

IsiXhosa Written Poetry and the “Glasnost” Epoch: 1990-1994

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Summary

The central argument of this interdisciplinary article is that the “glasnost” context of the last phase of the Apartheid regime (1990-1994) had a profound impact on the content and form of isiXhosa written poetry. An analysis and interpretation of selected poems produced by writers of the period, namely Shasha, Xozwa and Mbelu, exposes that contestation at an ideological level permeated the cultural manifestations. The study exposes the state of the repressive state apparatus which was established for the control of the quality and quantity of literary production. Additionally the article argues that there are parallels between the Soviet Union glasnost and the South African “glasnost”, as writers of both communities recognised the power of poetry as a weapon for resistance to political repression and for advancing socio-political transformation.

Opsomming

Die sentrale argument van hierdie interdisciplinêre artikel is dat die “glasnost” konteks van die laaste fase van die apartheidsregime (1990-1994) 'n groot invloed op die inhoud en vorm van isiXhosa geskrewe poësie gehad het. 'n Ontleding en interpretasie van geselekteerde gedigte wat deur skrywers van die tydperk vervaardig is, naamlik Shasha, Xozwa en Mbelu, stel voor dat die betoging op ideologiese vlak die kulturele manifestasies deurdring het. Die studie stel die toestand van die onderdrukkende staatsapparaat bekend wat ingestel is vir die beheer van die gehalte en hoeveelheid literêre produksie. Daarbenewens beweer die artikel dat daar parallelle is tussen die Sowjet-Unie glasnost en die Suid-Afrikaanse glasnost, aangesien skrywers van albei gemeenskappe die mag van poësie as 'n wapen vir weerstand teen politieke onderdrukking herkenhet en om sosio-politieke transformasie te bevorder.

Introduction

Glasnost is a Russian word that means “openness”, which describes the policy or practice of a more open, consultative, and accountable government and wider dissemination of information which was initiated from 1985 by Mikhail Gorbachev, former leader of the Soviet Union (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/glasnost>). As a result of this policy of openness, scholars of Russian literature have interrogated the relationship between the

glasnost era and literature as attested to by Hutcheson (2016) in his paper, “Russian Poetry and Glasnost: A Case Study”:

During the four years since Mikhail Gorbachev became leader of the Soviet Union, introduced glasnost to the communist regime and initiated a wide ranging perestroika, there have been signs that the greatest change of the Soviet political climate since the 1917 revolution is having effect also in the **literary world** (my emphasis).

Adlam (2005) in the introduction to her book *Women in Russian Literature after Glasnost* also states that:

The **Russian literary world** was shaken by the wide-reaching reforms of the late Soviet period (1985-1991) and the Soviet Union subsequent collapse. During this period of transition there emerged a body of writings known as “**alternative**” literature, characterised by **thematic, structural** and **linguistic** transgression of both Soviet-era values and the enduring Russian tradition of civic engagement and moral edification through literature ... (my emphasis).

In line with the Russian history, the South African historians have dubbed the period 1990-1994 as the glasnost epoch. The period was introduced through the unbanning of political organisations by the president of South Africa, F.W. De Klerk, on 02 Feb 1990. Merrett (1994: 157) says:

It is generally accepted that February 1990 ushered in an era of “**glasnost**”, allowing a degree of freedom of expression absent from political life since the late 1950s (my emphasis).

Commenting on the glasnost period in South Africa, Satyo (1993: 88) in Kaschula (2008: 127) states:

It remains to be seen whether **glasnost**, South African style, is likely to have any significant effect on the **quality** and **nature** of literary output in Xhosa as well as other African languages (my emphasis).

Kaschula (2008: 125) takes the debate further and identifies the alluded to period, 1990 onwards, as the period of transformation:

Since 1990, the political changes brought about in South Africa have liberated not only the people of South Africa, but the authors as well, realizing literature to be an articulation of freedom and thereby restoring it as a symbol of nationhood. By implication, nationhood, identity and society in South Africa are based on the concept of transformation, rebirth and recreation.

The concerns and observations made by isiXhosa and Russian scholars of literature make the study of poetry of the South African “glasnost” period imperative. The vexing question is whether the adoption of the glasnost

concept by South African historians is in name only or it bears the features, characteristics and critical qualities belonging typically to the glasnost. To elaborate further the question is “Are there defining characteristics of the ‘glasnost’ epoch in South Africa, as a context of the cultural manifestations in general that have transformed the quality and nature of isiXhosa written poetry in particular?” This is a question that requires interrogation of literature of the period under review.

Against the foregoing context, the argument of my paper, therefore, is that the South African “glasnost” had an impact on literature in general and isiXhosa written poetry in particular. Evidence of the impact is found in the content and form of literature of this period. This leads to my second postulation that the Soviet thought of open discussion of political and social issues and freer dissemination of information, which carried on from 1985-1991, might have found its way to South Africa and influenced the thoughts of cultural activists, writers in particular, resulting in parallels between the Soviet glasnost poetry and the South African glasnost poetry of the period 1990-1994.

The structure of the article will be as follows: a brief outline of the history of South Africa which covers the period (1990-1994), will be followed by an analysis and interpretation of a sample of poetry texts that are coterminous or synchronous with the period under review. The repressive state apparatus of this last phase of Apartheid will be exposed. A brief survey of the discernible aesthetic ideology of this period will be followed by a conclusion that exposes the parallels between the Soviet and South African glasnost.

The South African “Glasnost” Era: 1990-1994

In 1989 President Botha was succeeded by F.W. de Klerk, who introduced a new cabinet and new leadership style. In October of the same year, eight long serving political prisoners were released and before the end of the year, the Separate Amenities Act, which barred Blacks from making use of facilities reserved for Whites, was repealed. On 2 February 1990 when parliament resumed after recess, President De Klerk unbanned all political organisations as reflected by O’Meara (1996: 404) that on 2 February 1990, President De Klerk made an announcement that changed the history of South Africa, that Nelson Mandela was to be released after 27 long years of incarceration in Robben Island, and political organisations which had waged the struggle for an end to apartheid: the African National Congress, the Pan African Congress, the South African Communist Party and United Democratic Front, were to be unbanned (O’Meara 1996: 404). The announcement presented a clear plan by government to enter into negotiations with the leadership of Blacks with the aim of developing a new constitution. The actual release of Mandela took place on 11 February 1990.

The changes that were introduced by government were welcomed by all except the Conservative Party (CP) and the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB). In May 1990 talks between the ANC and the government began with the purpose of levelling the playing fields for negotiations pertaining to the new constitution for the country. The talks were followed by important milestones which led to the historic elections on the 27 April 1994. The following are some of significant milestones (Omer-Cooper 1994: 245-246):

- Suspension of the armed struggle by liberation movements.
- End of traditional social segregation.

Legislative pillars of Apartheid were repealed (O'Meara 1996: 245-246):

- Group Areas' Act
- Population Registration Act
- Desegregation of Education

These steps resulted in the withdrawal of economic sanctions by the international community. The arts, culture and sport boycotts of South Africa were brought to an end. On 20 December 1991, the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) assembled at the World Trade Centre in Johannesburg. Mandela (1995: 712) says that CODESA "... represented the first formal negotiations forum between the government, the ANC and the other South African parties". A referendum was called by President De Klerk on 17 March 1992 to determine the future of constitutional negotiations. Government's support for continuation was overwhelming. Despite this, negative incidents also occurred during this period (O'Meara 1996: 411):

- The Boipatong Massacre on 17 June 1992 by Inkatha supporters which affected women and children (see Mandela 1995: 724).
- Massacre of ANC supporters in the Ciskei homeland by the Gqozo military government on 7 September 1992.
- Assassination of Chris Hani, the ANC/SACP leader (Mandela 1995: 728).

The announcement of the unbanning of political organisations in 1990 enabled the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and other political organisations to operate freely to re-organise itself inside the country. The PAC met the ANC in Harare, in 1991, where the two liberation movements agreed to cooperate¹. But later the PAC changed its approach and did not finalise and formalise its co-operation with the ANC, and subsequently did not participate

1. Nelson Mandela, in *Long Walk to freedom* (1995: 580) makes reference to feuding between members of PAC, ANC and BCM in some sections of Robben Island where they were all prisoners. These ideological contestations were amicably resolved.

in the activities of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) (Omer-Cooper 1994: 248). The military wing of the PAC, the African People’s Liberation Army (APLA), during the period 1992-1993 was accused of being responsible for some violent incidents that were targeting the white community.

In April 1993 the Multi-party Negotiation Forum (MPNP) resumed talks and worked hard towards a date for elections to the Constituent Assembly, which was agreed upon on 03 June 1993, as 27 April 1994 (Mandela 1995: 732). Nelson Mandela and F.W. De Klerk won the Nobel Peace Prize jointly in 1993. An interim constitution was drafted despite all challenges and resistance from former homeland leaders and the conservative parties. Preparations went on and elections were held on 27-29 April 1994. Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was inaugurated as the first State President of the new democratic South Africa on 10 May 1994. This is the context within which analysis and interpretation of the glasnost literature will be located.

The Repressive State Apparatuses

The ideological state apparatus which was created by the Apartheid government in 1948 still held its control, in terms of the law of the country, over production and distribution of cultural artefacts. Production of literature that would be prescribed in schools had to go through the Language Boards that were created in terms of the Bantu Education Act of 1953. The publication Act of 1974, according to the book, continued to ensure that the content of all publications in the country, including newspapers, was monitored by government. This included self-published and community published material. The motive was to ensure that the content of all published material does not contradict the dominant Apartheid ideology.

The publication Act 74 of 1974 closed all avenues for appeal to the Supreme Court and allowed the directorate of publications to ban items for possession (Merret 1994: 79). The directorate was accountable to government and politicians. In March 1977 possession of a copy of the freedom charter was banned. Though censorship focused more on literature written in English,² fear of censorship also restrained writers and poets who wrote in indigenous languages.

The nomination of De Klerk as President led to the unbanning of political organisations on 02 Feb 1990. The implications of this move in relation to the foregoing scenario were that:

2. Khayaletu Mqhayisa’s “Confused Mhlaba” was banned in the mid-seventies, Mthutuzeli Matshoba who wrote “Call me not a man” and Mirriam Tlali’s “Muriel at Metropolitan” were banned in 1979. See Merret (1994: 81).

- All political organizations proscribed under the Internal Security Act (ISA) were unbanned.
- All publications banned under Internal Security Act were unbanned.

However police held fast to some of the censorship state apparatus:

- Criminal Procedure Act (particularly Section 205)
- Publications Act remained firmly entrenched.

(Merret 1994: 170)

During the period 1990-1994 IsiXhosa written poetry was published through three or more avenues:

- Private Sector publishing houses. All had first to get the approval of the Language Boards of the Department of Education before publishing a manuscript for purposes of prescription in schools. However during this period the language boards were no longer in full control as they were before 1990.
- Newspapers which allowed creativity and independence of the author of the poem.
- Community publishers who gave the author freedom in terms of expression of his/her views and opinions. These works were not necessarily prescribed for schools that fall under the Department of Education.

The remaining censorship laws could not stop the winds of change in the publishing industry after 1990. Kaschula in *English in Africa* 35 No 1(2008: 123) observes:

The period saw the setting up of black-run printing presses such as Skotaville (with Muthobi Mutloatse as director), Vivlia and BARD publishers. The latter have in the 1990's published works by popular authors such as Welile Shasha In the 1990s, black directors ... began taking up positions in previously white-owned companies.

Kaschula's observation is supported. As shall be demonstrated in the analysed poems later, the Apartheid system was no longer effective after the 1990 unbanning. The Xhosa Language Board, the ideological state apparatus which was responsible for ensuring that the Apartheid ideology was not challenged throughout the third phase of Apartheid, met in Zwelitsha on 21 March 1990. In his opening remarks, the Acting Director-General of Education, said:³

3. Copy of speech in Xhosa Language Board Archives deposited on 29/03/1990 at the Centre for Xhosa Literature.

The year 1990 is internationally recognized as the year of the reader ... the Xhosa Language Board has from inception been associated with encouraging creative, imaginative writers of all ages to come to the fore. Throughout its existence it has been seeking to promote and maintain acceptable literary standards at all times. Perhaps one of the strategies this year could be the tapping of the vast, unfathomed, God given literary resources from talented writers to celebrate the event. Alternatively, it could be the encouragement of writers to produce Xhosa **literature suitable not only for use by scholars but also more diversified, sophisticated and adult geared literature for the general public**. This could also mean encouraging library facilities in the black residential areas, and so on (my emphasis).

This is evidence that the freedom of expression ushered in by the “glasnost” period had an impact on the Apartheid gatekeepers, as well, forcing them to pursue new developmental approaches as shall be shown in the analysis below.

Analysis And Interpretation Of Texts

Shasha, W. 1992. *Zihlabana nje ziyalamba* (They are goring each other because they are starving).

In his poem “*Zihlabana nje ziyalamba*” (They are goring each other because they are starving) Shasha says:

Govu! Bhokro-o-o zahlabana!	Govu! Bhokro-o-o they gore each other!
Kuhlaban' iinkomo zomthonyama!	Indigenous cattle gore one another!
Nazi iimazi zamasi!	Here are dairy cows!
Nazi iinkab' ezimaxhaka!	Here are round horned oxen!
Zivalelwe kuthango lwabathakathi!	Enclosed in the kraal of wizards!
Ingca ziyayiphoselwa	Grass is cut and thrown into the kraal
Kodw' uqaqaqa udlal' abantwana;	When there is plenty of grass where children play
Kusikwa ngerhengqe kuphoswe,	A circle is used to cut grass and throw it into the enclosure
Zilwe zona ngaloo nketshe-nketshe:	And the cattle fight about the small amount of grass
Bayahluth' abazisengayo,	Those who milk them have their stomachs full,
Basengel' eselweni nasemlonyeni,	They fill their calabashes and their mouths,
Kodwa abavumi kuzivulela;	But they refuse to allow them to the pastures;
Banya bethe qhutsu kuba ziyakhaba!	They milk into their mouths, cautiously, in fear of being kicked!

Bath' abakahluthi ngumphehluthi! ⁴	They complain that they are not yet full with the second milking!
Bekungasekho nempunde na Enokurholihlahl'ivul' isango?	Is there not a simple relic of the race To pull the shrubs and open the entrance?
Sakuyithi yasithi "Rolihlahla", ,Siphinde sithi kuye "Vulisango";	We shall name him "puller of the shrub" And again call him "opener of the entrance";
Zophuma zigramz' uqaqaqa:	They will exit and graze the green grass
Akusentsuku zatywa-a-ala!	It will happen very soon!
Nde-e gram-gram ndawudl' uqaqaqa!	I am grazing the green grass!
Zihlabana nje ziyalamba.	They gore each other because they are starving.

The stylistic approach of the poem seems to be impressive. The poet hides behind imagery, namely metaphors and similes to express the alternative ideology which was dominant in the eighties. The poem exhibits an inter-textual relationship with Jolobe's "*Ukwenziwa komkhonzi*" and Qangule's "*Inkabi kabawo*". The narrative uses similes of cattle that are kept in a kraal. They are fed with grass that is thrown into the kraal. Because it is insufficient the cattle start fighting and goring each other. The starving animals benefit the oppressors who milk them. The writer then calls for a person, who will take the risk, face the wrath of the oppressor, and save the cattle from incarceration and torture. The metaphor makes reference to the South African situation in the eighties, the cattle (animals) are African political parties. The owners who benefit from their milk are the Apartheid oppressors who benefit economically from the labour of the oppressed Africans. He then calls for a leader to pull away the shrub (enokurhol' ihlahla) from the entrance. This leader was Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela who was viewed as the saviour of the Africans who will, when he has overthrown the oppressive Apartheid government, be set free to enjoy the economic and social rights. This stylistic writing sought to diffuse the Charterist ideology of the African National Congress through the use of creative and metaphorical language that was intended to beat the censor and the apolitical reader. Shasha's stylistic aptitude is, therefore, commendable. The poem demonstrates how, during the glasnost, the interest of writers on political issues was aroused.

Shasha, in the second poem "*Sithi abothuthu*" (It is us who are the indigenous people), says:

4. Obviously a typographical error. Correct word is "Umphehlulu", milk obtained from a second milking after the calf has been permitted to suck a second time. See Kropt (1915: 327).

Kwaqhushumb' irhuluwa phesha kweLigwa, Zonk' iimbombo zomhlaba zanyikima!	Gun started blazing across the Orange River, All the corners of the world were shaken!
Sharpvile, VanderbylPark EO Orlando nakwaLanga; Atsho am a-Afrikaathi: Mabhulu ndini sifaken' ejele!	Sharpvile, Vanderbyl Park At Orlando and Langa All Africans say: Afrikaners take us into prison!
Nto zooKgosana zithethe kom' amathe, Zaqokotha zaqononondisa zigxininisisa; Zawaxelelis' amabhulu:	The sons of Kgosana spoke until their mouths ran dry, They spoke, explained and laid emphasis, And impressed upon the Afrikaners:
Poqo yavel'inyaniso:	Poqo! The truth popped out:
Sithi abothuthu migqakhwendini; Nina apha ningamaveza-ndlebe, Inini nezaphuselana zabancethe zibenu: Thina sizakunibonis' amaqhekez' engqele! Thina bomthonyama thinabe Afrika, Thinamz' oNtsundu sifung'izinyanya!	We are the indigenous, you illegitimate children; You here are illegitimate parents, You and your annoying surrogates: We are going to show you wonders! We the indigenous we Africans, We Blacks, are appealing to our ancestors!
Umhlaba lo sikuwo wona ngowethu; I-Afrika iyonke ililizwe lethu: Sithi abothuthu sithi abomthonyama.	The land that we occupy belongs to us; The entire Africa is our land: We are the indigenous, the ones with a birth right
Ilizwe lethu asinakungalikhaleli, Xa silibona selingasekho zandleni zethu! Xhwenene amaxhwili adakumba,	We have to cry for our land When we have suddenly lost ownership. The wild dogs were convulsed grievously, dejected,
Kanti acinga okunye ukungcola: Ngxemdak' onomkhitha,	Contemplating another evil action: I beg your pardon comely Black person:
Ngxe Mangaliso, ngxe Leballo; Ngxe Mthopeng, Ngxe Makwetu;	I beg your pardon Mangaliso, I beg your pardon Leballo; I beg your pardon Mthopeng I beg your pardon Makwetu:

Sitshutshiswe sonke ngalamaxhwili,	We were all persecuted by these wild dogs.
Sicudiswe sonke ngalamaxelegu;	We were all oppressed by these slovenly persons;
Iminyaka eniyichithe esiQithini, Ayichithakelanga lize!	The years you spent at the Island, Was not in vain!
Yiyo igalelo kwisivivana soluntu,	It is a contribution to the milestone of humanity,
Yiyo ixabiso lokutheng'inkululeko!	It was the price to be paid for freedom:

(The literal translation of this poem is intended to enhance understanding of analysis and interpretation)

The poem was probably produced after the unbanning of political organizations that fought aggressively against the Apartheid ideology. It reflects on the unfortunate historic events, namely: The Sharpeville (21 March 1960), Van der Bijl Park (16 July 199), Orlando (16 June 1976) and Langa Massacres (21 March 1985) that were carried out by the repressive Apartheid government. In all the massacres unarmed protesters were shot at and killed by heavily armed police. It extols the leaders of the Pan Africanist Congress, namely: Kgosana, Mangaliso Sobukwe, Leballo, Zeph Mthopeng and Clarence Makwetu. The above are leaders of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) who led resistance to the racial Apartheid government. The naming of the leaders can be taken as evidence of the fact that the poem was written after the unbanning of the liberation movements, as the names of banned persons could not be mentioned before the unbanning of 1990. This is also evidence of the interest in political discourse that was stimulated by the glasnost. Tabu's (2007: 89) analysis of the poem focuses on the form / structure. She quotes the following lines from the poem to demonstrate Shasha's effective use of parallelism:

Ngxe Mangaliso, ngxe Leballo;	I beg your pardon Mangaliso, I beg your pardon Leballo;
Ngxe Mthopeng, Ngxe Makwetu;	I beg your pardon Mthopeng I beg your pardon Makwetu;

Tabu (2007: 89) says:

In the above parallelism, the word *ngxe* (be appeased) appears in a corresponding position in both lines. This repetition is aimed at calming the wrath of the elders such as Mangaliso, Mthopeng, Leballo and Makwetu. These figures are begged to be appeased for having spent years in prison, detained for their ideas to have black people liberated in South Africa. This

request for them to be appeased is because their spending years in prison was not in vain, as black people have ultimately been liberated from the oppression of the white man. Although the words Mangaliso and Mthopeng on the one hand, Leballo and Makwetu on the other, which are corresponding pairs, are different, they somehow bring the same idea, as they are all proper nouns referring to leaders of the political struggle in South Africa.

This study concurs with Tabu (2007: 5) that “Shasha makes extensive use of stylistic techniques, which form a significant part of the characteristics of his poetry”. The study, however, goes further to argue for an indepth study of the content and the context of Shasha’s poetry. In Shasha’s poem, the fundamental tenet of Pan Africanism, the land question, is emphasised by the claim to the entire African soil, “*IAfrika yonke lilizwe lethu*”. The claim that the Africans are the only indigenous people of Africa, who are the only true owners of the land reverberates the ideology of the Pan Africanist Congress. According to the basic documents of the Pan Africanist Congress (1990: 5), on 02 November 1958, the “Africanists” (meaning PAC members) declared themselves as the custodians of African Nationalism and Africanism. On 6 April 1959, the Pan Africanist Congress was born. Gerhart (Ibid: 13) explains the ideology of the Pan Africanist Congress as follows:

Orthodox African nationalism (which is sometimes called “exclusivist nationalism”) defines South Africa as a country belonging to Africans by right of first possession, and on the ground that they are the great majority of the population. To the orthodox nationalist, the white man is a guest in the African house and should be permitted to remain in Africa on terms set down by his indigenous hosts. Democracy is defined as a majority rule Turning from ends to means, orthodox nationalism rejects alliances with anti-apartheid whites

This means that Africa is for Africans because they are the majority and as indigenous people they are the rightful owners of the land in South Africa. However the PAC maintains that Europeans and Asiatics are not excluded by the definition of the African. If they acknowledge the fact that Africans, who are the indigenous people, have the right to govern, and demonstrate respect for them, then they qualify to be “Africans” and enjoy all fundamental human rights.

In Shasha’s poem, the claim to ownership of Africa is stylistically conjured up in the line “*Poqo! Yavel’inyaniso*”. “Poqo” is a name that was given to the liberation army of the PAC. Tabu (2007: 59-60) says that Shasha uses the ideophone “*Poqo*” to “... portray a situation where something comes out clearly. The poet uses it to signify how people like Kgosani told the white people clearly that the black people are the owners of South Africa while the white people are foreigners. Shasha presents a situation where this truth came out very clearly (poqo) as the white people were given a straight talk openly”.

The historian, Lodge (1990: 241), concurs when he provides an etymology of the word “*Poqo*”:

The word “Poqo” is a Xhosa expression meaning “alone” or “pure” The word was used sometimes in the Western Cape in 1960 by PAC spokesmen to describe the character of their organization in contrast to the multiracial dimension of the Congress Alliance Poqo was the first African political movement in South Africa to adopt a strategy that explicitly involved killing people and it was probably the largest active clandestine organization of the 1960s.

Thus, in answering the question, “who are Africanists?” Sobukwe, in *The Africanist* of January 1959, replied:

A simple answer would be that they are the members of the Africanist Movement. But, if one wishes to go deeper into the question, one would say that they are those Africans who believe that African Nationalism is the only liberatory outlook that can bind together the African masses by providing them with a loyalty higher than that of the tribe and thus mould them into militant disciplined fighting force (Karis & Carter 1977a: 506).

Sobukwe went on to state that:

We wish to emphasise that the freedom of the African means the Freedom of all in South Africa, the Europeans included, because only the African can guarantee the establishment of a genuine democracy in which all men will be citizens of a common state and will live and be governed as individuals and not as distinctive sectional groups.

(Karis & Carter 1977a: 575-576)

It is against this background that the study argues that Shasha’s poem is informed by the ideology of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and therefore reflects the fundamental tenets of the ideology. The researcher also argues that the glasnost environment allowed Shasha to publish this poem which has political overtones that explicitly disseminates the PAC ideology. Shasha therefore was able to freely express his political views and mention names of previously banned political activists.

Xozwa in Mtuze, P.T. and Kaschula, R.H. (1993). *Izibongo Zomthonyama (Indegenous Petry)*.

Xozwa, in “*Inkunzi yakuthi eQunu iphumile eskiti*” (The bull of my village, Qunu, is back from empoundment), declaims:

<p>Vukani bafazi bama-Africa, niyiyizele, nitshayebele, nehlis'izikhaka Ke nina makwedini akulo Jonguhlanga kaDalindyebo, Likhaliseni ibhelempe. Umbiko mawucangath' iintaba, ukunqol'imimango ukuhlanganis'usapho, lwendlw' emnyama oluselubhacweni phesheya naphonshono kweZambesi. Xeelan' umfokaThambo eLusaka nith' uphuncule uRholihlahla kaMandela.⁵ Nixelele uBiko emangcwabeni, ukuba inkunz' aseQunu kwesikaBhalizulu ifikile ekhaya!! kwasiphuk'izicithi Kwavuk' uthuli olungumpongampo eSharpeville, nqanda mfana kaVoster.</p>	<p>Wake up women of Africans, and ululate, dance, and put on your cow hide skirts. You young men of the house of Jonguhlanga of Dalindyebo, blow the horn. The announcement must cross the mountains and reach out to land ridges to bring together, the Blacks that are in exile this side and the other side of Zambezi River, Tell the son of Tambo in Lusaka that Rolihlahla of Mandela has set himself free. Tell Biko in his grave, that the bull of Qunu in the land of Bhalizulu has arrived at his home!! tall grass were pulled out. Thick dust was raised and it flew at Sharpeville, son of Vorster stop this carnage.</p>
<p>Atsho ama-Afrika azithwal' Ezoncwadizengcinezelo ezithob' isidima, Sendlw' emnyama, ipasile zibhanxa nezihiba, ngabula madlagusha..</p>	<p>The Africans subsequently carried those books of oppression that lower the dignity of the Black People, the pass of fools and the mad ones according to the Whites</p>
<p>Wanyuk' umsi wezoncwadi zocalucalulo eSharpeville, Ngangowedini. Wenyuk' umsi werhuluwa yeBhulu Kukugeqeka kwezidumbu zedini lamadini, Esimkalooma-Afrika ukubheka ekhaya.</p>	<p>The smoke of those books of segregation went up at Sharpeville, as high as that of a sacrifice. The smoke of the guns of Boers went up while corpses of the greatest sacrifice laid still. And those Africans departed for the home.</p>

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5. Other writers who celebrate Mandela's release are:
- Mtuze, (1990) in *Izibongo zomthonyana* (1993)
 - Sithole (1990) in *Izibongo zomthonyama* (1993)
 - Also Kaschula (1995) *Mandela Comes Home: The poets perspective*, in *Oral Tradition* 10/1 (1995: 91-110).

Zintantazel' iinto zakuloBhota Ukuyakucel' uncedo Phesheya kwezilwandle, Zasuka zabuya nembande yesikhova, nothuthuva lokrwitsho ngee <i>Sanctions</i> ; Yab'into kaTutu noBoesak zibil' amabunzi, zisithi malikrwitshwe;	The compatriots of Botha went overseas to seek help, They came back empty handed, only imposition of sanctions; The son of Tutu and Boesak were sweating calling for sanctions to be imposed;
Ukuze zivul' iingcango kuphum' Amabanjwaezopolitiko Azizinxebenxebe amadoda ephelelwe ziijoyini Nemisebenzi ngenxa yepolitiki. Kugqalw' indlela yokubuyel' ekhaya. Ide yaphuma loo nkunzi kaBhalizulu lade lasake nezulu! Kub`umfana kaDe Klerk uyewayidel' imithetho Yamawabo kuba ayiyoyezulu.	This resulted in doors being opened and political prisoners released. Men are in a desperate situation without work in the mines and elsewhere due to the political situation The road leading home being constructed. At last the bull of Bhalizulu came out and the heavens cleared! Because the son of De Klerk bent the laws of his people as it is not the laws of the Heavens.

This narrative poem celebrates the release of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela from twenty seven year's incarceration in Robben Island. The first person to be briefed about the release of "the Bull" (Mandela) is O.R. Tambo⁶ in exile in Lusaka. The poet also would like Steve Bantu Biko, the martyr of the Black consciousness Movement, to also be told of his release. Mandela is presented not only as a South African leader, but as an African leader whose release should bring joy to all Africans. His release is also presented as result of fruits of struggles by not only South Africans, but other African countries. The poet reiterates the struggles of African people for liberation, which invited the wrath and might of the Apartheid leaders. The struggle for independence resulted in the Sharpeville massacre, the burning of passes, and murders of protestors by the Apartheid police. He recalls the efforts of Prime Minister Botha to get international support for Apartheid which failed, leading to the

6. This might be recognition of O.R. Tambo's role in the demise of the Apartheid ideology. Read the speeches of O.R. Tambo in *Oliver Tambo speaks*, particularly "Make South Africa ungovernable" delivered at the Second National Consultative Conference in Lusaka on 16-23 June 1985.

implementation of economic sanctions against South Africa. He acknowledges the role played by Bishop Tutu, Dr Allan Boesak and the United Democratic Front in the eighties. The poet acknowledges the role of F.W. De Klerk, who took the courageous decision to release political prisoners, against the will of some of his members of the Afrikaner community. Xozwa did not delay celebrating the freedom brought about by President De Klerk’s announcement of 2 February 1990. Merrett says about this normalisation of political process in South Africa:

All 32 organisations adhering to various ideologies ranging from Marxist through the Congress movement to Africanist, proscribed under the internal security Act (ISA) were unbanned (1994: 157). Political prisoners convicted of membership and promotion of the aims of formerly banned organizations were made eligible for release.

By calling Mandela the “Bull of Qunu”, Xozwa Portrays Mandela as a symbol of leadership. The same image is used by Jolobe, Qangule and other isiXhosa poets, as a metaphor of a fighter and a leader. An understanding of symbolism will enhance our understanding of Xozwa’s poem. Chadwick (1971: 2-3) defines symbolism as:

... the art of expressing ideas and emotions not by describing the directly, nor by defining them through overt comparisons with concrete images, but by suggesting what these ideas and emotions are, by recreating them in the mind of the reader through the use of unexplained symbols.

The bull symbol also represents physical strength and power. It represents manliness (masculinity) and confidence. These are based on the bull’s massive physical stature. Use of the bull symbol demonstrates that the poet has a high regard and respect for Mandela as a leader and a symbol of freedom for black people.

The changes that were ushered in by the De Klerk government during the “glasnost” created a favourable environment for Xozwa to also freely extol his hero, Mandela.

Xozwa, in the poem “*Lala koo yihlo nawe ke Apartheid*” (Sleep in the land of your forebears you, as well, Apartheid), says:

Lala ke Apartheid, lala ntondini yakulo
Verwoerd emabalabala ngokwengwe.

Ewe ke mawethu lingatshoni’ ilanga
ndibalisa
Ngale ngxilimbela.
Izigilile ke izigede, yashiyek’ imizi
yemfundo

Sleep Apartheid, you who
belongs to Verwoerd, who
is sported with many
colours like a leopard/tiger.
Compatriots I can narrate
stories until sunset
about this giant.
It has caused a lot of
damage, and left education

Nomphangelo iziingqenge⁷.

Yagcwal' imizi yeentilongo,
aphuphuma amaziko
engcinezelo.

.....
XeTelani izizwe kuba umfana kaDe
Klerk ude yena wayosela.
Uyigwaz' ephinda-phinda de
wayichane siinqolomeni.
Mhl' ekhupha okaMandela eziseleni
emgxagxazelisa,
wayihlab' eluvalweni.
Mhl' echith' imithetho eval' imilomo
yoonozikhalazo
wayiqhokr'emadolweni

Ude ekugqibeleni wabhangis'
imithetho yokubhaliswa
Kwabantu ngebala
Uye wayicima amehlo mhl' evuma
ukuhlala
Nesininzi kwisithebe sengxoxo.
Kungoku njesijonge enkalweni,
Ukuxelwa
Kosuku lomgcwabo.

Silindele kuni mfana kaDe Klerk
nisixelel' imini yomngcwabo,

.....
Sebengxangile abashumayeli abakhulu
bokubamb' imilindelo.
Iinto zooSisulu, ooHani, ooMbeki,
nooJordan,
sebeman'ukufunda *iFreedom Charter*.

Kuba kaloku baqhel' ukushumayela
besazis' umzi nge*Freedom Charter*.

Silinde loo mini inkulu imini ye
interim government.

centres and workplaces
destroyed or being in ruins.
Prisons were filled to their
capacity; agents/ centres of
repression were overflowing.

.....
Tell the world that the son of De
Klerk has stabbed it to death.
He stabbed it repeatedly
until he hit the spinal cord.
On the day of his release of
Mandela from prison,
he stabbed it at the heart
When he unbanned the liberation
movements he hit it on the knees,

The last step was to repeal
legislation of registration
of people according to their race
He closed its eyes when he
agreed to sit around negotiations
with the majority representatives
Today we are looking forward to
the announcement
of the date of the funeral.

We are waiting for your nokaMandela
announcement, sons of De Klerk
and Mandela, of the date of the
funeral.

.....
The preachers are on standby ready
to conduct the night vigil.
The sons of Sisulu, Hani, Mbeki,
Jordan are
already reading the Freedom
charter.

For they are used to preaching,
teaching the communities about the
freedom Charter.

We are waiting for the day of
the interim government.

7. Reminder of the closing of historic missionary institutions like Lovedale, Healdtown, St Mathews, and the closing of industries as a result of disinvestment in South Africa.

<p>Kungaloo mhla ekuya kucwangciswa ngayo Ukukhululwa kwezila.</p>	<p>It is on that day that arrangements will be made for The termination of the mourning period.</p>
<p>Sikhululwa ngaloo madoda ayakuphathiswa itheko le <i>Constituent Assembly</i> Ukuze nathi singene kuMzantsi Africa Omtsha ongasenamzabalazo. Kuba kaloku iyakuba ingasekho loo Nkosi yayinyanzela ukuba sizabalaze. Koba kupheth' umasifane, masilingane, Ukuze singaphinde sizabalaze.</p>	<p>When the men who will lead the Constituent Assembly will assume duties For us also to enter the new South Africa without struggles. For the chief that forced us to struggle will be non-existent. For equality, equity, will be the order of the day eliminating the need for further struggles (political).</p>

Xozwa celebrates the demise of the Apartheid ideology which was the brainchild of Dr H.F. Verwoerd. He is pained by the devastation and the negative impact of the repressive state apparatus during this reign of terror of the Apartheid regime. He presents F.W. De Klerk as the hero who, at last, managed to stab the metaphorical ogre of Apartheid to death. The wound became fatal when he released Mandela from prison and repealed the pieces of legislation that proscribed political organisations and banned the leadership of the alternative ideologies.

The unbanning of political organisations and leaders allows him to mention the names of Walter Sisulu, Chris Hani, Thabo Mbeki, Pallo Jordan, and Nelson Mandela, which could not appear in internally published literature before 1990. After 1990 “the names of all those detained in the past under prolonged preventive detention, banned as exiles, and listed as communists were removed” (Merret 1994: 157). The Freedom Charter⁸ which was a banned document was brought to the consciousness of South Africans. Xozwa demonstrates an insight and interest in the post unbanning negotiations for a democratic government. He looks forward to the interim government and constituent assembly, which were symbols of a new South Africa.

The argument of this study is that Xozwa through this poem is celebrating the demise of the Apartheid discourse which entails the demise of the discourse of racism, and introduces the reader to the discourse of non-racism and the new South Africa. He says “*Koba kupheth' umasifane, masilingane ...*” which speaks of non-racialism and equality of all. Non-racialism and equality are presented as the staples that will lead towards building of one

8. In 1977 possession of a copy of the Freedom Charter was banned. Before 1990 the mere mention of the Freedom Charter constituted a reason for prosecution, conviction and or imprisonment.

nation, democracy and an end to material inequalities. Xozwa exposes the evils of Apartheid, and enhances the desirability of a new democratic social order. This strategy was deployed by Gorbachev's glasnost policy. Service (2007: 450) says:

With his policy of glasnost he encouraged the exposure of horrors of the Stalin years; he also directed a spotlight at the 'period of stagnation' under Brezhnev. If reform was to succeed, Soviet people had to be convinced of its **desirability** (My emphasis).

The argument submitted, therefore, is that the two poems by Xozwa exploit the new environment of unbanning and subsequent freedom of speech, by bringing to the centre the champion of the struggle for liberation, Nelson Mandela, exposing the evils of the Apartheid ideology, and emphasising the desirability of democracy.

Mbelu, S.C. (1994). *Iqwili⁹ lesizwe (The Medicinal Plant of the Nation)*

In the poem "*Ukhongolozii!*" (The African National Congress) Mbelu says:

Yinkongolo yama-Afrika jikelele,	It is the Congress of the Africans in general,
Ibiza wonk' uban' ayinamkhethe,	It invites everyone, it does not discriminate,
Ithi wen' ucinezelweyo wamkelekile,	It says you who are oppressed, you are welcome,
Ithi yiza sizabalezel' inkululeko,	It says come and let us struggle for liberation,
Indal' indodan' inenkqayi,	The man is old and has grown bald,
Indala ngamava nobuchwepheshe	Old in terms of experience and expertise!
Uzifunel' amahlakani kwakubanzim' uKhongolozii,	When it became difficult Congress looked for friends
Wanomhlob' ongu-UDF	He had a friend whose name was UDF
igama lenkobe;	He had a friend, the Communist
Kanjalo wanehlakani laMakomanisi,	He did as such with the workers
Wenza kanjalo nakwezabasebenzi;	

9. *Iqwili* is a medicinal plant, kalmos or sweet rush *alepidea amatymbica*, used for stomach disorders (Kropf 1915: 367).

Uzifunel’ iphiko lomkhos’ uKhongolozi,	The Congress founded a military wing
Ngowe – 1961 siwubonil’ usim’ uMkhonto Wesizwe! Ewe! Uwunisil’ uMkhonto Wesizw’ uKhongolozi,	In 1961 the MkhontoWesizwe was established! Yes the Congress established the Military wing,
Phantsi kweemekw’ ezinzim’ evalw’ umlomo, Lavela lon’ uncedo kumazw’ angaphandle;	Under difficult circumstances, being banned, Support came from foreign countries
Salufuman’ uncedo kumzi waseRussia, Usiqeqeshel’ amajoni ethukanene, Wasinik’ izixhob’ esithi phambili!	We received support from Russia A country that trained our soldiers well, And gave us weapons saying go forward!
Kunamhl’ uKhongoloz’ uvunywa lihlabathi; Kunamhl’ ilizwe lithi yiza nenkululekoKhongolozi, Uth’ uKhongolozi sekumnyam’ entla iyeza, Kusina litshisa izakulal’ ekhay’ eMzants’ Afrika,	Today the Congress is recognised internationally, Today the world says bring forth freedom, Congress The congress says, it is definitely coming, Rains and scotching sun will not stop its being brought home, to South Africa,
Abacinezeli sobasuk’ okwentambo zenkomo, Bazakuthamba benze okufunekayo nokuyiyo!	The oppressors will be softened like cowhide thongs, They will be softened and do what is desirable and appropriate!

The freedom from censorship which started during the glasnost period of unbanning of political organisations created space for IsiXhosa poets to educate the readers about their political organisations. Mbelu’s “Ukhongolosi” (The African National Congress) is a typical example of an attempt to educate the younger generation about the African National Congress. In the first stanza, he emphasises the character of the African National Congress as “a national liberation movement” whose membership “is open to all South Africans irrespective of race, colour and creed who accepts its principles, policies and programmes”. The second, third and the fourth stanza provides the history of the ANC from its establishment in 1912 to the eighties. Some leaders who played a significant role in struggle against Apartheid are mentioned: Lembede, Mathews, and Luthuli.

In the poem, it is also reflected that the banning of the ANC in 1960 led to the formation of uMkhonto we Sizwe, a military wing that was meant to engage in war to liberate the African people. The eighties also saw the establishment of the internal wing of the banned African National Congress, the United Democratic Front. Mbelu concludes the last stanza by emphasising the international acceptance and recognition of the ANC which makes him confident that the organisation will bring forth the freedom that the people of South Africa are aspiring for, thereby overcoming the Apartheid ideology. Mbelu makes specific mention of assistance received by the freedom fighters from Russia, in the form of military training and provision of weapons. He mentions the encouragement from Russia for Africans to carry on the struggle for liberation.

The significance of Mbelu's historic poem is its contribution to South Africa's "collective memory". It demonstrates the significance of the attempt to find answers to the demands of the present situation. About the significance of the knowledge of history Stolten in Stolten (2007: 6) says:

Knowledge of history helps to shape qualities of imagination, sensitivity, balance, accuracy, and discriminating judgement and provides multiple perspectives on how various elements have come together to create a society or to build a nation.

Mbelu's knowledge of the history of the African National Congress exposes us to how this national liberation movement has over the years struggled to create a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society or nation. This knowledge could only be imparted in a conducive environment of the glasnost era.

Aesthetics of the Glasnost Era

What is most remarkable about the poets of the glasnost period is their move away from the Western Victorian aesthetics. The reductive effect of an aesthetic that is not compatible with the content of a poem cannot be over emphasised. The majority of isiXhosa poets of this period seem to have realised the strangulating effects of this western technique and discarded it in favour of free verse. The immediacy of the experience that isiXhosa poetry writers of the glasnost phase dealt with; and the urgency of their socio-politico-economic oriented message might have been the motivation behind preference of the indigenous model. Their revolutionary content which yearns for change, condemns injustice and oppression and demands fundamental human rights, might have influenced their choice of techniques that derive from African oral traditions. A significant outcome of this aesthetic ideology is freedom from the extraneous constraints, and unearthing of creativity and innovation.

Fresh and original imagery is also the hallmark of the poetry of the glasnost phase in its expression of the atrocities of the Apartheid epoch. The freedom of expression, ushered in by the “glasnost” era also impacted on the diction of theisiXhosa written poetry. The style of Shasha’s first poem “*Zihlabana nje ziyalamba*” (They are goring each other because they are starving) demonstrates how poets articulate their political content through employment of imagery, thereby evading the censor and the apolitical reader. The second poem “*Sithi abothuthu*” (It is us who are the indigenous people) demonstrates how freedom of expression allows the poet to articulate his political message, but tends to be more prosaic than poetic. This tendency reduces the quality of the poem. The glasnost milieu provided sufficient space for writers to produce content that is reflective of the harsh realities on the ground. For example, Shasha’s political content is expressed through a harsh diction. Shasha, in “*Sithi abothuthu*”(It is us who are the indigenous people), says:

Sithi abothuthu migqakhwendini ;	We are the indigenous, you illegitimate children;
Nina apha ningamaveza-ndlebe ,	You here are illegitimate parents ,
.....
Inini nezaphuselana zabancethezi benu:	You and your annoying surrogates
Thina sizakunibonis’ amaqhekez’ engqe!	We are going to show you wonders!
.....
Sitshutshiswe sonke ngalam amaxhwili ,	We were all persecuted by these wild dogs.
Sicudiswe sonke ngala maxelegu ;	We were all oppressed by these slovenly persons;
.....
Xhwenene amaxhwili adakumba,	The wild dogs were convulsed grievously, dejected,
Kanti acinga okunye ukungcola :	Contemplating another evil action

Shasha, in this poem, attempts to capture the hardline stance of the Pan Africanist Congress ideology in the early nineties. The brief history provided in this paper has exposed that PAC refused to participate in the negotiation process. Shasha’s diction in this poem reflects the radical political stance of the PAC, through the use of the words such as “*migqakhwendini, ningamaveza-ndlebe, amaxhwili, amaxelegu*” (illegitimate children, illegitimate parents, wild dogs, slovenly persons). The words used by Shasha are used in situations of anger and at the height of emotions. Under normal circumstances euphemism would be used to avoid their use as they are perceived to be insulting, impudent, contemptuously impertinent or disrespectful. Bolinger (1980) informs us that “language is not a neutral instrument. It is a thousand ways biased”. To elaborate on this point he explains the meaning of the word “Political Correctness” which describes “...

language, ideas, policies or behaviour seen as seeking to minimize offence to gender, racial, cultural, disabled, aged or other identity groups. Conversely, the term “politically incorrect” is used to refer to language or ideas that may cause offence or that are unconstrained by orthodoxy” (Bolinger1980). In terms of Bolinger’s observation Shasha’s diction might be said to be politically incorrect.

Worth noting in Xozwa’s poems “*Inkunzi yakuthi eQunu*” ... (Our bull from Qunu ...) and “*Lala kooyihlo nawe ke Apartheid*” (Sleep in the land of your forbears Apartheid), is his choice of writing techniques deriving from the African oral poetry. Also interesting is his use of code-mixing, i.e. the intrasentential mixing of linguistic units, words, from English grammatical system and IsiXhosa grammatical system within one line of a stanza. The socio-psychological motivation behind this stylistic device might be demonstration of equality and acceptability of the languages used. The reviewers of the manuscript accepted this. Xozwa seems to subscribe to the principle of multilingualism which was advanced by the 1993 interim constitution, and would later be aggressively promoted by the language policy of the democratic South Africa. A challenge to this view might be that he is denying the isiXhosa language growth of its terminology, professionalisation and intellectualisation.

Conclusion

The article concludes that the “glasnost” period of the last phase of the Apartheid regime, had an impact on isiXhosa written poetry. The contestation at an ideological level, during this period, was between the Apartheid ideology, which was the ideology of the ruling class (Class is used here in a sense that transcends skin pigmentation, as the restructured apartheid system co-opted some blacks into its ranks) and the Charterist ideology, which was espoused by the African National Congress through the United Democratic Front, and the alternative ideology of the subordinate class (Here also class is used in a sense that transcends colour, as this ideology propounded non-racialism and non-sexism). The Pan Africanism ideology also re-emerged in IsiXhosa literature during the “glasnost” period. The contestation at a political level permeated the cultural manifestations of the period under review. The argument of this paper is that the glasnost ambience created space for writers to create a **content** that reflected the reality in South Africa at the time. This characteristic is one of the critical yardsticks for measuring the quality of poetry of the glasnost period. Nkosi’s (1981: 169) concurs with our view when he says that “in Africa as elsewhere the development of poetry is closely bound up with the social, economic and political development of society”.

The censorship mechanism of the Apartheid regime seems to have lost its firm grip of the previous two decades as isiXhosa poets emerged one after

another extolling the ideologies of the formerly banned alternative Charterist and Africanist movements (e.g. Mandela, Tambo, Sisulu, Sobukwe, Mthembu, et al). It is interesting to note the re-emergence of the Pan Africanism discourse of the PAC during this post unbanning period through Shasha’s poem titled “*Sithi abothuthu*” (It is us who are the indigenous people).

Both the Soviet and South African society recognised the power of poetry as a political weapon. The pre-glasnost period in both countries was a period of suppression, banning, exile, and intolerance to poets who resisted the dominant ideology and their poetry. The atmosphere of the glasnost brought an end to victimisation of both oral and pen poets. Hutcheson (2016) says about the Soviet Union:

One does not have to rummage deep into the history of Russian literature from its beginnings in the late 18th century until the present day to uncover too many instances of poets being victimised by the authorities.

He mentions names of Russian poets who experienced difficulties with authorities: Pushkin, Lermontov, Gumilyov, Mandelshtam, Tsvetayeva et al. In the South African situation, and isiXhosa poetry in particular Kaschula (2008: 129) says:

There are also clear examples presented in Opland (Opland 1983: 266-268), where oral poets such as Qangule were harassed and ultimately forced into exile for their anti homeland statements. Sithole himself “rolled up his skins” during the Apartheid years to re-emerge as Nelson Mandela’s first imbongi in the Transkei region after Mandela’s release from prison in 1990 (Kaschula 2002).¹⁰

To this list we may add Mbutuma, the poet of King Sabata Dalindyebo and the author of “*Isife somzi*”, a collection of poems. He was interrogated and detained by the security system. This leads to a second finding of this study that there are **parallels between Soviet glasnost and South African glasnost**. The Soviet thought of open discussion of political and social issues and freer dissemination of information might have found its way to and from South Africa and influenced the thoughts of cultural activists, poets in particular. Mbelu’s poem makes reference to assistance provided by Russia in the form of military training and provision of military weapons. I therefore conclude by emphasising that the South African “glasnost”, had an impact on literature in general and isiXhosa written poetry in particular as shown above.

10. Qangule and Sithole are both oral and pen poets.

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