other venue set-ups this platform requires the presence of the performer or poet and the audience. One of the performances the researcher attended was held at the University of KwaZulu- Natal, Howard College at the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre from 7 to 12 October 2019, and it was hosted

by the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Centre for Creative Arts (CCA). They were celebrating the 23rd edition of the Poetry Africa Festival that featured a host of local and international poets during evening sessions. The researcher attended a session on 7 October 2019 for the purpose of conducting observations in terms of the venue set-up and the performance itself. The venue was highly flexible, with no fixed seating arrangements and was characterised by a high degree of sound adjustability. Other features included a large stage, extensive machinery and extensive media recording. As this was an international gathering, the performance was done in different languages though the researcher's focus was on isiZulu poets. What the researcher observed was that even though many poets performed in English, isiZulu poets recited their poems in mother tongue. This allowed the performance to appeal to a wider regiment, particularly when both national and international poets engaged in animated discussions, sharing their skills and experiences in the poetry industry.

#### **7.4.5 University lecture rooms**

University lecture halls are sometimes used as venues to host poetry sessions for the convenience of on-campus poets and audiences. The researcher attended a number of poetry sessions at different universities and campuses during the data collection stage but had to confine her analysis to one of the sessions she attended because the set-up and procedure during such sessions were more or less the same across venues.

Usually, when there was going to be a poetry session, the organisers would design posters and paste them all over the campus and also post them on social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and so on. The purpose would be to invite as huge an audience as possible to attend and support the local poets. The researcher was on Facebook surfing through the Westville campus Facebook page when she saw a poster about a poetry session that was going to take place at the Howard College Campus on the 06<sup>th</sup> of September 2018. The researcher made her way to the campus lecture hall to attend the performance event, organised by Word Architect.

As students began to enter the hall eagerly, a wave of anxious energy permeated the room. During the poetry session, the audience's visual focus was fixed on whoever took over the stage and got hold of the microphone. The stage and the person who occupied it became the main visual focal point in the room. Usually, people who sit within the middle seating area have a direct line of sight and can keep their eyes fixed on the stage. Members of the audience

seated at the back, however, often face difficulties maintaining a visual link with the performer. During the performance, the stage was oriented to the front of the lecture hall. The venue was packed in such a way that some of the members of the audience were standing at the back and on the sides of the hall.

On the other hand, some of the latecomers placed themselves in front of the other members of the audience, resulting in them losing sight of the performers holding the microphone. Between performances, some of the standing members would move about trying to find better positions on which to sit. There was no sound system or other sound accompaniments. The only things that were there were the microphones and speakers only necessary for amplifying the sound. However, many performers preferred to avoid using microphones as they were using both hands during the performance. They also moved back and forth to demonstrate whatever they were talking about in order to convey a clear message to the audience.

## **7.5 The performance**

The performer obviously takes centre stage in performance poetry and sets the tone for the session. The performers' tone indicates their attitude towards their subject, audience and perhaps even towards themselves. Performance poetry creates a particular mood or feeling, which all depends on the skill and versatility of the poet, the performer. When the poet fails to create the desired ambience, it then becomes very hard to appreciate the poem, let alone to understand or grasp the message it seeks to convey. The poet's tone might be sarcastic, sincere or humorous; all infused in a poem with the sole aim of keeping the audience enthralled by the performance and appreciative of the message conveyed through the poem.

Tone is the emotional colouring or meaning of the work of art and it is an extremely important part of the full meaning (Abrams, 1999). According to Gill (1995), what creates tone is the manner in which the words work and that is a matter which can be described in a specialised language, but it is also part of that more general vocabulary that depicts the poet's thoughts and feelings because it refers to an emotional colouring of the language. Tone helps the audience to understand the mood in which the poet was when composing the poem, thus inducing the audience to get into the poet's emotions. Regarding this, the researcher observed that in Siyabonga Mpungose's performance, the poet sometimes just sings a song and the audience joins in, applauding as he performs. In this case, the involvement of the audience makes

performance poetry a participatory art. According to Mnensa (2010), contemporary performance poetry does not imply that a poet simply gets onto the stage and reads or recites his or her poem. Finnegan (1971:4) has this to say about the exploitation of tone:

Tone (in African languages) is sometimes used as a structural element in literary expression and can be exploited by the oral artist in many ways somewhat analogous to the use of rhyme or rhythm in written European poetry.

Finnegan (1970) observes that it is often accepted that a performance can inflect a message or the mood of a poem through the poet's own dramatization, tempo, singing style, pauses, rhythmic movement, gestures, facial expression and so on. Therefore, it is clear that the performance and the potency of the content of the poem are conveyed by the style of delivery and the poet's dramatization of the poem.

African poets usually start their performances with an introductory formula. This is a way of indicating that the rendition is about to commence. They signal the nature of the performance poem about to be performed and this shapes the audience's attitudes, either to make them believe or doubt the poet's presentation or to appreciate the poem with humour. Below is the opening formula which is usually adopted by Siyabonga Mpungose:

*Ngokukhulu ukuhlonipha ngiyabingelela.  
Igama lami nginguSiyabonga Mpungose.  
Ngiphuma phansi eMpophomeni emazweni.  
Umfula engiwuphuzayo awukho  
Ngiphuza iMidmar,  
Ngiwuthola nge-tap.  
Running through,  
That is true,  
Ngiwumakhuluma besale bekhwehlela,  
Sengathi babanjwe i-swine flu;  
Ngikunika i-clue.  
Indoda engabafungi abakubo abangasekho.  
Ngifunga i-stru.  
Ngoba ngiya-bhilivela kuGod.  
Kodwa ngoba nani angisanazi sengifunga nina.  
Siyabonga Mpungose!*

(I greet you, with great respect  
My name is Siyabonga Mpungose,  
I come from Mpophomeni, far away  
I don't drink from a river  
I drink Midmar

That is, from a tap  
Running through,  
That is true.  
I am the one who speaks and they are left coughing  
As if they were down with swine-flue;  
I give you clue.  
I am a man who doesn't swear by late ancestors;  
I swear it's true  
Because I believe in God  
But since I haven't seen you in ages, I swear by you  
Siyabonga Mpungose!)

Siyabonga Mpungose sometimes starts by praising himself or throwing jokes before he starts performing; just to create a cheerful mood among the audience. In response, the audience gives a round of applause to show their appreciation and invite the him to proceed.

The tone that the poet uses here prepares the audience for the poem to be performed. As he performs, he stands right in front of the audience, holding a microphone, taking on a tall, confident posture. The same confidence manifests itself in his voice when he speaks very eloquently in an appropriately pitched voice. Sometimes, one performer is granted the stage as a curtain raiser that warms up and entertains the audience while waiting for the main act to commence. This protocol intensifies the expectation of the audience regarding the course of the event. Budding and lesser known poets perform warm-up acts to set the tone and galvanise the crowd into the mood. This ensures that main attraction performers present their work in an environment where the jovial mood has already been stirred and the audience naturally enters into the mesmerising world of the creative bliss.

One of the things that make performance poems more interesting is the poets' tone. According to Gill (1995), what creates tone is the way the poet's diction is projected and that is a matter which, to some extent, can be described in a specialised language, but is also part of the general vocabulary that depicts the poet's thoughts and feelings because it refers to the emotional flavouring and decoration of language. Tone helps to the reader or listener to understand the mood in which the poet was when composing the poem. The reader or listener empathises as he or she gets into the emotions of the poet. Related to this assertion is Blommaert's (2006: 266) view that "ultimately, what ethnopoetics does is to show voice, to visualize the particular ways; often deviant from hegemonic norms in which subjects produce meaning."



**Figure 4: The audience absorbedly listening**

In Deo's poems, tone is very effective in creating and sustaining an infectious jovial mood in the audience. The expressive tone which introduces her performance is so powerful and commanding that everyone gives her their undivided attention. On the *Poetry Joint* that was hosted by Minenhle Mthembu in Durban, Deo recited a very interesting poem that was preluded by self-praising. The praise part that she did before getting into the actual poem was so powerful that it succeeded in drawing the attention of the audience. By the time she started performing, the audience was ready and eager to listen to her reciting. Her praises metaphorically electrified the whole venue as everyone sprang to their feet even before the actual poem was recited. This asserted centrality of the voice in the arena of ethnopoetics which is concerned with the creative side of performance as it values the features that may be rare or even unique to a particular artist or occasion (Tedlock, 2011).

SimChina, usually starts by singing a song in a very soft voice as she moves very slowly to the microphone. It is often difficult to grasp every word in her introductory song. She then begins to raise her voice bit by bit until it becomes very loud and audible. In the beginning, even the

audience struggles to hear her voice though they often respond positively to her performance. SimChina captivates the attention of the audience as she steps forth to the stage. As she starts to recite her poem, the audience laughs throughout the first two minutes of the piece. As the audience experiences her poem, hearing and seeing it being performed, they seize the opportunity to respond through emotional engagement, in the sense that they enjoy the poem, feel its impact and get involved to the extent of establishing a closer contact with the poet. In that particular performance, the audience experienced intense internal emotions and had the memories provoked; experienced the pleasure as they identified with the poet. They found the poem vibrant and had a sensual experience.

Another Durban-based poet, Minenhle Mthembu starts by giving a brief introduction, explaining that the poem is about his poetry and passion for life. He humorously brags how good he is at taking care of the women although for some elusive reason, he fails to keep them. His sentiments show his stereotypical belief that women are inherently undecided regarding what they really want in a relationship as they are inclined to come and go. He often presents his introductory remarks with a very sad tone, which signifies that the poem he is about to recite breaks his heart and rekindles sordid memories that characterise his experiences. Minenhle Mthembu recited this poem at *The Joint*, but the response from the audience was so amazing that one could tell that the poem was their favourite as demonstrated by their appreciation and response to it.

Zamani Mzobe performed live during poetry sessions at Harding. Everything about him seemed to catch the audience's attention, especially the unique haircut he sported. In one of his poem, he talks about his lover and reveals his strong feelings towards her. It was quite amazing to observe the enthusiastic participation of the audience while he was reciting the poem. The audience roared with laughter from the first word he uttered, right to the last stanza, after which the crowd gave him a thunderous round of applause.

## **7.6 The audience**

Although oral literature is fundamentally delivered by word of mouth, "the bare words cannot be left to speak for themselves," (Finnegan year, cited in Okpewho, 1992: 46). Thus, to understand the message, the audience has to pay attention to all the non-verbal aspects of the performance which, according to Okpewho (1992:46), "occur side by side with the text or the

words of the literature.” The audience forms an integral part of the creative act in oral poetry performances. Without the audience which marks out the space, then storytelling performance would cease to exist. Ruddock (2001: 16) describes the audience as the “prime movers responsible for the volume and pace of performance.” Ruddock’s (2001) position reveals the centrality of the audience in the different types of performances. By describing them as the prime movers in performance, Ruddock (2001) implies that the audience is an indispensable part of the oral performances. The audience is the best indicator that tells the truth about the impact of the performance. The audience is extremely important for the success of a performance as it is capable of making or breaking it. Since some members of the audience are potential performers, they are also budding critics who are keen to judge the performance according to the commonly accepted standards such as creativity and imagination (Canonici, 1996).

The audience plays a significant role when it comes to performance poetry. The response of the audience can influence the content of the poem and manner in which it is delivered. A poet can, in the middle of a performance, spontaneously improvise or abruptly change a poem she or he has previously performed on numerous occasions in the past, depending on whether the audience is responding positively or negatively. If the audience is unequivocally pleased with the poem and the performance, the poet often becomes louder, bolder and more assertive in her/his articulation of the issues at hand. The presence of an audience is a crucial dimension as the poet is made to accommodate the response of the audience. Thus, performance poetry is interactive and relatively reciprocal (Mnensa, 2010).

Performance poetry encourages members of the audience to become vocal during the performance by contributing to the poem itself through complimentary utterances or praises meant to show appreciation of the diction or the phrases the poet choose to use. These poetic words and praise phraseology are usually in the form of a call-and-response technique (Gregory, 2008). The praises that the audience expresses in appreciation of the poet’s work are hinged upon the poet’s use of sound to convey the desired mood and meaning and the contribution the audience makes gives oral poetry a different literacy plateau (Boudreau, 2009). Performance allows an immediate response from the audience and if somebody really enjoys something, they cheer, applaud and nod their heads simultaneously. It has now become a convention that if members of the audience express their enjoyment of the performance by clicking their fingers in appreciation.



During the Poetry Africa festival that was held at the University of KwaZulu-Natal from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> of October 2017, there were strict rules that prohibited conversation, including the use of cell phones and cameras during the performances. Interestingly, anyone who dared speak was confronted with a punitive “Shhhh!” from the other members of the audience or the programme director. Even though comments from the audience such as laughter or ululation are accommodated when they are appreciative, never is any uncomplimentary noise or comment allowed, especially when it is interpreted to be interruptive or distractive to the performer or audience’s attention. At the end of each performance, the audience comes back to life with spirited conversations and applause (Sabley, 2001).

Shabley, (2001) further says that the audience is expected to applaud as it welcomes the poet to the stage and to applaud their efforts at the end of the presentation. The types of applause differ remarkably. Sometimes, the applause is more enthusiastic and lively for a certain performance or poet. The audience may applaud to encourage a shy performer, or to “pump up” a seasoned performer. Quite often, applauds are accompanied by cheers, boos or comments of approval. Nevertheless, Beasley (1996: 35-36) makes the following point:

Performance poetry, concerned as it is with audio-transmission, has endeavoured to make itself more available through other formats; primarily the event and secondarily through sound-recording technology – the album, cassette and CD. [. . .] I’d just like to observe that although the media have been slow to pick up on the potentials of performance, especially for a mass audience [. . .], it is happening and the signs are seriously exciting.

During poetry sessions, the researcher noticed that poets would present their performance in order to stimulate an intense interaction of knowledge, alternative perspectives and experiences in a way that compels both the performer and the audience to engage in some kind of mental and physical conversation. For the sake of this research, not every poem discussed here was recorded during the staged performances. Other pieces of performance poetry were set to be recorded on UKhozi FM during the *Back to My Roots* programme. This platform allows poets to reach out to a wide range of people and to market their talents but the issue brings into focus different aspects of performance such as live presentations or staging, the venue and the audience that is supposed to be addressed. Even though it may seem good at some point, the staging of live poems appears to deny the poet the opportunity to evaluate the impact of the poem on the society. Hilscher (2003:217) supports this statement, arguing that “a performance piece is considered significant by the poet if feedback is received

from the audience that clarifies the poet's own perspective on an issue. It's likely that spontaneous interactions with the audience are facilitated by a poet's presentation strategies.”

## **7.7 Dress code**

The way a poet dresses can play an important role in drawing the attention of the audience. Performance poets are generally identified in two ways: some through the content and tone of the poems, which could be pensive, melancholy or showy while others are classified as dramatic, flamboyant, plain and so forth depending on how they present themselves through dress code. Even though there are no compulsory outfits for poets, they often choose to wear costumes that resonate with the personality, themes or mood that pervade their poems. Reflective and melancholic poets usually prefer dark shades, for instance, black pants with black shirt or black dress. Berets, caps and hats are also a favorite with both some female and male poets, which arguably succeeds in catching the attention of the audience. For obvious reasons, flat shoes and sneakers are ideal for performance shoes. Noticeably, females do not go overboard on make-up and jewellery and seem to prefer a variety of apparel that makes them appear humble and natural and afrocentric. Showy and dramatic poets are often identified by wearing bright colours and eye-catching jewellery and floral dressing. In essence sessions, poets wear clothes that make them look closest to the mood and theme of their poems and in fact, choose to wear anything they think best creates a vibrant ambience. In colder seasons, some poets wear laced gloves that add a dramatic touch to their performance. For jewellery, they choose anything big and brightly coloured, and by so doing tend to be “showy.”

### **7.7.1 Female poet's dress code**

Female performance poets are usually attired in a traditional costume. The more traditional wear *isidwaba* which is a skirt made from a cow hide, and *isicholo*, a shiny black headset and usually come to the stage barefooted or wearing sneakers or sandals. Urban poets who still want to retain a traditional flavor usually don a long dress or a skirt and an assortment of beads. Putting on miscellaneous things in their hair adds to their performance a “street realness” that fuses the message and its context. In their hands, they carry a knobkerrie that they use to point sideways when reciting their poems. Their faces are decorated with whitish cream and small spots or some attractive. The overall intention seems to enhance their beauty while embracing and retaining their natural look. Other female poets just choose to wear their own casual

clothes while some are fond of wearing all-black clothes especially when they are going to attend evening poetry sessions. It is worth mentioning that members of the audience also wear traditional clothes. One can assume that to them, wearing traditional clothes is arguably a way of embracing cultural values and diversity. Generally, a poet who dons traditional attire receives a warmer welcome than the one dressed in plain casual attire.



**Figure 5: Nonhle Mkhize (Indoni)**

### **7.7.2 Male poet's drees code**

Male poets sometimes dress up in traditional attire which usually consists of animal skins and other outfits with close resemblance to traditional fashion. *Ibheshu* or *umbhlaselo*, a multi-coloured patterned trousers is an attire of choice for many poets. They usually wear this with a vest or animal print shirts with an animal skin head ring as cherry on top. *Izimbadada*, which are traditional car-tyre shoes always complete the outfit. There are some who choose to wear their own casual clothes while others dress as if they were going to a fashion show; sporting expensive suits, shiny jewellery and pointed shoes. The more fashion savvy are evidently dressed by popular fashion designers.

These poetry sessions are attended by people from different cultures and this is seen in the way they dress up in accordance with their own cultural identity. This also proves that poetry is not just for entertainment only but also serves to reaffirm cultural backgrounds. Poets seem to appreciate this and ensure that they accentuate their cultural identity by wearing local traditional attire. Some even carry a shield and a knobkerrie to the stage, which usually generates applause and ululation from the audience.

## **7.8 Marketing and publicity**

The most significant step that determines the growth of the poetry industry is to get the word spread beyond local venues and take poetry into the wider community and to attract the potential audience. This could be done by utilising all the available advertising media platforms. The use of social media in advertising poetry shows plays a pivotal role in this context since social media has become a prominent feature as a significant communication tool. Undoubtedly, it's every poet's dream to perform on television or be on air, enjoy popularity and keep accumulating fans for his work. Although there are various online platforms that are rapidly providing viewers with performance poetry, none of them compares with the online video forum, the YouTube, in terms of scope and popularity. YouTube offers a unique platform for the analysis of performance poetry as the number of followers, views and the available videos are easily accessible and are becoming increasingly popular.

Further, it regularly promotes Featured Channels of various poets in order to increase individual view counts for those specific artists' YouTube channels. The YouTube platform also allows a viewer to access performance poetry, a service which is truly outstanding. Although the focus of this analysis is not primarily on the YouTube platform, the impact upon an individual's ability to obtain performed poetry as a result of the forum's vast resources and abundance of uploaded videos can hardly go unnoticed. Among the poetic works that have been studied, Siyabonga Mpungose's works are the most popular as ranked by the received number of views on the YouTube platform. One could assume that this is because the poet is known not only in South Africa but internationally. Further, visual and audio performers are set to reap enormous advantages from the YouTube performances as they can watch a variety of poems as well as observe a large assortment of performances in a very little a space of time. Even though the development of technology has certainly increased the amount and the

accessibility of literature available for our consumption, it may be reckoned that this advancement has concurrently increased the range of difficulty for decision-making regarding what constitutes good performances.

The economic dynamics in South Africa accord artists with various opportunities and possibilities to sell their products. This is always welcome particularly by poets who find themselves compelled to sell their art because of joblessness since most poets are unemployed university graduates who have redirected their focus. Instead of going around looking for jobs, they have decided to explore and sell their talents to fend for their families. Admittedly, venturing into performance poetry has attendant costs such as venue hire, transport, sound system and so forth. Also, wider dissemination of their work entails recording and taking videos, which also increases costs long before the poet can enjoy financial benefits for their craft and talents.

Traditionally, performance poets relied on their live performance shows to gain popularity and to sell their poems but owing to the advent of technology, many of the artists represented in this study are beginning to embrace the use of the internet to reach out to a wider audience. Videos and audio recordings of their performances can be found on the internet where the majority of the poets sell their poetry. They also make videos and audio recordings and share them on social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and other social media sites.

Throsby (2001) contends that technological change has a profound impact on both the production and consumption patterns within the arts industries. On the production side, one of the most obvious impacts of contemporary technological influences has been brought by computer technology and advancements in video and sound reproduction. Computers have revolutionized the whole process of artistic creation and the nature and quality of the products offered to the market. Performance poetry has been turned into a vibrant industry in which artists are not only concerned with the outcomes and benefits to the community, but also the revenue that can be generated to sustain poets. Poets are now being booked to perform at various events and get paid for their services, which is not an unethical thing since they have a sound justification for charging fees for their talents.



*Figure 6: Posters for the advertisement of a poetry performance session*

The comments which were found relevant in support of what has been said in the above sections, were accessed from Nonhle Mkhize's Facebook page where she expressed her concerns about the alleged exploitation of some of the artists. On her Facebook page, she was quoted saying:



*Le nto yokwenziwa kwama-artist ongqimidada ayisoze iphele until wona ama artist aziqonda ukuthi a-valuable kangakanani. Uma usajabulela ukuba kwiposter enabantu abakhulu abazokhokhelwa but wena as i-artist elisakhula ungakhokhelwa kuthiwa usaziveza weee bhatata madumbe shame on you, #AwushoUyozvezakuzekubenin? Ungizwe kahle angisho ukuthi isimo esinjalo asizukukufica as an artist esakhula but dlula phela kusona and reach the point where by you make money with your gift, musa ukuba utamatisi nje, obaqwe bagibele phezu kwekhanda lakho wayawaya bazuze, wena ungazuzi lutho. Akusizi ukugcwala kumaposter kanti ekugcineni awuzukubuya ngisho nanesenti or even a progressive deal. #YizwaMina Akusizi kunaloko kubanga usizi. #WakeUp #Zazi and ifunde industry kungenjalo bazodla ngawe baze badle nawe uqobo.#ItsUpToYouThen.*

(The notion of taking artists for a ride will never end until artists themselves realise how valuable they are. Pity you who are excited by appearing on a poster with seasoned artists who will get paid while you as a budding artist don't get paid, an excuse being that you are being marketed. #SoTellMe how long will you keep marketing yourself ? Don't get me wrong, I am not saying you won't experience that as a budding artist, but you should overcome it and reach a point where you make money through your talent, don't allow people to take advantage of you indefinitely and benefit from you while you don't benefit. It's not beneficial to be splashed on posters but not get even a cent at the end, or even a progressive deal.#HearFromMe it doesn't help, instead it brings sorrow. Wake up # know yourself and understand the industry or else they will use and abuse you as well#ItsUpToYouThen.)

This shows that many artists now focus on the economic side of the cultural industries and its emphasis on the market place robs people of an understanding of the creative work from some of its meaning and do not address the purpose of arts with sensitivity. However, in order for culture and arts to be taken seriously, it is essential to understand their economic authorizations. In the words of Throsby (2001), it is imperative to find better ways of doing this in order to cultivate an image of the arts as an industry equal or even better than its counterparts such as alcoholic beverages and clothing industries. Hughes (2007) also believes that poetry encourages an economy and precision in the use of language and such skills can be transferred to other types of oral and written communication. On the other hand, Michaels (1999:3) suggests that "Reading and writing poems can help us discover profound truths we didn't realize we knew."

In an interview with the researcher, Nonhle Mkhize (Indoni) interrogates the impact of performance poetry on her life as a female poet and on the community at large:

In my understanding, poetry is the best form of art that I trust and I have noticed that it has a huge impact on the community. Poetry spreads peace; it encourages people, enlightening them in a different perspective about life as a whole. It brings hope, love and wisdom to people. It is a pure gift that is very powerful because it also brings back the spirit of Ubuntu and oneness. Poets are usually rooted in art; that means they are rooted in God. Therefore, they spread godliness to people. Apparently, people are very supportive; they now respect poetry and give attention to it. Through poetry events, society is gaining a lot because it helps us to be able to support our families, make a change in our society and also make money through it because it has become a job opportunity to us. In my community, a lot of parents tend to love poetry and appreciate our gatherings as young artists because they say it helps their children in some way. The more they attend poetry sessions and events, the more they behave, respect them and think positively. Therefore, poetry is the best tool that unites the family and the society as well. As a female poet, I can confidently say that I stand for Imbokodo (the grinding stone) and I am the voice of the women through poetry. I really love art and love poetry.

Nonhle Mkhize (Indoni) comments on the impact of poetry on the society and on her as an individual. This emphasises the point that poetry is a tool that helps in building relationships among families and the society. The relationship allows space for growth and more exposure as members of the society get to know each other by inviting each other to poetry sessions in their respective areas. Nonhle started composing poetry in 2014 and was reportedly inspired by life itself. She takes poetry as her full-time job or career.

Creativity among amaZulu has impacted positively on their behavior and livelihoods and responds to technological changes. It is undeniable that money is central in the sustainability of a poet's livelihood. Hence, the issue of economic value is a crucial aspect in the process of creating a cultural product. Besides generating income for artists, poetry also promotes positive self-esteem and self-confidence among artists which increases rapidly when artists gain popularity.

## **7.9 Conclusion**

Performance poetry is performed on various occasions under different themes, depending on the situation and sometimes on the audience's prevailing mood. Every performance should be appropriate and fit the occasion. For instance, a sad or melancholic poem wouldn't be suitable for a wedding. But then there can be cases where a performance can lift the spirits of a grieving audience such as during a funeral or any other similar solemn occasion. Contemporary performance poetry reflects a history, the life style and the experiences of smaller audiences



on the verge of developing into larger ones. Poetic recitation has moved from being miniature ones into the huge public enterprises with great impact on the kind of community being anticipated and addressed. This genre has gained popularity as it has since been co-opted for the public political expression.

Various elements are at play when it comes to attracting audiences to poetry sessions. Some sessions are regular features in arts calendar year. This can be seen in events such as the Poetry Africa festival which is a yearly event that doesn't need much publicity for poetry communities because it is always a much anticipated event and seats for the festival sell out long before the start of the festival. But other sessions need a lot of marketing and publicity to entice crowds to attend the events. In most cases the location of the venue is critical in ensuring attendance particularly since poetry lovers and even poets themselves depend on reliable and convenient public transport.

Performers have to ensure that they give audience value for money during a performance. This is even more important as poets use poetry sessions to market themselves and ensure future bookings. Levels of professionalism are discernible in the dress code a poet chooses for the performance and evidence of prior rehearsals to ensure maximum performance and appreciation of the composition and its presentation. The advent of technology and availability of media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube have enhanced professionalism among performers and increased visibility and dissemination of information about poets and their performance abilities. All these factors contribute in making each performance a memorable occasion since poets give their best because a lot is at stake in terms of publicity and future bookings.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

Performance poetry is a rich and complex art form, precisely because many of its creators have always positioned themselves at the intersection of social, political and literary spheres (Gräbner, 2008). In this chapter, the main findings, which address research questions, are summarised and general conclusions are expatiated on the basis of the findings of the research that was conducted for this thesis. Furthermore, the chapter describes the research methodologies that were adopted and contextualises them in terms of the conclusions reached, the contribution of the research to the existing body of knowledge and reiterates the remarks that permeated discussions and comments in the preceding chapters. This chapter winds up by proffering recommendations for both sustainable action and further research.

#### **8. 2 Literature review and theoretical framework**

On literature review, existing data was reviewed in identifying knowledge gap in my research area. Poetry was interrogated in various aspects to locate the intersection of history and its function. The study applied two theories, namely the expressive theory and ethno-poetic theory. Ethno-poetic theory focuses on the aesthetic and poetic structure of oral art. It is based on the idea that work of verbal art are important organisation of lines and verses (Hymes, 1982). This theory aids in literary interpretation of performance poetry and the methodology of transcription and data analysis of collected data, especially on the stylistic devices and techniques employed by poets in composing poems.

On the other hand, expressive theory assisted this research in the interpretation of contemporary isiZulu performance poetry and its function. Performance poetry is the emotional bringing to life of a poem so that the audience will have an emotional, cathartic response. Hilscher (2003) avers that a poet considers a performance piece significant if feedback is received from the audience in appreciation of the poet's own perspective on an issue. It is undisputed that spontaneous interactions with the audience are facilitated by a poet's presentation or performance strategies.

### **8.3 Methods used in the research**

This is an ethnographic study and it is especially useful for gaining an insight into the complexities of a particular socio-cultural group. In the generality of ethnographic studies, the researcher engages the observations of participants and becomes immersed in the daily lives of the group of people being studied. In fact, during the course of the study, the researcher's role may gradually change from that of an "outsider" to that of an "insider." However, the disadvantage of the ethnographic method is that the researcher may end up becoming too emotionally involved in the experiences of the participants to the extent of losing objectivity and accuracy in assessing the situation (Leedy and Ormrod, 2014).

In this study, the researcher employed a qualitative method to explore and examine contemporary isiZulu performance poetry and its impact on the modern society. The qualitative method involved the use of interviews, observations and audio recordings to explore the experiences of the poets. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research enhances the exploration and understanding of the meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to social or human phenomena. Silverman (2000) disputes the notion that if a researcher is apprehensive with reconnoitering people's lives, histories or everyday behaviour, then qualitative methods may be the most preferred mode of exploration.

### **8.4 Data collection**

In this study, the data collection process involved three major stages. The initial stage involved the recording of the poetry sessions that occurred naturally in different settings. In this initial stage, the researcher then administered interviews with a sample of different poets. Through the interviews, the researcher was provided with the information needed to establish important connections between participants or poets' experiences. The naturally occurring conversations were recorded, transcribed and translated for analysis. The transcription of the data was time consuming, a factor that made the process a very daunting task. In some of the recorded clips, there was a lot of background noise made by the audience, thus rendering participants' voices inaudible. The researcher would then have to play such clips the average of five times in order to correctly grasp all the information that had been provided. In executing all these tasks, the researcher also observed the behaviour of the participants to capture the relationship between the poet and the audience during live performances. The majority of the poets had been trying

to employ all the available media channels to attract more attention from the audience. It was evident that their new style of presenting spoken-word poetry appealed to the crowds of youth who circulated the videos on the social media networks. A discussion of the selected performed poetry revealed the manner in which they include other thematic features and the tools employed to back this performance poetry.

### **8.5 Limitations of the study and ethical reflexivity**

The research was carried out over a period of four years. In this regard, sincere thanks go to National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences, and the University of KwaZulu-Natal for being always ready to render the needed financial and academic support and assistance. Among the most problematic areas during the research was the transcription and translation of the collected data, especially the live performance poetry that was collected from YouTube. That was coupled with the challenge arising from the process of transcribing the data from the audio recordings. The translation of poems from isiZulu into English made it clear that translation can pose quite a huge challenge and considerable difficulty to the research process. During this translation process, it became unavoidable to provide paraphrases instead of literal or word for word translations due to the lofty and highly artistic and linguistically complex expressions that individual poets adopted in their compositions. came to a point where some words or expressions could hardly be translated. This doesn't however, suggest that some gist or essence of meaning and intention of the poems was lost in the translation. Challenges that are attendant to literary translation are well articulated by Mutahi (1994), as cited in Okombo (1994:18), who stated that "when translating data from one language into another, an inevitable loss of information results in more ways than one, and often a loss of original flavour is experienced." This implies that "thinking realistically, we aim not for a true translation, but a satisfactory one" (Okombo, 1994:18). This was the exact attitude that the researcher embraced or adopted in the data translation process of this study.

Furthermore, another problem was the failure of the poets to honour their interview appointments owing to their busy schedules. They often promised to meet the researcher on certain dates, but would make excuses at short notice. The researcher also engaged in virtual communication with participants and allowed them ample time to respond during their own spare time or at a pace that best suited them and e-mail their answers to the researcher upon

completion of the questions. The researcher would then have to wait only to phone them again to send their responses.

The researcher was also conscious of the fact that performance poetry and spoken word were born out of African culture and tradition. Throughout this research, the researcher tried to be respectful of the origins of performance poetry while at the same time observing and maintaining cultural sensitivity. Although the researcher believes that every person has the right and the ability to express their feelings and experiences through performance poetry, she made sure that none of the research findings culturally appropriated performance poetry to suit her needs. Since the researcher did not have an assistant during the entire data collection process, it sometimes became difficult to collect data during these poetry sessions. Recording each poem and making notes at the same time was a daunting task and as such, the researcher had to listen carefully while at the same time writing down the information as the performance proceeded.

## **8.6 Findings concerning research questions**

The literature studied at the beginning of this study indicates that little attention has been paid to isiZulu performance poetry. Instead, scholars who have analysed isiZulu poetry seem to have focused more on the traditional oral poetry forms and poetry that is available in book form at the expense of emerging contemporary performance poetry.

The aim of this study was, in part, to evaluate thematic distribution and message portrayal in contemporary isiZulu performance poetry as well as some poetic features that underpin this emerging poetry sub-genre. Aims of this study were only achieved by answering questions that are cited below and arose before the researcher embarked on this research.

### **Research question 1**

#### ***What is the thematic contribution discernible in performance poetry?***

This study was able to identify and present wide-ranging themes that most poets address in their compositions and performances. Chapter 4 discussed the themes that emerged from poetry sessions, platforms such as YouTube and programmes such UKhozi FM's *Back to my Roots*. An observation was that poets delve more into their experiences, life stories, principles, goals and practices they value as members of the performance poetry community.

The examples of Zulu poems that were collected and analysed for this study demonstrated the wisdom that is disseminated by oral tradition apart from showing the manner in which people perceive and interact with their immediate world. It is through performance poetry that poets are capable of claiming ownership of their artistic works. Therefore, performance poems have the ability to manipulate thoughts to fit own voices and address whatever issues at stake. The findings demonstrate that most of the poetry studied in this research dwelt much on the theme of love. However, in the poetry excerpts, poets perceive love as a different aspect of life depending on the manner in which a particular poet understands this abstract phenomenon.

## **Research question 2**

### ***How do poets use poetic features in contemporary isiZulu performance poetry?***

The findings presented in this thesis show that most of the poets deliberately use repetition to emphasise certain issues or aspects in their poems. The effect of the repetition lies in its ability to draw the attention of the audience to take note of particular meanings the poets want to accentuate. In this study, the researcher also discovered that isiZulu contemporary poetry employs linguistic elements in its expression of the diverse thematic issues. Code-mixing or code-switching and borrowing seem to be getting more attention in the composition of performance poems. The analysis of these poems demonstrated that poets code-mix for various reasons, with some of them just doing it unconsciously and do not even seem to be concerned about the impact of the style.

The researcher discovered that code-mixing or code-switching results from multilingualism and it is peculiar to isiZulu performance poetry which is not intended for any publication or academic community but mainly for entertainment and income generation. According to Cheng (2003), speakers often code-switch in order to show solidarity with the audience that they are addressing. Besides accommodating each other, words or phrases were sometimes replaced with English ones in the poem simply because there were no isiZulu words conveying the same meaning or even if they were there, they were not proper enough to convey the intended meaning in the context of the poem.

### **Research question 3**

#### ***How does isiZulu performance poetry impact on the society?***

To answer this research question that borders on the impact of performance poetry on the society, this study has found out that amaZulu women share their experiences of life in a very unique way. In this regard, poetry has become an important outlet for women as it provides relief and conduit for expressing heartfelt emotions about various circumstances. Poetry portrays them as playing an important role in the dynamics of daily social life.

Performance poetry was also quite revealing on the reality that amaZulu women become more empowered when they come together in a bid to share their experiences, feelings and ideas through poetry as a medium of expression. When women converge, they become inspired since they become conscious of their capability to use the oral art form to jointly fight against the socially constructed gender-based imbalances, including other malpractices that prevail in the society in which they live.

It should be borne in mind, therefore, that the presence of women on the African poetic scene is not without censure and unfortunately, critical attention has not been paid to the issues around the existence of women. Despite the restrictive odds, women have continued to feature prominently in performance poetry and their presence has pervaded the African poetic scene. Men have always been at the centre of affairs in the socio-political, religious, cultural and even literary spheres, relegating women to the background. The awareness of this patriarchal order has necessitated women's ability to extricate themselves from the shackles of silence and indistinctness in every sphere of human endeavour. Hence, this has enabled them to proclaim their rightful place in society.

The corpus of poetry performed by women has been studied in this research and the findings have demonstrated beyond doubt that women have extended and consolidated their foothold in the African literary canon, particularly in the area of poetry. African poetry has now become a "two-eyed" phenomenon since there is a balance in poetic viewpoints through which both men and women can now express their emotional experiences and those of their ilk. This justifies the argument that artistic women have been able to eliminate the gap that once existed between men and women in African poetry.

Poetry was never supposed to be an exclusive domain for men, neither was it meant to be a solely feminine entity. The only problem, which made women not to be recognized in the past, was the marginalization based on male and patriarchal dominance. Chiwome (1991:55-60), states that poetry is the expression of the life experiences and the impact thereof on the poet and on the community. These life experiences are unfolded or expressed to the audience through a variety of themes such as love, death, morality, heroism and protest. According to Gumede (2009), it is an irrefutable assertion that many women have been marginalised in many spheres of the family, communal and national issues around the world. Consequently, such marginalisation has impinged negatively on women's lives. Unfortunately, amaZulu women have not been immune to marginalisation and have also been subjugated at the hands of male and patriarchal dominance.

The manner in which amaZulu women have been socialised has led to them being regarded as "secondary in status to men," and in this way, they grow up feeling emasculated. In spite of this emasculation, amaZulu women have developed ways of empowering themselves through the so-called performance poetry "for survival" (Bukonya, 2001) by publicly proclaiming their concerns. Precisely, South African women have empowered themselves by expressing their concerns through a combination of the practice of composition and performance of poetry.

Furthermore, this research has demonstrated that the composers and performers of poetry are the authentic owners of the works of poetry they perform. Arguably, poetry forms an essential part of women's lives. For this reason, no one can be able to perform poetic work without acknowledging its author. For instance, when one examines the poem "Zulu love letter" one knows exactly that it is Mxolisi Mtshali's work and the poem titled "This is a story about my sister", is identified as Siyabonga Mpungose's work. It further stands out that isiZulu speakers re-gain and consolidate their identity through performance poetry. The massive use of isiZulu in their poetry is indicative of their pride in their identity. Integrating with the community has made them realise, day by day, that deserting their language is both futile and self-defeating. One of isiZulu poets who performed during Poetry Africa in 2017 was the only one performing in isiZulu but was not deterred by the diversity and multi-lingual nature of the audience.

Ideally, indigenous languages become endangered and some face inevitable extinction owing to a multiplicity of reasons. Sadly, the physical eradication of communities of the native speakers of a particular language is all too often the cause of the extinction of that language.



Previously, young people perceived education, jobs, culture and technology as being inextricably associated with the dominant language and they would then focus their attention on that language. However, from the perspective of this research, poetry has impacted positively on the mother tongue or the indigenous languages and that explains why they are still being used even by tertiary education students and academics. This reveals that literary works of poetry are very effective in so far as the imparting of the essence of both indigenous identity and language among amaZulu people in South Africa is concerned.

The desire to decode messages rapidly is also one of the positive impacts of the performance poetry as evidenced by the findings of this study. The contemporary African poet's attitude towards performance poetry presupposes that there is an urgent message that needs to be relayed across to the citizenry and the masses within as shortest a period of time as possible. This simply means that poets react to certain situations simultaneously and they express their feelings to the society, either for the sake of appreciation and critique or for other awareness campaign reasons.

Lastly, the study discovered that people are capable of discovering their history and identity through poetry. For example, the poetry that articulates historical and cultural events can be a reminder to people as to who they really are and where they come from. Poetry is the best way of recording the history of a particular country while at the same time teaching people about their culture. In a traditional society, poets compose poems for the sake of recording historical events to which future generations would get access. In the contemporary society, poets perform and keep track of records by making videos and putting them on YouTube which is more advanced and more accessible to the digital society rather than writing them down and having them available in books.

### **8.7 The contribution of the research**

In addition to the provision of some suggestions for future research, this study has made three major contributions to the African Languages and Literature since research in these areas is relatively new and the related literature focusing on performance poetry is still inadequate. Admittedly, some few studies have attempted to delve into the area explored by this study, albeit through different approaches.

Firstly, most of the poets who were chosen to participate in this study have already made a huge contribution in the field of arts and have in turn benefited from it as well. This research, in so far as it focuses on isiZulu performance poetry, will give an insight into the view that isiZulu speakers use their indigenous languages to express their feelings. This is very important as it does not only enhance effective communication for everyone, but also preserves endangered indigenous language. The more the language is used, the more it is developed and preserved.

Secondly, the study is set to contribute again to the economic development of the society. It sheds light on the notion that one's skill and talent could be a springboard for one's socio-economic advancement. When the researcher engaged with most of the poets, it became apparent that they were not conscious of the fact that their writings and performance skills could possibly change their lives. Sadly they were oblivious of the fact that some of the poets have taken up performance poetry as their permanent livelihoods, enabling them to put food on the table.

Thirdly, this research seeks to make immense contributions to the field of African Languages as well. IsiZulu, as one of the marginalised indigenous languages, was formerly not recognised, especially in tertiary education but the landscape is gradually improving for the better. This is evident in the embracing of bilingualism in various tertiary institutions, with some offering isiZulu as a medium of instruction for some modules, coupled with rapid harvesting and generation of isiZulu terminology for technical and scientific fields of study. Undoubtedly, accelerated research in African Languages enhances elevation and recognition of indigenous languages both locally and abroad.

Lastly, it is the researcher's hope that this research will also contribute, at least in part, to the advancement of research in indigenous literature in general and amplified appreciation of isiZulu performance poetry in particular. The researcher also hopes that it will generate further research on how notions of multilingualism impact contemporary poets and audiences, resulting in willingness to embrace socio-linguistic dynamics such as slang and code-switching as well as shift of attitudes from conservative and purist to more catholic and accommodative appreciation of poetry.

## **8.8 Reiterating remarks and autobiographical reflection**

The undertaking of this research study has been an invaluable learning experience for the researcher. The researcher has gained an in-depth understanding of the nature of research as well as its exciting, albeit sometimes frustrating processes. This research study has also provided some key ideas which have helped the researcher re-examine her own professional values as a lecturer in the discipline of African Languages, apart from proffering guidelines for possible changes to her own future development and reasoning.

The researcher would like to start by sharing her experiences from the initial stage when she was preparing to undertake this study. In any research, preparation entails reading, choosing an approach, and identifying potential obstacles (Jorgensen, (1989) cited in Rossman and Rallis (2012). Rubin and Babbie (2013:493) advise that in preparation, a researcher should “begin with a search for the relevant literature” which entails discovering what others have said about the subject and discussing the targeted population group with one or more informants. In this study, the fieldwork journey was premised on the fact that fieldwork is subjective and personal. Prior to this fieldwork, the researcher gave much thought to the importance of her subjective identity as an ethnographic researcher.

This research was confined to three different aspects. The first one looked at the thematic distribution and the message portrayal in performance poetry. Secondly, the researcher analysed the structure and the stylistic features of the poems and lastly, the researcher sought to find out the extent of soci-linguistic influences on poems and performance thereof. In order to effectively collect data, the researcher had to use three different data collection instruments as well. The research began with the collection of data from UKhozi FM which presented the poets as they recited their poems live. The purpose of data collection was to identify and analyse the various themes that permeated the poems. The researcher then attended a number of poetry sessions as well as functions such as weddings and funerals. On some of the sessions, the researcher was merely part of the audience and gathered data through observations. On other sessions, the researcher had to inform the host that she was doing her research on performance poetry. The researcher then purposively selected a few poets to participate in the study by responding to research questions that enquired into the dynamics of performance poetry. The participants were told to give answers based on their observation as they had been in the industry for a very long time and also their responses were supposed to be based on their

experiences. In their responses, many poets referred to their personal experiences, indicating that they had benefited a lot from performance poetry. Some of the participants were even known internationally because of their poetry.

Honestly, the researcher enjoyed every episode of the research journey regardless of the challenges. Rossman and Rallis (2012) have asserted the imperativeness of reciprocity during fieldwork. They define this reciprocity as the recognition of the need for mutual benefit in human interactions. Throughout the fieldwork or the natural setting, the researcher tried to be as accessible and open as possible. The researcher understood that for poets, knowing that she was a lecturer at university might make them feel that she was an aloof person. It was even difficult for the researcher to introduce herself as an adult and it was easier to introduce herself to them by simply mentioning her firstname only at the same time trying to be as friendly as possible in order for them to accommodate her.

The data collection exercise is a very intriguing part of the research process since the researcher can't foretell everything in advance. For instance, the researcher may not know if all the data will be available for collection and if the collected data are going to be reliable. Further, it is difficult to predict the willingness of the potential participants to honour interviews and what their reactions to questions will be. It is equally difficult to know if the interviewee would actually arrive for the scheduled interview. This is indeed a very insecure period for the researcher. Indeed, the last part of the data collection process was a daunting one as several problems arose during this exercise. The most serious of these setbacks was the unavailability of the selected poets. They would promise to meet the researcher on the certain agreed dates and times, only to make an excuse at the last minute.

The researcher was patient enough to wait, but she would phone them again reminding them to send the answers. Unfortunately, the same response would be obtained when the researcher asked them why it was taking too long for them to respond. They would insist that it was due to their busy schedules that delayed them. This changed the researcher's viewpoint about poetry as part of entertainment industry. The way the poets are busy with poetry around the country is indicative of the view that the art has become their full-time job and they prioritise it over other things. Before embarking on this kind of study, the researcher viewed poetry merely as entertainment. However, the experiences obtained from fieldwork contributed to the researcher's more comprehensive appreciation of this artistic genre. Since the researcher was

not a poet herself, her motive was simply to discover some phenomena, and it was accomplished as such. As the research work progressed, the researcher began to develop passion for poetry in addition to an in-depth understanding of the impact of poetry on, and its contribution to the society.

### **8.9 Professional recommendations**

Special attention must be paid to performance poetry and funds to support poetry events or sessions must be availed as these do not only benefit the poets but the society at large. During the study, it was observed that most of the poets are multilingual. In most cases, they performed in isiZulu and English interchangeably. Code-switching and code-mixing were not given much attention in this study for the obvious reason that they were not central to the study. The researcher feels that more study is imperative and its focus has to be on code-switching as a feature of performance poetry.

A further research is essential as a comparative study between isiZulu performance poetry and those of other indigenous languages, including the diverse opportunities that they present to the indigenous communities. Such a study will give a better insight into an understanding in which transformational characteristics of performance poetry are considered as a significant aspect of the specific context in which the poetry is composed and performed which might be the result of the emerging cultural industries of which performance poetry is part.

Lastly, the research also poses questions around the relationship between the socio-cultural transformation and the socio-economic transformation. Such questions are: How can these different processes be used complementarily to advance the ideals of transformation in general? In other words, how might poetry contribute to the reduction of inequality, unemployment, and so on and vice versa?

### **8.10 Conclusion**

This thesis provides an in-depth analysis of contemporary isiZulu performance poetry. This study has shown the extent to which performance poetry has contributed to the socio-cultural transformation of the South African society in general and the Zulu society in particular. Even though performance poetry is a highly artistic genre, some shortcomings have been identified.

It has been noted that poets do not consider the length of their lines and this renders their poems a bit prosaic. Nonetheless, during the performance sessions, the researcher could sense that the lines were rather too lengthy to conform to the conventional poetry requirements. By taking into consideration their pause after saying something, the researcher could tell that the lines were longer than usual.

On the one hand, Tedlock (1992) asserted that not all pauses in oral performances indicate where poetic lines break as they occur in the written form as compared to musical cords, adding that words on a page should be formatted to reflect the more subtle qualities of speech used in oral performances such as performance poetry. Hymes (1982) argues that the representations of the oral narrative on the page whether in line, verse, stanza or scene are important in order to index the performative competence which rarely features consciously in the mind of the performer. Nonetheless, such structural features become real and present in the organization of the text.

Poets address social issues that touch humanity as a whole, but their main focus, according to the poems studied, are love matters. Poets critique love from all its dimensions and the overall message they convey is that love should pervade our interaction with fellow human beings and this would help eradicate social ills such as women and children abuse. It is highly remarkable that poets are not silent regarding governance across structures or authorities in our country. This is evident in protest poems that challenge nepotism and looting of state coffers. Poets also keep emphasising that we shouldn't forget the past if we want to pave the future for our country. For instance, one of the poets focuses more on the history of South Africa during apartheid times, which makes us conscious of the transformation, which is indeed in the process of unfolding. As much as we are told that we live in a democratic country, one can see through some poems that the people of South Africa escaped from the throngs of apartheid rule with permanent wounds.

Lastly, it must be asserted that this study does not claim that performance poetry can bring about all these transformations single-handedly. Rather, this study has been an attempt at showing the manner in which inter-cultural public art practices are capable of making singular contributions to the transformational challenges the country still faces in this post-apartheid dispensation.

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## APPENDIX 1: Informed Consent Form



### FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

This informed consent form is for poets, who are invited to participate in a research titled “An analysis of IsiZulu Contemporary Performance Poetry”

Name of Student : Gladness Bongephiwe Dlamini-Myeni  
Name of Institution : University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Student Number : 208507318  
Supervisor : Dr N.G. Sibiya  
Contact number : 0735940043

#### Introduction

My name is Gladness Bongephiwe Dlamini-Myeni and I am a student and Lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in the faculty of Humanities and social sciences, School of Arts, African Languages discipline. I am conducting a research on performance poetry. I am going to give you information and invite you to be part of this research. You do not have to decide today whether or not you will participate in the research. You have to take your time to think about it and you can also talk to anyone you feel comfortable with about the research before making decision. I will explain some word that you may not understand while going through the whole research information. You can stop me if you have any questions that you need clarity on.

#### Objectives of the study

- To evaluate thematic distribution and message portrayal of contemporary isiZulu performance poetry
- To analyze poetic features in the new genre of contemporary isiZulu performance poetry
- To explore the impact of this new genre of isiZulu performance poetry.

**Participant Selection**

You are being invited to take part in this research because we feel that as a popular poets who are doing performance poetry, you can participate by responding in few questions in regards to the impact of performance poetry in the society.

**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. The choice that you make will have no bearing on your job or on any work-related evaluations or reports. You may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed earlier.

**Confidentiality**

The research ethics stresses the importance of taking into consideration the privacy of the participants. I will not be sharing information about you to anyone outside of the research team. The information that I collect from this research project will be kept private. Any information about you will have a Symbol on it instead of your name. Only the researchers will know what your symbol is. It will not be shared with or given to anyone.

**Procedures**

I will conduct the interviews myself at any setting that you are comfortable with. If it is better for you, the interview can take place in your home or a friend's home. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions during the interview, you may say so and the interviewer will move on to the next question. The information recorded is confidential, and no one else except the interviewer will have access to the information documented during your interview. The entire interview will be voice-recorded, but no-one will be identified by name on the recordings. The recordings will be transcribed and stored as computer textual files. The information recorded is confidential, and no one else except me will have access to the recordings.

**Duration**

Each interview will take about ten to twenty minutes.

**Risks**

There are no known risks associated with your participation in this research.

**Benefits**

There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation is likely to help us find out more about the impact of performance poetry.

**Contact person**

For any information about this research or me, you can contact my supervisors,

Dr N.G. Sibiyi

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Contact: 031 260 5546



## **APPENDIX 2: Participant consent form**

I agree to take part in this research 'An analysis of Contemporary isiZulu Performance Poetry'

The purpose of this study is to evaluate thematic distribution and message portrayal of contemporary isiZulu performing poetry. To analyze poetic features in the new genre of contemporary isiZulu performing poetry and to explore the impact of this new genre of isiZulu performance poetry.

The research is led by Gladness Bongepiwe Dlamini-Myeni, Student at University of KwaZulu-Natal.

I have had the principles and procedures explained to me and I have also read the information sheet. I understand the principles and procedures fully

I am aware that I will be required to answer question about my observation and poetl experience on poetry.

I understand that any confidential information will be seen only by researcher and will not be revealed to anyone else.

The researcher has explained to my satisfactory the purpose of the study and that I am free to withdraw from participating on the study at any time.

However in the event of withdrawal from participating in the research. I give permission for data to continue to be used in an anonymous form.

Name (Please print):.....

Signed:.....

Date:.....

## APPENDIX 3: Ethical clearance Certificate



12 December 2016

Ms Gladness Bongephiwe (Dlamini) 208507318  
School of Arts  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Ms Dlamini

Protocol reference number: HSS/1918/016D

Project title: An analysis of Contemporary Zulu Performance Poetry

**Full Approval – Expedited Application**

In response to your application received 3 November 2016, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)  
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Cc. Supervisor: Dr NG Sibiba  
Cc. Academic Leader: Dr Nicola Jones  
Cc. School Administrator: Ms Debbie Bowen

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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