



Some aspects of imagery in the poetry of S.M. Burns-Ncamashe

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Abstract

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This article investigates the use of imagery in the poetry of S.M. Burns-Ncamashe, as it is apparent that his poetry is rich in imagery. The aspects of imagery to be discussed are simile, metaphor and personification. The discussion then aims at revealing the nature of the imagery the poet uses and the domains of reality that he explores with his images.

*The poetry of Burns-Ncamashe that will be considered includes the already published poems in **Masibaliselane** (1961), **Izibongo zakwa-Sesile** (1979), the unpublished poem titled "Aa! Dalubuhle!" and the one in the volume compiled by Tonjeni (1959). Certain poems on tapes [T(XH/96)5, T(XH/90)317, T(XH/93)28 and T(XH/94)84] will also be considered for this discussion. Prior to the discussion of the elements of imagery Burns-Ncamashe will be introduced and the concepts "imagery" defined. A concluding section briefly summarises the discussion and highlights some of the findings.*

Opsomming

Sekere aspekte van die beeldspraak in die gedigte van S.M. Burns-Ncamashe

Hierdie artikel ondersoek die gebruik van beeldspraak in die digkuns van S.M. Burns-Ncamashe, omdat die digter se gedigte ryk aan beeldspraak is. Die aspekte van die digter se beeldspraak wat bestudeer word, is sy gebruik van vergelykings, metafore en personifikasie. Die artikel wil die aard van die beeldspraak wat die digter gebruik, asook die domeine van die werklikheid wat hy met sy beelde verken, ondersoek.

Die digkuns van Burns-Ncamashe wat oorweeg is, sluit in gepubliseerde gedigte **Masibaliselane** (1961), **Izibongo zakwaSesile** (1979), asook die ongepubliseerde gedig "Aa! Dalubuhle!" en ook die gedig in die bundel wat Tonjeni (1959) saamgestel het. 'n Paar gedigte op kasset [T(XH/96)5, T(XH/90)317, T(XH/93)28 en T(XH/94)84], sal ook in hierdie bespreking gebruik word. Voordat die elemente van beelspraak bespreek word, word Burns-Ncamashe bekendgestel en die konsep "beeldspraak" gedefinieer. Die artikel word afgesluit met 'n kort opsomming van die bespreking en die aandui van 'n paar van die bevindings.

1. Introduction

Very little attention has been given to Burns-Ncamashe's use of imagery in his poetry. So far Mtumane (2000), has probably been the only scholar who has studied this aspect of the poet's work. Burns-Ncamashe's use of imagery is in line with most other poets, as they tend to use this device in their poems. This article then will indicate what is accomplished by the use of simile, metaphor and personification. It will also investigate which worlds the poet draws his images from. Generally, imagery tends to enhance the meaning of poetry and serve as an instrument by which the reader's intellectual abilities are challenged, as it makes him engage his thought processes to understand what the poet actually intends saying in a poem. It also makes the meaning of the poems clearer when the reader has discovered what the images refer to. This article then will indicate whether Burns-Ncamashe's use of imagery does accomplish the said issues, and whether it goes beyond the usual or has certain shortcomings.

2. Burns-Ncamashe

Sipho Mangindi Burns-Ncamashe (1920-1996) was a well-known Xhosa *imbongi* (praise poet) who has also written short stories and poems. His publications include *Masibaliselane* (1961) which is a combination of short stories and poems, and *Izibongo zakwaSesile* (1979), which is a collection of poems. Apart from these two publications, some of Burns-Ncamashe's poems have also been recorded on tapes, which can be found in the archives of the South African Broadcasting Corporation in Port Elizabeth.

Burns-Ncamashe was both a modern poet and a traditional praise singer. He was the praise singer of Chief Velile Sandile of amaRharhabe (a Xhosa sub-group). Later he became a politician and the chief of amaGwali, which is also a Xhosa sub-group.

3. Imagery defined

Imagery may be defined as the use of images to represent something else. Fogle (1962:22-23) defines it as:

... analogy or comparison, having the peculiarly aesthetic and concentrative form of 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.

Cohen (1973:187) concurs with Fogle, as he defines imagery as:

a direct sense appeal, a figure of speech, or both, which leads a reader by a process of association to combine at least two elements inherent in the figure.

From the above definitions, imagery may be said to be the poet's figurative use of language, by which he substitutes images for ordinary words in such a manner that the listener or reader is able to make mental pictures that are associated or compared to the object that the poet speaks about. Murwamphida (1993:136-128) and Kgobe (1994:211) illustrate that imagery may be visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, kinaesthetic, tactile and abstract.

Heese and Lawton (1975:62) further maintain that the specific terms that are indicative of the general terms "imagery" or "image" include simile, personification, metaphor and symbolism. This view is also shared by Nowotny (1968:51) and Brooks, Purser and Warren (1975:884), who also mention simile, metaphor and symbolism as figures of speech that are used in imagery. It is these figures of speech that give poetry its internal form and reveal the poet's skill to employ language in an unusual manner. This article focuses on the use of simile, metaphor and personification and how these devices are used in the poetry of S.M. Burns-Ncamashe.

Poets draw images from different aspects of life. Burns-Ncamashe, in particular, draws images from the cosmic, animal (and insect), plant, human, mythical, biblical, natural and physical worlds. In this article then it will also be indicated which of the images are drawn from the various domains mentioned above.

4. Simile

Simile is a device of imagery that is commonly used in poetry. It is a figure of speech in which two objects or processes of different categories are compared explicitly by virtue of likeness in one or more characteristics that unify them. This association tends to

clarify, emphasise and enhance the original object. In the employment of simile one object is likened to another by the use of words such as “like” or “as” (Shipley, 1970:304, Cohen, 1973:51, 195, Brooks, Purser & Warren, 1975:887, Fowler, 1987:222), whose Xhosa equivalents are *oku kwa-*, *njenga-*, *ngathi*, *nqwa na-*, and *-rha*, which are formatives used to indicate similarity in the language. This comparison may be made with natural phenomena, animals, cosmic objects and physical places and objects.

The poet’s drawing images from the *biblical* world (place) is apparent in “Umnyaka omtsha”, where the structure of the then Radio Bantu is likened to the New Jerusalem as follows:

1. Lihle nebhotwe lenu ndilibonile linenzukiseko,
 2. Lifuzis’ *okweJerusalem*’ entsha yesemaZulwini.)
-
1. [I have seen your palace is also beautiful and glorious
 2. It resembles the heavenly New Jerusalem.]
- (T(XH/93)28)

The poem from which these lines are drawn describes the striking appearance of the building of the then Radio Bantu. That is why the building is compared to the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is believed to be a very beautiful city where Christians hope to be when Christ comes to fetch them. The comparison of the structure of Radio Bantu with this city then vivifies the beauty of the building. The use of the New Jerusalem as an object of comparison also points to the poet’s acquaintance with the Bible, as it is in this book that the city is referred to and described. This is not surprising as Burns-Ncamashe was a Christian, and the Bible is the basis of the Christian faith. Although the New Jerusalem has never actually been seen with the physical eye, the reader who knows its biblical description (Rev. 21:9-27) can imagine the very beautiful city. The poet’s association of this image with Radio Bantu will act to enhance the impact of the physical structure of Radio Bantu in the perception of the poem. In this case the poet utilises *visual* objects as imagery.

An example of a simile in which an object is likened to a *natural phenomenon* is found in “Igalelo lika Profesa J. Opland”, where the poet likens the appearance of Xhosa poets to the cloudy summer weather (Burns-Ncamashe, 1979:42). The poem in which this comparison is found describes the fearsome appearance of Xhosa praise poets when performing. That is why Burns-Ncamashe associates them with cloudy summer weather. Weather is a natural phenomenon to which the poet likens Xhosa poets in the line. The

comparison to cloudy summer weather indicates the fearsome appearance praise poets assume when performing. Cloudy summer weather usually has thick cumulus clouds, as this is the season of thunderstorms. These clouds appear to be frightening because of their dark and stormy nature. That is the reason why the poet compares the threatening nature of the Xhosa poets with this kind of weather. Since weather is a visible phenomenon, the poet uses visual imagery in this poem thus enabling the reader to create a mental picture of the weather in his imagination, and then to associate it with the image the poet creates in the poem.

Comparison with an *animal* is apparent in “Aa! Velile!”, where the treatment of amaRharhabe by modern politicians during the homeland system in the former Ciskei homeland is likened to that of dogs:

1. Bephethwe *njengezinja* ...
1. [They are treated *like dogs* ...]
(T(XH/90)317)

The poem from which this line is drawn protests against the illtreatment of amaRharhabe by modern politicians and associates their treatment with that of dogs. A dog is an animal, which is generally treated rather harshly among Africans: It usually spends the nights outside, is made to eat the remains of food (*intshela*) and bones, instead of having good food and meat. This treatment is also illustrated by Siyongwana, in his protest novel entitled *Ubulumko bezinja* (1962). The likening of the treatment of amaRharhabe with that of dogs indicates the unpleasant way in which these people were treated. This image is indicative of the persecution and exploitation they may have experienced, according to the poet. In this poem the poet uses a visual image – an ill-treated dog perceived by the eye. The use of this image enables the reader to create a mental picture of the dog in his imagination and associate it with amaRharhabe, who are said to be treated like a dog. This association then affords the reader a better understanding of the exploitation and oppression of amaRharhabe, as is expressed by the poet.

Besides the animal world, the poet also compares subjects with objects from the *cosmic* world. This is apparent in “Umthomb’ onzulu wamanz’ olwazi”, where he likens the colour of Rhodes’s eyes with the naked sky (Burns-Ncamashe, 1979:11). The poem in which this comparison is found is about Rhodes University, which was named

after Cecil John Rhodes. In this poem the appearance of Cecil John Rhodes, with whom the university is generally associated is described. *Izulu* (The sky) is a blue cosmic phenomenon which use as an object of comparison emphasises the blue colour of Rhodes's eyes. This colour is further stressed by referring to the sky as "naked". This descriptive word strengthens the mental picture of a clear and uncloudy blue sky which, in turn, points to the bright colour of Rhodes's eyes. In this sense the poet stresses the physical appearance of the subject. This simile can also be regarded as visual imagery as the sky is a phenomenon that can be seen with the physical eye.

Burns-Ncamashe's use of objects from the biblical, natural, animal and cosmic worlds as images of comparison in his use of simile, points to his acquaintance with these domains. For instance, reference to the weather and animals may reveal that he perhaps used to look after animals in different weather conditions. It may be that that experience has equipped him with the ability to utilise images from this "world". The use of the New Jerusalem as simile points to the author's acquaintance with the Bible. Furthermore, as a leader in a Christian church, he was also a preacher who read the Bible. All this proves that it is not by chance that Burns-Ncamashe draws images of comparison from the aforesaid worlds and that these images are based upon personal experience.

The use of simile in Burns-Ncamashe's poetry, as the foregoing discussion illustrates, clarifies, emphasises and enhances the original object. It also gives the reader a clearer mental picture of what the poet speaks about, and then he (the reader) associates the objects of comparison with the subjects or objects described in the poetry.

5. Metaphor

Metaphor is a device that is also commonly employed in poetry. As a figure of speech it is related to simile, as it also involves the comparison of two objects on the basis of similarity in one or more aspects. A metaphor also likens one object to another. The difference between a metaphor and a simile lies in the manner of comparing the objects. In the case of simile, as it is illustrated in the above discussion, one object is said to be like the other, or X is like Y. When a metaphor, however, is used one object is said to be the one which is the source of association or X is Y. In other words, in a metaphor two objects are identified implicitly as a metaphor and is an implied comparison. One object substitutes for another.

Generally, the use of metaphor makes an idea more vivid, as the attributes of the object of connection tend to clarify what the poet says about the subject. It also enriches the meaning or weight of the poem. In its use, metaphor may be based on different parts of speech and some objects. With parts of speech it may be based on copulative constructions, possessive constructions, verbs and nouns. With objects it may be based on the worlds referred to earlier in this article. In this discussion metaphors will be categorised according to parts of speech and it will also be indicated on which worlds they are based on.

5.1 Metaphors based on copulative construction

A metaphor that is based on a copulative construction is evident in 'Aa!! Gunyaziwe!!' in the following lines:

1. *Yinunw'* emsila md' ungameGqili,
 2. *Yingweny'* egosis' ononkala namazilenzi,
-
1. [He is the long tailed *snake* like the Orange River]
 2. [He is the *crocodile* that makes crabs and water snakes serve him.]

(Tonjeni, 1959:18)

In the poem from which these lines are drawn, the poet is praising Bishop Cullen, who was the leader of the Presbyterian Church in the Eastern Cape at the time of composing this poem. In the above lines the poet uses the identificative copulative derived with the formative *Yi-*. Note that the metaphors found in these lines are drawn from the animal world. Both animals (the snake and the crocodile) are dangerous reptiles. When unprovoked, they look harmless but become dangerous when provoked or disturbed. To use these animals as metaphors may point to Cullen's personality of being humble, yet strong when requested to perform his duties. This characteristic is typical of a minister of religion, as some ministers generally look humble, but perform their preaching duties with surprising vigour. This attitude is also in line with the isiXhosa saying that *ubani uyingozi* (so and so is dangerous) when referring to somebody who looks humble but excels in his duties.

As the crocodile is generally regarded to be a dominating and powerful animal in a river area, its use here may be emphasising the general authority Cullen had in the church and to ministers who served under him. This idea is further strengthened by mentioning crabs and water snakes subordinate to the crocodile. Crabs and

water snakes are regarded to be of a lower status than the crocodile. The metaphor of crocodile then may also be used to signify the high level of respect Cullen enjoyed because of the position he occupied – that of being a Bishop. The snake and crocodile are feared by other creatures. This fear may also imply respect, specifically as the crocodile is regarded as the king of water animals. This line of thought further emphasises the fact that the metaphors signify the high level of respect Cullen enjoyed because of the position he occupied.

Burns-Ncamashe also draws metaphorical images from the *mythical world*. That is apparent in his use of *impundulu* (the lightning bird) as an image. *Impundulu* is a mythical bird, which is generally believed, among amaXhosa, to be used by witches in executing their duties. This mythical bird is generally believed to be used by female witches to harm, inflict some diseases to or kill their targets. The implied meaning of this metaphor is evident in the poem “‘Intak’ emlom’ ubomvu”, where the following is said about the subject:

1. Ngemikhwa yimpundulu,
 2. Ikhaba namawayo;
-
1. [By habits he is the lightning bird,
 2. He kicks even his own people.]
- (Burns-Ncamashe, 1979:33)

The above-mentioned poem is quite satirical in tone. In his analysis of the poem, Mdaka maintains that the person satirised was a leader in the then Ciskei homeland, but he (Mdaka) does not reveal the leader’s name, probably for fear of detention as the analysis was made during the apartheid and oppression regime, when freedom of speech was restricted in the country (Mdaka as quoted by Mtumane, 2001:240). Due to the leader’s unacceptable manner of ruling he is viewed as *impundulu* (the lightning bird). The use of *impundulu* to describe the habits indicates that the poet views this person as harmful as the practice of witchcraft is. This aspect of harmfulness is also evident in the stress on his inflicting pain on other creatures of the same species as himself: “he kicks even his own people” (*ikhaba namawayo*). The use of the word *ikhaba* (it kicks) further strengthens the idea that *impundulu*, in this context, is used to represent witchcraft. It is common among amaXhosa to hear people saying *ukhatywe yimpundulu* (he has been kicked by the lightning bird) when referring to someone who is seriously ill or has just died as a result of being bewitched.

Impundulu is believed to be non-selective in its actions. As witches are believed to harm even members of their own families, the actions of the lightning bird are also believed to be used against family members. The poet suggests this non-selective element of *impundulu* when he views the subject of the poem as kicking even his own people.

As *impundulu* is a mythic object that may not have actually been seen with the physical eye; it thus exists only in theory and its existence can not be proven in reality; its use is an instance of the poet's employment of abstract imagery. However, its use gives the reader, who understands the belief in witchcraft, an opportunity to associate the subject with the bird. Subsequently this association enables the reader to understand what the poet actually says about the subject, that is, he is harmful, dangerous and evil.

The use of metaphors from the *physical world* is evident when the poet uses a pillar as an image. The use of pillar as a metaphor is apparent in "Umntwana oyinkwenkwe" (Burns-Ncamashe, 1961:67, 68), where the poet refers to the boy as *intsika* (the pillar). By utilising the metaphor of a pillar he highlights the significance of boys in Xhosa society. *Intsika* (the pillar) is a pole that is used to support the roof of a hut and is normally made from a strong tree. Its metaphorical use to refer to a boy indicates how the latter is expected to be strong and supportive to his family and the nation, as confirmed by the words:

1. Kukukhuthal' ithemba ngaye,
 2. Athand' ukulima, athiy' ukulimaza.
 3. ...
 4. Axhas' izikolo, axhase nokholo,
-
1. [Hope about him lies in diligence,
 2. He should like cultivating, and abhor hurting,
 3. ...
 4. He should support schools, and support faith.]
- (Burns-Ncamashe, 1961:66)

Practising agriculture is a great support to one's family and nation, as it results in providing food for them. The poet's suggesting that the boy should like cultivating (the land), then, indicates how he is expected to support his family and the nation by planning to produce food. The support of schools and faith further indicates how the boy should contribute towards the uplifting of the nation and encourage religious activities in it. It is his involvement in these activities that will fulfil his being a pillar to his people.

As the pillar is a visible phenomenon, and the reader is able to create a mental picture of it, its use as an image is an instance of employing visual imagery. The reader's creation of the mental picture, together with his interpretation of the importance attached to the pillar, enables him to associate the metaphor's meaning with the boy. This association then gives the reader more insight into what the poet says about the boy.

5.2 Metaphors based on possessive construction

With metaphors based on possessive construction, Ntuli (1984:115) maintains that the possessee is usually a metaphorical attribute of the possessor. This is evident in the poem "Aa! Ngweyesizwe!", where the poet views Sebe as *inkomo kaSebe* (the cow of Sebe) (T(XH/94)84) as follows:

1. Nditsho kuwe *nkomo kaSebe* gqirh' eliyindoda lawaQelekequshe.
1. [I refer to you cow of Sebe, male diviner from Qelekaqushe.]

The poem in which this metaphor is found is about Lennox Sebe, who was president of the former Ciskei homeland. The word *inkomo* (a cow) is an attribute given to Sebe by the poet. By using this word the poet indicates the importance of the subject of praise to society. The identification of the subject with a cow stems from the fact that this animal has a specific symbolic meaning among the amaXhosa. Generally it symbolises the survival of the nation, unity, loyalty, neighbourliness, wealth and prosperity. In the poem cow functions as an image pointing to the importance of the subject in the survival of and loyalty to society. The milk and meat from a cow are used to feed people and the oxen are used to plough the fields. The cow is also slaughtered as a sacrifice to appease ancestral spirits. In this manner people benefit from a cow in many ways. It is for this reason that people from which the nation benefits are identified with a cow, as is the case with Sebe in the preceding excerpt. As Sebe was president of the former Ciskei homeland, people benefited from him; hence he is associated with a cow. The use of a cow is an instance of a visual metaphor as a cow is a visible object.

5.3 Metaphors based on the verb

With the use of metaphors based on verbs, Ntuli (1984:167) states that the verb may have an effect of inanimating the animate object or animating the inanimate one. Because of the controversial use of the terms animate and inanimate, it is preferred to refer to this kind of metaphor as humanising the non-human object or dehumanising

the human one. This kind of metaphor is apparent in “Umthomb’ onzulu wamanz’ olwazi”, where the poet says the following about Rhodes University:

1. Le yunivesithi inegama lenkomo kaRhodes,
 2. Imaz’ *abayisengayo* noko kudala yafayo.
1. [This university bears the name of the cow of Rhodes,
 2. The cow *they still milk* while it died long ago.]
- (Burns-Ncamashe, 1979:11)

The verb *abasayisengayo* (which they still milk) tends to de-humanise Rhodes, as he is described as a cow that is milked and not as a human being. However, the dehumanisation involved here has positive overtones, which are meant to emphasise Rhodes’s positive contribution to society, as milk is a nourishing liquid. To say that Rhodes is still milked reflects how the results of his efforts are still enjoyed, although he died long ago. In this way Rhodes is metaphorically associated with a cow. This is also clearly confirmed by the use of the word *imazi* (a cow), to refer to Rhodes with the verb. As a cow is a visible object, its use as an image in this instance is a case of visual imagery.

5.4 Metaphors based on nouns

Metaphor based on nouns, may utilise the names of animals or insects and plants. The use of *insect life* is evident in “UDavidson Mavuso”, where the poet refers to Mavuso as a mosquito in the following line:

1. *Ingcongcon’ ebalek’ imigxobhozo ...*
1. [*The mosquito* that runs away from bogs ...]
- (Burns-Ncamashe, 1961:109).

In the poem the poet praises Chief Mavuso, who was the chief of amaBhele in the Alice district. In the above-mentioned line the poet depicts the physical appearance of Mavuso by referring to him as “ingcongconi” (a mosquito). The mosquito is a long and thin-legged insect. Identifying Mavuso with the mosquito, therefore, indicates that he was a tall and thin person. This is further confirmed by the poet’s viewing him as “igxagx’ elixhongo bade” (The *tall-legged* uncouth one) later in the poem. This identification suggests the physical appearance of the subject of praise. As the mosquito is a visible insect, its use as an image in the poem is an instance of visual imagery.

The use of *plant* life is apparent in the unpublished poem “Aa! Dalubuhle!” where the poet depicts Chief Mhlambiso’s physical appearance by associating him with a tree.

Referring to Mhlambiso as a tree indicates how this plant is used as metaphor in that the metaphor serves as a description of Mhlambiso’s height – a tree is generally a tall plant. In the poem Mhlambiso is not just referred to as a tree but the tree of the Amatola forests. Forest trees are normally very tall – in particular the trees of the Amatola forests in the Eastern Cape are known because of their height. Therefore, by this metaphor the poet suggests that Mhlambiso was a tall figure; hence the use of the tree suggests his physical appearance. As the tree is a visible object, its use as a metaphor illustrates an instance of visual imagery.

Burns-Ncamashe’s skill in the use of metaphor is apparent in his employment of the different parts of speech such as copulatives, possessives, verbs and nouns, as discussed above. These different grammatical constructions enable the poetry to evoke different implied layers of meaning. The use of metaphor in Burns-Ncamashe’s poetry gives the reader a clearer understanding of the qualities of the person or object he is presented with in the poem. It also adds quality to the poetry and vivifies imagery.

The metaphorical images that are used by Burns-Ncamashe are mainly drawn from the animal, plant, mythical and physical worlds. The drawing of images from the animal world points to the poet’s profound knowledge of the qualities and usefulness of these animals. It also reflects his experience as a herd-boy in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape. This experience enabled him to apply the characteristics of animals to emphasise some aspects of his subjects. The inclusion of *impundulu* (lightning bird) which is a mythical object suggests the poet’s understanding of the belief system of his people.

6. Personification

Personification is a device that is commonly used by poets as a determinant of imagery. It is a figure of speech, which compares a non-human object or idea with a human being by endowing the former with some qualities of the latter. By attributing human qualities to non-human objects, these objects are impersonated or humanised (Hall, 1981:421; Cuddon, 1977:219). For instance, an animal may be given human attributes by being portrayed as speaking, as is generally the case with isiXhosa traditional literature.

Something that is not human is spoken of as though it is human. Personification is generally regarded as a type of metaphor, as it compares two distinct objects by giving one the qualities of the other (Scott, 1977:217; Ntuli, 1984:170). However, in this article, personification is discussed separately from metaphor as it serves a specific function – that of humanising non-human objects. This discussion will attempt to indicate how this device is used as being based on human features and actions.

The endowing of non-human objects with *human features* is apparent in the poem “Intak’ emlom’ ubomvu”, where the bird is described as:

1. Lixhonti ngeziqula.
1. [It has hairy strong legs.]
(Burns-Ncamashe, 1979:31).

The word “iziqula” (strong legs) is normally used to refer to the tough legs of a human being. A bird or animal is seldom referred to as having “iziqula”. Therefore, the description of the bird as having “iziqula” signifies how it is endowed with a human feature. This description also makes the reader suspect that, although the poem is about a bird, it is actually used to satirise a human being. As the word “iziqula” is generally used to refer to legs with strong calves, its use here suggests the strength of the satirised person.

The use of personification based on human *actions* is apparent in the poem “Aa! Velile!”, where the poet says the following to Velile:

1. *NeNtaba kaNdod’ ilindel’ ukukuncedisa,*
2. *NeNgxingxol’ ilindel’ ukukuncedisa.*
1. (Even *Ntaba KaNdoda* is waiting to give you assistance,
2. Even *Ngxingxolo* is waiting to give you assistance.)
(T(XH/90)317)

The poem from which these lines are drawn exhibits protest against the abuse and oppression of amaRharhabe by the modern political system. The poem also protests against the undermining of traditional leadership by the modern political system. An appeal is made to the late Chief Velile Sandile, who was the most important chief of amaRharhabe, to intervene by punishing the oppressors. That is why he depicts iNtaba kaNdoda and iNgxingxolo as waiting to assist him in punishing the oppressors. The images in these lines are drawn from the natural world, as iNtaba KaNdoda is a mountain,

where some of the former chiefs of amaRharhabe were buried. iNgxingxolo is a river, where Chief Gcaleka of amaXhosa is believed to have been called by being drowned (*wathwetyulwa*). Waiting to give assistance is normally expected of human beings. The references to a mountain and a river is indicative of how these objects are personified. Personification as applied in this poem seems to have an extended meaning, as the meaning does not end with these objects. One's awareness that iNtaba kaNdoda is where the bodies of the ancestors of amaRharhabe are lying and iNgxingxolo is where Gcaleka was drowned, assists one to understand that it is these ancestors, who are associated with these objects that the poet is actually referring to. The ancestors are used as images of those waiting to give assistance to Velile.

Burns-Ncamashe's art in the use of personification is apparent in his endowing non-human objects such as animals and natural phenomena with human attributes, as it is illustrated in the discussion above. This use of personification brings the personified objects closer to human beings as the former are made to share the same features and actions with the latter. The different aspects the poet considers in this personification bring some variety in his applying of the device.

7. Conclusion

This article has examined and indicated how Burns-Ncamashe uses simile, metaphor and personification as elements of imagery in his poetry. In using these devices he draws images from the natural, human, animal, plant, cosmic, mythical and physical worlds. The kinds of images he uses are visual and abstract. For personification the poet uses images based on human features and actions as well.

Burns-Ncamashe's artistic use of simile, metaphor and personification in his poetry adds to the high standard of the poetry. It also enhances the reader's understanding of the imagery employed in the poetry and, therefore, equips him with a better understanding of what the poet intended to express. Burns-Ncamashe's poetry is considered to be good poetry, as powerful and evocative imagery is a sign of good poetry. Burns-Ncamashe's ability to use different types of images, drawn from the natural, human, animal, plant, cosmic, mythical and physical worlds, illustrates his experience with these worlds. This imagery then gives his poetry lasting appeal. His use of visual imagery affords the reader the opportunity to make mental pictures of these images. The use of abstract imagery reveals the poet's skill in imagining objects that cannot be perceived

by one's senses and exist only in the imagination. His poetry indeed succeeds in fulfilling the functions of imaginative poetry.

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Tapes:

- T(XH/93)28 – see Burns-Ncamashe (1967).
 T(XH/90)317 – see Burns-Ncamashe (1990).
 T(XH/94)84 – see Burns-Ncamashe (1994).

Key concepts:

Burns-Ncamashe, S.M.

imagery: metaphor, simile, personification

imagery: nature of ... as used by Burns-Ncamashe

Kernbegrippe:

Burns-Ncamashe, S.M.

beeldspraak: aard van ... soos deur Burns-Ncamashe aangewend

beeldspraak: metafoor, vergelyking, beeldspraak