



Intertextuality shapes the poetry of Xhosa poets

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Abstract

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Praises among the amaXhosa today are not only performed at traditional gatherings. These praises are also performed in many places such as schools, churches and funerals. The question is whether the praises performed in other places rather than traditional gatherings still possess the characteristics of traditional praises. In many praises Xhosa poets draw terminology from Biblical texts. This strategy can be seen as an attempt to break the boundaries between Christianity and Xhosa poetry.

Having said that, the aim of this article is to uncover the interplay between Xhosa traditional poems and Christianity. To do that, this article discusses the interplay between Christianity, elegy, health and social issues. It also discusses new trends of intertextuality in Xhosa poetry. The intertextual theory insists that a text cannot exist as a hermetic or self-sufficient whole and does not function as a closed system. Still and Worton (1991:1) believe that the writer is a reader of the text before she/he is a creator of texts and therefore the work of art is inevitably alive with references, quotations and influences of every kind.

Opsomming

Intertekstualiteit vorm die poësie van Xhosadigters

Lofprysing by die amaXhosa kom vandag nie slegs tydens tradisionele byeenkomste voor nie. Hierdie lofprysings word ook op vele ander plekke gehoor, soos by skole, kerke en begravinge. Die vraag is of lofprysings wat by ander geleenthede as tradisionele byeenkomste uitgevoer word, nog steeds die eien-

skappe van die tradisionele weergawe besit. In baie lofprysings ontleen Xhosadigters terminologie uit Bybelse tekste. Hierdie strategie kan beskou word as 'n poging om die grense tussen die Christendom en Xhosapoësie te deurbreek. Die doel van hierdie artikel, in die lig van die voorafgaande, is dus om die wisselwerking tussen tradisionele Xhosagedigte en die Christelike tematiek bloot te lê.

Met hierdie doel voor oë word die interaksie tussen die Christendom, elegie, gesondheid en sosiale kwessies ondersoek. Nuwe tendense ten opsigte van intertekstualiteit in Xhosapoësie word ook bespreek. Intertekstuele teorie lê die klem daarop dat 'n teks nie as 'n hermetiese of selfgenoegsame geheel kan bestaan of as 'n geslote sisteem kan funksioneer nie. Still en Worton (1991:1) aanvaar dat die skrywer 'n leser van die teks is alvorens hy/sy 'n skepper van tekste is. Die kunswerk is dus deurtrek met verwysings, aanhalings en allerlei invloede.

1. Introduction

The amaXhosa action of *ukubonga* (to praise) is seminal to Xhosa folklore. Leading folklorist Jeff Opland (1998:5) is of the opinion that Xhosa oral poetry is a living organism reflecting the aspirations of a people or nation. This poetry shows evidence of adapting to new social circumstances brought about by urbanisation, literacy and assimilation. This flows logically from the fact that performed poems among the amaXhosa are predicated on the principle of improvisation, constant re-creation and reformulation. Added to this is that poets adapt the subject of the *imbongi* tradition from predominantly focusing on personalities, preferably royal ones, to focusing their attention on commoners, processes or objects of the historical divide between tradition and modernity (Masilela, 1981:1). It also needs to be pointed out that the phrase *Xhosa poetry* in this article refers to both oral and written Xhosa praise poems.

Kaschula (2000:19) avers that, as far as the contemporary socio-political context is concerned, griots and *imbongi*, be they women or men, are essentially influenced by, and attracted to the power which emanates, for example, from politics, religion, education and cultural events. To support this notion, Manyaka (2000:260-261) avers that the duty of a poet is to be the spokesperson of the community in which he/she lives. The spokesperson of the society convinces the community to see and view things the way he/she sees them. For example, according to Manyaka (2000) Thobeng's poetry illustrates the disagreement of the poet with the way people of Gaborone

behave in society. Thobeng's poetry evolves around Christianity, possibly because he is the son of a minister. One aspect of his contributions has been to expose corruption in the church. His poetry also includes elements of Christianity, as does the work of many Xhosa poets. Intertextuality can be seen as a central phenomenon in this poetry.

Intertextuality was introduced by Julia Kristeva in her work of the late 1960s. Manyaka (1992:24) avers that intertextuality was coined by Julia Kristeva which alludes to every text building itself as a mosaic of quotations, where it is an absorption and transformation of another text or other texts. Her work on semiotics and literature, is partly collected in English in her *Desire in language and revolution in poetic language* (Kristeva, 1986). Kristeva describes a literary text as a network of linguistic signs which has its origin not in the intention of the author, but in the multiple discursive contexts surrounding the text. As Barthes explains in his famous essay "The death of the author", a text consists of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody and contestation (Barthes, 1993:4).

According to Still and Worton (1991:x), intertextuality is a promiscuous interdiscipline, or even a transdiscipline, certainly a transvestite discipline, in that it constantly borrows its trappings from other disciplines. They go on to say that a text comes into being through the process of reading, and that what is produced at a given moment is due to the cross-fertilisation of the packaged textual material by all the texts which the reader brings to it. In the poems of some Xhosa poets one can trace Christian influences; their praises are intertwined with elements from Christianity.

Xhosa poets such as Nqakula, Jolobe, Mqhayi, Mabunu, Shasha and others, e.g. show clear links to Christianity in their poems. In some of their works they combined and produced both traditional and Christian related poems. According to Milubi (1988:163), such praise poems reveal the image of a soul anxiously working out its own salvation. In most cases, these poems oscillate between faith in the mercy of God through Christ, and a feeling of personal worthlessness that is very close to despair.

The reader of the texts of the Xhosa poets discussed below, would recognise the influence of Christianity. This influence on South African writers can be traced back to the missionary work which took the African people by storm. Some Africans abandoned their cultural traits to accommodate Christianity, and African culture was seen as

evil. Christian influence should be seen not only as an influence to shape and nurture the work of Xhosa poets, but also to give a sustenance to it. African people today have accepted Christianity as a part of their lives. In order to embrace that, they incorporate Christian texts into their praises.

To support the previous argument, Mabunu for example composed a poem called *Ubukhulu bukaThixo* (The greatness of God). Christian aspects are evident in the following stanza:

Kuba inkomo yabinzwa phezu kwentaba zeKalvari,
Wabinzwa kambe phezu kwentaba yamathambo,
Kwath' isizwe sonke sathi, 'Camagu',
Camagu kub' izono zomhlaba zixolelwe
Zath'izizwe zonke 'Camagu'
Kub' uThixo nabantu babandakanyiwe.

*For the Bull was sacrificed on Mount Calvary,
Sacrificed indeed on the Mountain of Bones,
And all the nation cried, 'Mercy',
'Mercy!' for the sins of the earth are pardoned,
All the nations cried 'Mercy',
For God and the people are one.*

(Opland, 1998:25.)

This stanza is rich in Christian diction. Diction is interpreted here as the writer's choice and use of words. It can be described as colloquial, simple and emotive or figurative. The following phrases/words can be associated with Christianity: *intaba yamathambo*, *inkomo*, *izono*, *Calvary* and *Thixo*. *Intaba yamathambo* (the mountain of bones) refers to Calvary. The word *inkomo* is used as a metaphor to refer to "Jesus", who was crucified. *Inkomo* (cow) sometimes among the Xhosa people is slaughtered to appease the ancestors. Slaughtering an animal among the amaXhosa is believed to be associated with offering. In this case the poet sees Jesus as an offering. *Kalvari* is the place where Christ was crucified. Biblically, Calvary is a mountain of bones, but in this poem it can be likened to a kraal where slaughtering among the amaXhosa takes place. The word *izono* means "sins" while *Thixo* refers to God.

According to Still and Worton (1991:56) an intertext is one or more texts which the reader must know in order to understand a work of literature in terms of its overall significance as opposed to the discrete meanings of its successive words, phrases and sentences. In this case the poet understands the Bible and links it to his poem. In Mqhayi's poem *Amadelakufa* (The Heroes) one can observe the

similarity of style as the style used by Mabunu. He also uses interplay between texts. Mqhayi wrote this poem to encourage the South African labour contingent, a party of Africans travelling to France during the First World War. Part of it reads as follows:

Sinenz' idini lesizwe sikaNtu.
 Hambani, mathol' eemaz' ezimabele made,
 Hambani, mathol' oonyonga-nde kukudlelana,
 Hambani, kuba le nto thina sesiyibonile.
 UThixo wakowethu sel eyijikele ngaphambili.

*We've made you the blacks' obligation.
 Go, calves of the long-uddered cows;
 Go, calves of cows lean from sharing;
 Go, for we've long seen this coming.
 God is already in front.* (Opland, 1998:41.)

In the stanza above, the poet sets a Christian mood. Among other things, the poet is trying to glorify God and edify man. This suggests that some Xhosa poets were also Christians. Some of them came from Christian backgrounds. This can also be the reason why some poets quoted from Biblical texts. In the stanza above the poet sees the soldiers as sacrifice. Biblically, Jesus was the sacrifice for the people. In this case the African soldiers are the sacrifice for the African people. The Christian reference to God, namely *Thixo* is also used. Based on the mentioned examples, one can conclude that interplay is evident in Mqhayi and Mabunu's praises. They both draw from the Bible to enhance their Xhosa praises.

Nqakula (1974:1) in his poem *Ukhanyo* (Light) also alludes to a Biblical text from Matthew 2:13. The sixth stanza of the poem reads as follows:

Xa uHerode olu khanyo wayefuna ukulucima,
 Ubukhosi bomhlaba neZulu efun' ukubuthimba,
 Wasithum' uYehova isiThunywa Sakhe,
 Sathi kuYosefu makasabe nentsapho yakhe,
 Kub' uHerode efun' ukumtshabalalisa uMfundisi.

*When Herod wanted to extinguish the light,
 And wanted to take over the Kingdom of Heaven and earth,
 He sent his Angel,
 To tell Joseph to flee with his family,
 Because Herod wanted to destroy the Messiah.*

This stanza clearly shows that the poet used the Bible, as this story is about Herod who wanted to kill the Messiah in order to remain

ruler. Here the poet was trying to show that there are people who do not like the light, but those people always fail because they do not have the Holy Spirit. The Biblical text has been conveyed and transformed to fit the praise poem. One can conclude that a parasite strategy has been used in this case by taking what is in the Bible to feed the text in the Xhosa poem. The poet found the Biblical text encouraging after scolding those who do not support transformation. To emphasise this idea, the poet draws from the Biblical text. Ntuli (1984:47) comments about poets whose works reflect a Christian influence:

In the biography of Vilakazi we indicated how he was associated with Christian institutions at Mariannhill and Ixopo. We do not expect these contacts to have left no mark on his work.

During the period of the missionaries, much emphasis was laid on the reading of the Bible. Vilakazi and others surely were affected in one way or another. In Kaschula (2000:15), Reverend Lordwyk Xozwa, an *imbongi* and preacher within the Methodist Church in the Eastern Cape, is one of the contemporary praise singers who has chosen to use his gift of praising to honour God.

Intertextuality can be subsumed under a broader deconstructive approach and concepts such as allusion, parody, imitation, parasite, host, supplement and influence are cornerstones of it. It is therefore important to discuss the link between Christian related themes and Xhosa praise poetry. The use of intertextuality as a literary strategy (referred to as an example of influence before the 1980s) helps writers to be more creative and give them the capacity to link different texts. The host in this case is Xhosa praise poems incorporating Christian aspects.

Intertextuality operates between texts and authors, within and between genres, and between different systems of representation and narrative. In order to outline this notion of intertextuality further, certain themes shall be discussed where intertextuality is visible.

2. Interplay between texts

Intertextuality has its defining features which include reflexivity (how self-conscious the use of intertextuality seems to be), alteration (the alteration of the source), explicitness (the explicitness of reference(s) to other text(s)), criticality to comprehension scale of adoption (the overall scale of allusion within the text) and structural unboun-

dedness (to what extent is the text presented as part of the larger structure) (Genette, 1997:2).

It implies that texts are instrumental not only in the construction of other texts, but in the construction of experiences as well. We live in a society where our perception is directed almost as often to representations as it is to reality (Lash, 1990:24). Some of the Xhosa poets use pre-textual experiences to shape the current representation. An example is Mtshwane's praise she performed at Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape during the apartheid era.

Hambani ke madoda, niy' ePitoli
Nikhumbul' amaqhawe omzabalazo
Izihendo zongendawo ze nizoyise
uThixo wethu wonikhusela

*So go then, men, to Pretoria
Remember the political activists
Resist the temptations of the evil one
Our Lord will protect you*
(Mtshwane, 1979)

The stanza above reflects various interconnected texts. The poet oscillates between Christianity and politics. This is evident when the poet mentions Pretoria and political activists. This suggest that the poet encourages the political activists to go and fight oppressors in Pretoria. Again in the same stanza Christianity appears when the poet uses the word *Thixo* (Lord). Admittedly, intertextuality has inspired many Xhosa poets in the composition of their praises.

Another example is that of David Yali-Manisi when he was on his mission as a go-between, forging communication between black South Africa and America: he appealed to America for educational support for blacks in South Africa who were ragged vagabonds in the land of their birth. Manisi concluded his speech by a performance. The first four lines of his poem read as follows:

Sisono madod' ukuvimba
Bubuntu kodwa kon' ukupha
Sison' ukungabi nanceba
Yintsikelo nobuThix' ukuba nofefe

*It's a sin, fellows, to be stingy,
it's humane to give.
It's a sin to lack sympathy,
a godly blessing to show compassion.*
(Opland, 1998:186-187)

In line 1 the poet uses the word *isono* (sin). *Sin* is a term used mainly in a Christian context to describe an act that violates a moral rule, or the state of having committed such a violation. According to the Scriptural point of view, a moral code of conduct is decreed by a divine entity such as God. Sin can be used to mean an action that is prohibited or considered wrong. It can also refer to a state of mind rather than action. Colloquially, it is understood to mean any thought, or act which is considered immoral, harmful, or shameful (Hein, 2004:1). Manisi like other Xhosa poets, incorporates Christian words in his praise poem such as *isono* (sin) and *Thixo* (God).

Some Christian praises are performed in a Christian situation, but still carry the characteristics of traditional praises. The content of these praises dwell on the personal feelings and experiences of the audience and poet. For example, during a funeral, sorrow is a common theme. A theme depends on the context of delivery in both traditional and Christian praises. According to Thwala (2000:12) the theme of a work is not its subject, but rather its central idea, which may be stated directly or indirectly.

Christian themes address God's creation as artistic and real. The interpretation of these themes is based on the context of African culture within Christianity. Nefefe writes of the pleasures of life as one of the themes in *Shangoni*. He compares the modern existence with Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18). This can be observed in these lines:

Pleasure of life for an eye,
It robs the pupil's eye when it sees honey.
Pleasures of Sodom and Gomorrah it sees.
(Nefefe, 1995:62.)

Nefefe portrays our land as if it were the evil of Sodom and Gomorrah. Life in Gomorrah had no guiding principles. Christian themes are important concerns for praise poetry which tries to expose the evil deeds of Satan and to inculcate Christian values. Death themes need to be discussed in relation to Christianity and Xhosa social life.

3. Interplay between Christianity and death praises

Poems are not things, but only words that refer to other words, and those words refer to yet other words, and so on, into the densely overpopulated world of literary language. Any poem is an inter-poem, and any reading of a poem is an inter-reading. You cannot

write or think or even read without imitation and what you can imitate is what another person has done – that person's writing or thinking. Your relation to what informs that person is tradition (Bloom, 1990: 10).

The interplay between Christianity and the poems written by people from Xhosa cultural background, adds a new dimension to Xhosa poetry. Elegies in Xhosa society in the past have been written or sung, accommodating Xhosa norms and values such as heroic tendencies and succession. Today the Christian contribution is also acknowledged.

What has to be understood, is that man is not a master of his own fate. Man's life, among other things, is surrounded by pitfalls and engulfed by both good and evil. Death is man's inevitable destination. From one point of view, death is most natural. "It is appointed unto men to die once" (Heb. 9:27) and this is usually accepted without resistance. From another perspective, it is most unnatural, as it is the penalty for sin (Rom. 6:23), and is to be feared as such. According to Somniso (2002:73), death is a biological necessity, but men do not simply die like animals. Once a human being dies, a prayer is said immediately to thank God for liberating him/her from suffering. The preparations for a Christian burial will then take place. The service is often conducted by ministers of religion or preachers. In most cases, a Christian service takes place in church, whereas a non-Christian service is conducted at the home of the deceased. During the funeral service, speakers will speak on behalf of the family or family members. The speakers will talk about the life of the deceased. A praise singer could also emerge unexpectedly to expound the virtues of the deceased.

For example, Elma Mtshwane, a Xhosa poet, rose and praised the virtues of Zandile Trato in January 1999. Zandile died in a car accident on her way to Queenstown, where she was teaching. It was a sad event, as the girl was still very young. Mtshwane sang the following praise poem to offer some relief:

Ewe! Namhla ilanga lingcangc' emini,
Liyagoduka, liya kunina,
Libeth' ixilongo xa kumpondozankomo
Livath' ubuqaqawuli beZulu.
Mna Zandile ndilelo langa namhla,
Ning anxubi ibimide iminyaka yam nani ,
Ndifikile apho bendisiya namhla,

Ekhay' eZulwini – eNkosini yam,
Arrive alive! Ndiphilile.

*Yes! Today the sun sets at daylight,
Is going home to its mother,
It blows the trumpet in the early morning,
Wearing the regalia of heaven.
I! Zandile, am that sun today,
Do not worry, I had many years with you,
I have reached my destination today,
My home heaven – in my Lord,
Arrive alive – I am alive.*

(Mtshwane, 1999.)

Backer *et al.* (1982) are of the opinion that a funeral serves to reinforce the integration of the community, the family, the religious group, and the ethnic group while helping the bereaved begin their separation from the deceased. The theme of the praise poem above, provides family support, instils a realisation of the death as a social reality and promises a better life after death. The following lines taken from the praise poem above, indicate the end of the journey and a peaceful rest in God's Hands:

Ndifikile apho bendisiya namhla
Namhla ndilelele apha ndithe zole.

*I have reached my destination today
Today I am sleeping here quietly.*

This theme also demonstrates the visibility of family networks in society whilst providing the bereaved with Christian support. Here the poet is speaking as if she was the deceased when she uses the first person singular, *ndi-* (I) to comfort Zandile's parents. Heaven is used to supplement home later in the poem, implying that heaven has taken the place of home.

4. Interplay between Christianity and health praises

Xhosa poets, when addressing health related issues also appeal to God. Welile Shasha, a medical doctor, is one of the poets who paved the way for addressing health problems among African people in the arts. The praise singers of Matanzima in the former republic of Transkei stimulated his interest in praise singing. As a bard and writer he responded poetically to social issues such as health. In his book *Zihlabana Nje Ziyalamba* (The reason for going each other is because they are hungry) health related issues are dealt with, for example "Isifo sekholera ngo-1982" (Cholera epidemic

of 1982) and “Izifo zabahle” (Gonorrhea). The social context served as his stimulus to compose. Although in the past the most famous praise poems were directed mainly at prominent persons, today things have changed and health has also become an important topic.

Health-related issues are topical world-wide. There are opportunistic diseases such as tuberculosis and AIDS. According to Nicolson (1995), South Africans are aware of the looming AIDS pandemic. Projects and campaigns to educate people about this health hazard have been taken seriously. The Christian response to AIDS forms part of the campaign. Regrettably, people living with AIDS have been ostracised and dehumanised by society. A Biblical reference (Matt. 8:10-13) states that Christ was not afraid of being associated with society’s outcasts. The question of health victims now is, “Why us”? The response to this question could raise even more questions, but the fortunate fact is that there are people who are encouraging communities to care for the victims. Praise singers are among the concerned. They also take the stage during AIDS workshops and sing praises, some demanding a Christian approach to the AIDS problem. Nicolson (1995:18) is of the opinion that for the churches not to respond to an issue of this magnitude would imply that God, Jesus and Christianity are irrelevant and offer no saving grace. The above arguments lead to the thematic analysis of the praise poems performed within the parameters of Christianity. One of them, “Isingxobo” (Condom) was performed on AIDS day at Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape by Elma Mtshwane. The praise poem was recorded by the author and it is available at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. The praise poem reads as follows:

Ubom abukho obusetyesini,
Yekani ingxolo yiyani kuSingxobo,
Likhona icebo lokusinda kwezingxingongo ,
Cebo linye sebenzisa isingxobo.
UYesu wakhalimela uPetrosi,
Asidabi lanyama eli lelomoya,
Buyisel’ikrele lakho kwisingxobo,
Asidabi lothando eli lelobomi,
Buyisela loo nto yakho kwisingxobo,
Isingxobo – ntozakuthi – isingxobo.

*There is no second chance in life,
Do not make noise, go to condom,
There is a way to survive in these problems,*

*The only suggestion is to use a condom.
Jesus reprimanded Peter,
This is not a physical war, it's a spiritual war,
Return your spear to your bag,
This is no love war it's a life war,
Return your thing to the bag,
Condom – fellow brothers – condom.
(Mtshwane, 2005.)*

Here the poet expresses her concern about people who are HIV-positive and appeals to everyone who have sex to use a condom. The poet is also protesting against individuals who do not use condoms, and issuing an appeal when she says:

Isingxobo – ntozakuthi – isingxobo.

Condom – fellow brothers – condom.

This theme displays little joy or hope in life, because of the nature of the rampant killer disease AIDS. The poet recommends that people should turn to God for the solution. Intertextuality allows a fruitful perspective for the analysis of the thematic implications in any given literary text. Xhosa poets do not only use intertextuality between tradition and Christianity, there are also other fields where it is evident such as in health and social life.

5. Interplay between Christianity and social related praises

Intertextuality is the general discursive space that makes a text intelligible. This is also evident when the poet sings praises about the love and way of life of his/her people. As a social commentator, he/she would move from text to text to provide interpretations and perspectives. The poet also responds poetically to the social and political circumstances confronting him during his/her performance. Humans are social beings, they interact daily. Social interaction brings both pain and happiness to the lives of people. It is very unfortunate that people are subjected to two patterns of life – you are either good or bad, Christian or non-Christian, beautiful or ugly. Also factors such as kindness, generosity, pride, immorality and humanity can affect social interaction either positively or negatively.

Poets sometimes directly attack those imbued with a sense of pride. By so doing, they state that a person with pride denies him-/herself free access to any society. In Somniso (2002:94) one of the Xhosa poets, when praising “kindness” says “kindness is an everlasting gift

of God which confronts the suffering". The poet can be seen moving from discourse to discourse, from text to text, between the Biblical and the socially references. This proves that every text is an intersection of others. In this socially engaged poem, Maseti uses strong intertextuality:

Ikratshi landulel' ilishwa nokwenzakala
 Umnt' onekratsh' unobudenge nobuhedeni
 Unochuku nocalulo
 Nqwa noMsamariyakaz' equleni likaYakobi
 Kodwa ekugqibeleni watshintsha
 Masitshintshe boomama

*Pride comes before evil and accident
 A person with pride has stupidity and heathendom
 Is irritable and has racism
 Just like the Samaritan woman at the pool of Jacob
 But at last, she changed
 Let us change, mothers.*

(Maseti, 2002.)

This praise poem is a direct attack on those imbued with a sense of pride. Pride in this praise poem is seen as unwarranted behaviour. The poet worries much about what happens to someone who suffers from this trait, one of the "seven deadly sins". She also states that a person with pride denies him-/herself free access to any society. The poet draws from the story of Jesus when He spoke to the Samaritan woman near Jacob's well. The Samaritan woman, instead of helping a needy person, used a strong expression of disapproval. The poet here sees people with the negative trait of inordinate pride as heathens. Biblically, heathens have no place in God's paradise as in the case of societal life where they are also not welcomed.

Another praise poem with a positive Christian message was also performed by the same poet at a Christian gathering in Port Elizabeth:

Lungekh' uthand' ububele buyaphanza
 Uyadakumba
 Uxelis' uMarta, mhl'ekhalazel' uMariya
 Ngokungamncedis' ukulungiselel' iNkosi
 Yona yabon' olona thando nobubele kuMariya
 Ehlel' ezinyaweni zikaYesu
 Ephulaphul' iindab' esetyisa

*Without love, kindness perishes
 You become tired*

*Just like Martha the day she was complaining about Mary
Not helping her preparing for the Lord
He saw the real love and kindness from Mary
Sitting at the feet of Jesus
Listening to the news.*

(Maseti, 2002.)

This praise poem signifies kindness as an ever-lasting gift from God which comforts those suffering. The theme of this praise poem incorporates love and compassion within a social setting. The poet is informing Christians and society at large about these essential qualities which need to be encouraged in order for people to live together harmoniously.

Another vital aspect of the main idea, theme or message is the way in which it is conveyed in the oral setting. It is therefore imperative to present a brief outline of the traditional devices of praise poems. This will help to lay a foundation to enable the researcher to identify and explore oral devices in Christian praise poems. The interplay shown in these praise poems illustrates the way Xhosa poets define their identities and order their experiences.

According to Ott (2000:1) texts are instrumental not only in the construction of other texts, but also in the building of experiences. Intertextuality blurs the boundaries, not only between texts, but between text and the world of lived experience. The world is changing and people need to adapt themselves to these new changes.

6. New trends in intertextuality

This article among other things, can be seen as opening new areas of study, such as the study of the interplay between Xhosa traditional poems and the media. Television can be the best medium to explore for this purpose. In the performance situation a poet combines different types of actions such as dramatisation, gestures, ululating and music when performing. The poet can project impressions through a single piece of music. The parameters of music can also include aspects such as rhythms, pitch, instruments and other structures.

Landow and Delany (1991), also support this notion when they say "the written text is the stable record of thoughts and to achieve that this stability of the text had to be based on a physical medium such as book". Yet a text is more than just a written text, it can also be presented on screen.

One of the contemporary Xhosa poets who uses such a style is Zolani Mkiva, who also performs on television. He combines Xhosa poetry, Christianity, and music. This strategy leads to the strong commercialisation of Xhosa praises. The study of poetic performances across media is another way in which intertextuality may result in texts which are identifiably new. Intertextuality demonstrates texts' endless adaptability and ability to create new dimensions.

Scholars should begin to answer questions such as the following: What is the relationship of Xhosa poetry to media such as print technologies, audiotapes and hypermedia? To what extent do media function in Xhosa poetry?

7. Conclusion

In this article, an attempt has been made to discuss the interplay between traditional and Christian praise poems. Christian influences are noticeable in the works of various poets. In the last line of the last stanza of the praise poem about Zandile, for example, Christian influences are noticeably present.

Texts used in this article show that the writers of traditional Xhosa praises employ passages from the Bible as carrier for their praises. Among other things, the Xhosa poets use the terms such as *Thixo* (God), *Kalvari* (Calvary) and *isono* (sin), which suggest intertextuality. The use of Biblical terms can be seen as a link between tradition and Christianity, which would benefit the contemporary society through the use of multidisciplinary studies. Negatively, Mqhayi uses this interplay for his own purposes. He uses Christianity to scorn the perpetrators of apartheid who hide behind the Bible to probe their actions. When a Biblical text is used for good purposes, writers should be commended. This usage should also not be seen as plagiarism. Thus it can be demonstrated that writers draw on many different fields in order to enhance their artwork.

Emphasis has been placed on the interplay between Christianity and poems composed on the grounds of Xhosa traditions. Praises which deal with death, health and social issues are discussed in relation to Christianity. The examples indicate that Xhosa texts also owe lot to other texts as well as to their own makers and that Xhosa poets practice extensive intertextuality.

The use of intertextuality is an ongoing interdisciplinary process. A text is not seen as something that exists in isolation. It forms part of a corpus of other texts. The fundamental concept of intertextuality is

that no text, much as it might appear to be so, is original and unique in itself. Julia Kristeva, the formulator of intertextuality, suggests that intertextuality is rather a tissue of inevitable, and to an extent unwitting, reference to and quotations from other texts.

This article also opens a forum where Xhosa poetry can be seen as playing a role in media studies, as a text will mimic or copy certain stylistic features of another text. In this way one can see the possibilities for commercial use of Xhosa poetry.

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Key concepts:

Christianity: influence of
interplay in texts
intertextuality
Xhosa praise poems

Kernbegrippe:

Christendom: invloed van
intertekstualiteit
Xhosa-lofgedigte
wisselwerking in tekste

