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“I will not speak’: the socio- political in the music of Albert Nyathi”

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts.

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Abstract

The thesis analyses the music of Albert Nyathi to ascertain how he uses the medium of music to engage with the socio- political issues in Zimbabwe. Using theories of popular culture and popular music, the paper examines how Nyathi uses music for the purpose of communicating his sentiments about the challenges facing the country. The songs to be analysed have been selected from the artists' albums on a thematic basis. The analysis will focus on the message that the songs communicate and also on how the message is communicated. While emphasis has been placed on the lyrics as the main carriers of the message of the songs, the music will also be analysed to ascertain how it is used to enhance the message in the songs.

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

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Name of candidate

14th day of February 2008

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Chapter one

Introduction

The aim of the paper is to analyse the music of Albert Nyathi in order to examine how he uses his music to address the socio political concerns of Zimbabwe. His music will be read with the aim of ascertaining how he engages with the socio political challenges and concerns of the country. Emphasis will be placed on the lyrics which are in poetic form with the intention of examining how he captures the concerns of the country in his poetry. The paper will analyse the songs as a form that utilises both the lyrics and the music to convey meaning.

As an artist, Albert Nyathi has contributed immensely to the growth of the music and poetry culture in Zimbabwe yet his works have received little attention in scholarly circles. This study is intended to add to the growing body of scholarship on Nyathi's works and the functions of popular culture in contemporary African societies. The study of music in Zimbabwe has mainly focused on internationally acclaimed artists such as Oliver Mtukudzi and Thomas Mapfumo to the extent that their music has almost become synonymous with that of Zimbabwe. While one cannot overlook the contribution that such artists have made to development of music in the country and the influence that their music has had in the socio political arena, there is a need to widen the studies to include those whose music is less well known yet is bringing into the popular culture scene innovative and potentially powerful new ways of using music to address social challenges. There is a need not only to study popular music as a means of communication but to also acknowledge the fact that within the class of popular music, there are different forms that function differently, just like the music of Albert Nyathi that uses poetry and music to communicate. It is hoped that this study will add to that body of scholarship on Zimbabwean music that emphasises not just the content of songs but also the form as having a significant bearing on the message as a whole and the whole aspect of communication.

Music in the political history of Zimbabwe

Music has always been an integral part of Zimbabwe's political and social landscape. With all the changes that the country has seen, music has played an instrumental part in not only reflecting and engaging with these changes but also in facilitating them (Barber, 1997). This section will look at the political role that music has and continues to play in Zimbabwe and the way in which the country's successive governments use popular music as a political tool. The section will briefly look at the use of music for political purposes both before and after independence and also at government censorship to give an idea of how popular music is used for political purposes.

The effects of colonial contact on the cultural products of the Africans was profound and far reaching. The introduction of music from other parts of the world, particularly the west, was welcomed by the indigenous people and eventually saw these sounds being incorporated into the music that was being produced locally. Local music thus became heavily influenced by these new sounds and music styles. The extent of this influence was best seen in Zimbabwean township music which was mostly influenced by South African and western jazz forms (Makwenda, 2005; 68). Though this could be seen as a normal process resulting from cultural contact, the Rhodesian government had its reservations about the effects of this contact on the Africans and on its own ability to develop the Africans as a 'civilised' people while maintaining their roots in African culture. Controlling the cultural products that Africans consumed was seen as a strategy and thus the Rhodesian government, in a bid to keep a tight reign over Africans, set up stringent governance laws that affected all aspects of life. The cultural aspects were not spared, but rather than discourage traditional art forms such as music, the government saw them as a potential tool for controlling the Africans and encouraged them. Radio stations specifically meant for the broadcasting of African music and programmes in African languages were set up. According to Fraenkel, the purpose of this government propaganda was the production of 'civilised' Africans capable of working reasonably well in the development of the territory and playing a role in the Africans' enlightenment (quoted in Turino, 2000; 98). The stations were meant to mould African minds with

carefully chosen material and would thus broadcast apolitical and pro-government sentiments only. Discerning voices were silenced through rigorous processes of scrutiny, censorship and manipulation of artists. Apart from the fact that the government viewed these traditional art forms as "safe recreational activities for the locals to engage in" (Turino,2000; 63), the radio stations, which were government controlled, were meant to keep Africans entertained so that they would not tune into alternative stations that might broadcast anti government sentiments.

During the war of liberation, music became a political tool for both warring parties. According to Sibanda, the emergence of this war brought with it what later came to be known as Chimurenga songs which are considered to have played a significant role in the struggle (2004; 5). These songs were sung in indigenous languages with a large number of them being renditions of old traditional songs. Pongweni (1982) points out that during the liberation struggle, these songs were used to conscientise, inform, educate and mobilise people. Both parties made use of songs for propaganda purposes. In order to counter the Rhodesian government propaganda, liberation choirs composed songs meant to persuade the regime supporters to side with them.

Independence saw the new government take over the running of the stations. They were opened up so that music from other countries, especially America, could be heard on air. Aware of the power of music, government soon put music to use as a nation building tool. Only music that was seen as positively aiding the process of building a democratic nation for all races was given room on radio stations. Pongweni (1982) points out that in the new democracy, music that denounced whites that had once been encouraged was no longer desirable as it went against government's reconciliatory policies and liberation songs sung by the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) choirs were not played as this went against the one party state policy. This was despite the fact that the war had been fought by two parties, (ZIPRA) the armed wing of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and the Zimbabwe National People's Liberation Army (ZANLA) the armed wing of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU).

Despite the fact that there was a new government in power, there was soon dissatisfaction in some circles about the manner of governance and soon some artists sang about these concerns. Some of these like Thomas Mapfumo and Lovemore Majaivana sang about the lack of development in Matabeleland. The government's response to these discerning voices was to silence them through censorship and buying their allegiance. Those who would not heed the call to stop singing politically incorrect music such as Thomas Mapfumo were removed from the airwaves while others such the gospel musician Hosiah Chipanga were sent death threats to scare them into silence (Eyre, 2005).

The 2000 presidential elections also saw music being used as one of the campaign tools. Numerous artists, in favour of the government, wrote and sang songs supporting government policies, particularly the land reform programme that had been implemented prior to the elections. Some government ministers, like Elliot Manyika and Jonathan Moyo, also joined the band-wagon of artists and released their own albums of music in support of the government. These songs enjoyed massive airplay and attention from the media as a whole. The elections were followed by the introduction of the 75% and soon afterwards, 100% local content policy on radio and television. The justification given for this policy was that the foreign programmes were bad for the youth and corrupted them, helping to fuel the spread of AIDS. However, as Musila argues, state control of issues emanating from the media is a way of ensuring the circulation of a particular image of itself (2004; 10). The Zimbabwean government was thus trying to show itself in good light as a caring government living up to its independence promises and music was the vehicle of this message.

Both the Rhodesian and current Zimbabwean governments' preoccupation with controlling music comes as no surprise seeing as numerous other governments have done the same thing. One could argue that they are following Plato's sentiments concerning the potential of music to upset social order. Plato believed that the effects of music on society were more profound than leaders were aware of and argued that music had the potential to unsettle the most stable social relationships and social structures hence political leaders had to be careful about the music they allowed to be produced and

consumed in their states (Negus, 1996; 200). Kivnick, commenting on the tendency to control music by governments, argues that authorities are not concerned with banning songs per se, but with stamping out the unquenchable spirit that all freedom singing conveys (1990; 306). Whatever the reason for censoring music, it is quite clear that the Zimbabwean government is leaving nothing to chance in ensuring that any music that seems to undermine the government is silenced.

The worsening economic and political situation in the country has seen government intensify its efforts to silence critical and discerning voices. Voices of criticism have almost been completely silenced and replaced by a host of state sponsored persons and with the 100% local content policy in place, the minister of information controlled the content (Eyre, 2005). His tactics included bribing artists, blacklisting songs that he felt could not be played on air and pressuring recording studios into not recording protest music (ibid). In a country were people have been known to have been harassed by the police for talking about the problems of the country in public and mourners forced to prove that they are not opposition supporters, one can get a sense of the degree to which censorship of public material like music is being carried out. Despite this, popular cultural productions continue to thrive and grow in numbers. Fabian argues that in situations of oppression and contexts were overt criticism and dissenting voices are not accommodated, popular cultural productions become important channels of expression, providing 'sites of freedom' (quoted in Musila, 2004; 9). Even though it is not so easy for artists to exercise their artistic freedom in the music industry due to political pressure, artists like Nyathi still manage to put their thoughts across using music which indeed becomes a site of freedom.

Albert Nyathi's music

Born in 1962 in Kezi in Matebeleland South region, Nyathi started composing and reciting poetry at an early age, a habit he maintained right through his schooling years. In an interview with Irene Staunton, he says he is an *imbongi* or praise poet and dub poet and was a performance poet first before he took up music (2006). He runs Imbongi Arts, a professional music performance company that has churned out an array of artists, some of whom have gone on to become some of Zimbabwe's finest musicians. As a poet, Nyathi writes his own poems and also borrows poems written by other poets, such as the poem he recites in the song 'Senzeni na ?' which was written by the late vice president of Zimbabwe Simon Muzenda.

An area of interest with Nyathi's music is that he defines it as dub poetry even though it does not sound like dub poetry at all. His music is basically a mixture of poetry recited over the sound of music from a live band. Nyathi works with a group called Imbongi, an eleven piece band which comprises a full band and back up female singers and it is this band that produces the music that accompanies Nyathi's poetry. Dub on the other hand is usually characterised by the recital of a poem over a reggae rhythm and is thus defined by the reggae rhythm and sound (Habekost, 1993; 3). Nyathi's music has none of the reggae sounds hence one could argue that even though the music sounds nothing like dub, he locates its foundations within the dub culture, especially the recital of the poetry over music. While some might argue that the music is not dub poetry, the approach taken in the paper is that popular cultural forms are by nature evasive to definition and straight jacketing by classification into rigid genre classes and are constantly shifting and redefining their borders. Nyathi's definition of his music as dub will be read as a way of redefining dub by expanding the meaning of the term to include non Jamaican sounds into the music.

Nyathi's music exhibits influences from a wide range of musical genres such as afro-jazz and the South African maskanda music. The major influence in the music is the 50s and 60s jazz tradition of South Africa and Zimbabwe that led to the rise of music such as

marabi and *kwela*. His range of instruments includes guitars, keyboards, trumpets, saxophones, drums and the pennywhistle among others. Collaborations done with the likes of South African Dan Chanda and guitarist Maqhinga Hadebe have helped maintain the heavy South African influence in his music.

As an artist with influence in his field, Nyathi has worked with some big names in the music industry, the likes of veteran Fanyana Dube and young and upcoming Otis Ngwabi. Though he does feature these artists in his songs, he does not allow them to bring in their individual and particular qualities to stand out over the music itself so that they do not end up stealing the focus from the songs themselves.

The most prominent feature of Nyathi's music is the fact that his songs tend to focus on socio-political issues that affect the whole country. His subjects are the everyday challenges that affect the nation, issues such as the job and food shortages. His lyrics are mainly in Ndebele and English with elements of Shona here and there. Nyairo argues that some of the text's strategies in invoking the audiences, particularly the choice of language, may generate bounded categories of users (2004; xvii). In light of Nyairo's argument, one could argue that Nyathi's use of the three official languages is meant to accommodate a wider audience. English, being the medium that is used by different language groups who are not familiar with the other's indigenous language, makes his music accessible to non-Ndebele speakers. This is particularly true of his international audience overseas where he has been touring since the release of his last two albums which were produced and released in the United Kingdom.

For purposes of the study, the report will distinguish between songs and music. The music will refer to the music alone excluding the lyrics while the song will mark both the music and the lyrics. This is necessitated by the fact that the study intends to analyse the lyrics as well as the accompanying music as separate texts that work in unison to create the resultant meaning of the song. Music is therefore an integral part of the song that should be given attention if we are to understand the song as a whole. Nyathi's use of music as an accompaniment to his poetry is interesting in the sense that it is atmospheric.

The music is a generic jazz sound of the 50s and 60s bands. I therefore argue that the music is used for historical contextualisation while at the same time serving as a signifier of the music's country of origin. According to Coplan, music is not merely a domain but an environment in which to understand culture and it does not only occur in a context, but it becomes a context in which things occur (quoted in Ayon, 2005; 47). In Nyathi's case, the music is being used as a historical context within which he engages with contemporary problems facing Zimbabwe. The music in this case has more than entertainment value; it serves to compound the message of the lyrics.

The use of poetry

Nyathi's poetry is influenced by the traditional Ndebele praise poetry. Praise poetry is a genre of poetry that has a long history in Ndebele culture. It was used mainly for praises hence was mainly associated with royal praises. The praise poems were recited by a praise poet, and though they were meant to praise the king for his leadership, the poet would include critical comments and points out issues that were of concern to the nation. Praise poems were thus a means of communication between the king and his subjects via the praise poet. The genre has been appropriated over time by various artists for numerous purposes, supposedly for its versatility. Gunner (1989) cites the example of the Congress of South African Trade Union (COSATU) poets who adapted the Zulu royal praises for political purposes, namely for praising and pushing the agenda of the union of conscientising workers about their rights. As she puts it, the fact that royal praises can be adapted into union praises exemplifies the way a form of oral art can transform itself through the pressure of history and social change (1989; 49). Nyathi has, in the same fashion, borrowed the form to engage with socio political issues. Nyathi's use of poetry to engage with contemporary issues is in line with Barber's contention that popular arts take from older indigenous traditions and combine them with contemporary urban forms to create new forms (quoted in Gunner and Gwala, 1991; 19). Even though Nyathi uses poetry for social commentary purposes only, one cannot thus overlook the conventions of poetry and the influences they have in shaping his music as a whole.

The name *'imbongi'* suggests Nyathi views his role as an artist equal to that of the praise poet. A praise poet had social responsibility to speak on behalf of the king's subjects through his poems. It was therefore necessary that he be close to both the king and to the society so that he keeps up to date with events. According to Finnegan (1970), the praise poet was in the service of his society, using his poetry to engage with issues that were of social concern. As an artist, Nyathi seems to be using his work as a means through which he comments about the problems facing the people while at the same time critiquing the state.

As mentioned before, Nyathi's lyrics are in the form of poems. The argument concerning his use of poem rather than lyric is that poetry offers him advantages that simple lyrics do not. In a repressive environment were people are silenced by intimidation, censorship and physical violence, poetry provides the space to engage in politically sensitive subjects. I therefore argue that Nyathi's choice of poetry is due to the protection and richness it offers (Kivnick, 1990; 272). This is linked to the fact that poetry takes advantage of the multiple layers of meaning in words, proverbs and metaphors. The poetry, especially the parts done in Ndebele, are not easy for someone who is not well-versed in the language to decipher as some of the references are culture specific. While one might argue that this limits his audience, it does however provide him with room to encode his meaning in ways that the censors might not understand. Barber (in Duncan, 1999; 28) points out that different speech genres make it possible to generate utterances of specific kinds, with specific and sometimes specialised implications and effects. I argue that poetry in this case provides the specific genre that allows Nyathi to effectively generate the discourse in his poems. These conventions of poetry provide the ideal 'environment' for Nyathi to deal with 'sensitive' material in a sensitive environment.

Rather than being the preserve of the powerful and those with the right to speak out in a repressive environment, poetry in Nyathi's case becomes the language of the socially marginalised, those who can not speak out openly in a hostile environment They therefore have to find ways of speaking about issues while seeming to not be doing so and poetry as a form provides such a space. Poetry allows an artist to be ambiguous and

indirect in reference such that it becomes difficult to pin down its exact reference and this, coupled with the fact that it takes advantage of the numerous meanings of words, makes it even more difficult to decipher. This is in line with Furniss and Gunner's assertion that the indirectness of reference and therefore the ambiguity of function are direct correlates of the form's position as a voice of the socially marginal (1995; 4).

Unlike in the past when the praise poet was respected and given the platform to speak, the modern day praise poet, the artist, is a state enemy. Nyathi's tendency to be open about political issues that other artists steer clear of might be linked to what he perceives to be the historical role of the praise poet and praise poetry as an art. While it might seem that the poet, acting as a social commentator, had the freedom of speech to delve into any issue he felt was of significance, White argues that it was the poem and not the poet that had the freedom of speech that went beyond conventions (1989; 36). From the above statement, one can see that the freedom of speech comes with the form of praise poem and not the right of the poet. According to Furniss and Gunner, the forms with which producers of oral literature work are themselves invested with power; that is to say, the words and texts have the ability to provoke move, direct, prevent, overturn and to recast social reality (1995; 3). One can thus argue that the poem form itself is vested with power which Nyathi takes advantage of to create his music. The Zimbabwean government, over the last 10 years, has intensified its efforts to censor and control the products of artists in music and other arts fields. This has left artists with very little choice but to comply with regulations or risk being 'banned' or worse. In such a repressive environment, many artists have opted to dwell on safer subjects such as love and other domestic issues. Nyathi is one of those who still focus on the 'dangerous' subjects of political and social problems, a thing that has made him unpopular with the government.

The use of poetry by Nyathi can also be read as not just limited to it advantages in terms of the form and conventions it offers but also extends to the fact that the praise poem has a history associated with glorious pasts, social harmony, accessible and people oriented leadership and freedom of speech. These features are a contrast to the current situation in the country were the government seems to be self- centred and working to stay in power

at the cost of the whole nation; where freedom of expression has been criminalised. The praise poem in this sense can be seen to be used as part of a "larger statement that evokes conservative and narrow nostalgia for a glorious past" (Gunner and Gwala, 1991; 13). In Nyathi's case, because of his concern with issues that affect everyone, the nostalgia seems to be for a past Zimbabwe rather than for a glorious past of one tribal group.

Chapter 2

Literature review

The last few years have seen an increase in the studies undertaken in the field of popular art forms and culture. Initially these were overlooked in the belief that they were of little social value but with growing interest, many studies have been carried out into the functions of these forms with most of them showing that they are of integral value in all the aspects of a society's life. Numerous scholars have written extensively on popular culture, popular music and Zimbabwean popular music. Because the thesis locates popular music within the wider frame of popular culture, the thesis will draw from works on popular culture and music in general.

Newell (2000) is one author who has written widely on popular fiction in Africa with her work focusing mainly on the forms and functions of popular fiction in contemporary society. Her works thus try to understand how popular fiction relates to societal concerns about the everyday life. She argues that popular literatures do not just reflect empirically valid truths about societies but that they are used by the authors to mediate, express and often, symbolically, to resolve commonly held preoccupations about issues such as money and marriage (p8). Barber (1997) also makes a similar point on the communicative functions of popular culture genres in general, pointing out that they speak to people about the conditions of their existence and struggles (p2). Such views about popular culture are relevant to the study as they provide a definition of popular culture that goes beyond the reflective capacities of cultural products, allowing a broader view of popular culture as a means of engaging with reality. This provides an entry point into understanding how popular culture operates as a means of communication.

One of the major characteristics of popular culture that Barber points to is the challenge it poses in terms of definition. According to Barber, popular culture in Africa is difficult to define as it is first and foremost the result of culture contact between Western and traditional African cultures (1987). Because of this, popular culture exhibits

characteristics of both worlds so that it is neither traditionally African nor western. This characteristic of being neither African nor western is what defines African popular culture. Newell also sites the hybrid nature of popular art forms when she points out that rather than being the passive consumers of alien cultures, audiences are "continually generating popular narratives, beats and rhythms, creating models from the borrowed elements and localising the foreign to such an extent that it can not be easily placed in a separate sphere" (2000; 4).

These definitions of popular culture and art are useful to the study as they open up space for popular culture to be viewed as an entity in its own right. By not fully subscribing to the rules of more established art forms, popular culture claims the right to exist in its own space and exerts its right to be viewed in its own terms. The definitions also provide us with the room to locate popular music within the ambiguous space occupied by popular culture and thus offer opportunities to study popular music as a form that has its own special qualities.

Fabian (1998) is another scholar who has done work on popular culture. He views popular culture as a term that stands for discursive strategies and signals a discourse that raises issues of power (p3). As a theory, he views popular culture as asserting the existence of spaces of freedom and creativity in situations of oppression and supposed mass consumption (p2). Such a definition of popular culture is useful as it leads us to try and locate the space that popular culture inhibits in society and to examine how it engages with issues of power. These happen to be some of the main concerns of the thesis as a whole and Fabian's views thus provide an entry point into examining the relationship between popular culture and power in society.

One of the main functions of popular art forms is as an encapsulation of peoples' sentiments about issues of concern. Scott argues that popular culture provides a "hidden transcript" in which is written the anger and reciprocal aggression denied by the presence of domination (in Mutonya, 2006; 24). Neal cites the example of chattel slaves in America who used these hidden transcripts, in the form of encoded messages, as a means

of expressing underground resistance (1992; 2). What both these scholars suggest is that popular culture plays an integral communicative role, especially in situations of oppression. These arguments provide us with an entry point into examining why and how popular music operates as a communication tool.

As a field of study, Zimbabwean popular music is not an unexplored field, having seeing scholars such as Turino (2000), Vambe (2000), Pongweni (1982) and Kwaramba (1997) produce works focusing on various aspects of popular music within the country. Pongweni's (1982) works is one of the earlier works on popular music in Zimbabwe focusing on the role of music in the liberation war. His work highlights the fact that music was used during the war for propaganda purposes by the fighting parties. As counter propaganda, the liberation choirs composed songs for the purpose of winning over to their side those who sympathised with the regime (p2). The work brings to light the fact that music was used for political ends. Implicit here is the point that music can be made to mean for whatever purpose. Storey brings out the same point in his following statement;

> Meaning is a social production…the world has to be made to mean. A text or practice or event is not the issuing source of meaning, but a site where the articulation of meaning, variable meaning(s) can take place…Because different meanings can be ascribed to the same text or practice or event, meaning is always a potential site of conflict…it is a terrain of incorporation and resistance, one of the sites where hegemony is to be won or lost (1996; 4).

Since part of the thesis aims to understand how meaning is created within the songs of Albert Nyathi, Pongweni's work thus proves useful as it offers an insight into how popular music operates and communicates.

In the article '*Popular songs and social realities in post-independence Zimbabwe'*, Vambe (2000) focuses on how music has been used by the nationalist government in its

nation building project and how this tended to clash with some artist's intentions who were concerned with deconstructing official truth about the liberation history and nation building process(p78). Part of the nation building project included banning of songs that were deemed subversive of state policies, songs which were however quite appropriate in the pre-independence period. Artists such as Thomas Mapfumo criticised some government policies and shortcomings such as the failure to deliver on promises made at independence. While the work focuses on the use of music for political ends, the work does draw an important link between popular music and power struggles and highlights how popular music can become contested space in power relations. This view will form part of the premises that will underlie the examination of the role of popular music in a repressive environment.

One of the main characteristics of Nyathi's music is its use of sounds from other musical genres in Africa such as South African music. The paper intends to do a reading of the music as a social phenomenon with social meaning. The songs make use of musical genres whose histories lie in the colonial and post colonial eras and have been written about by numerous scholars to show how these histories can be read as contributing to the meaning of the songs as a whole. Ansell (2004) is one author who wrote about music and the relationship between music and politics in South Africa in the colonial era. Her text is an examination of how apartheid impacted on the development of music throughout the colonial years and how the different music styles and genres grew despite the attempts by the government to stifle it (through the harassment of musicians). Titlestad (2003) also makes reference to the tendency to associate township music with negative behaviour when he notes how *marabi* was infused with negative connotations of drunkenness and licentiousness by some township dwellers. As such he argues that the interpretation of music is due to the effect of cultural and racial assumptions and does not express anything intrinsic to the music itself (p108). What Ansell and Titlestad bring out in their studies of music is the fact that the definition of music lies not in the music itself but in the social meanings that societies infuse the music with. Such a view is relevant to the study as it offers room to analyse music as social phenomenon with social meaning.

One of the writers who have written on township music in South Africa in the colonial period is Coplan (1985). In his work, he gives an overview of the various types of musical genres to have grown out of South African townships and the socio historical conditions that gave birth to this music. The jazz music of the colonial period was a fusion of traditional African music traditions and western influences such as American jazz that grew under the harsh conditions of poverty, segregation and police harassment. Coplan's work thus gives us an idea of the conditions under which the music was made which helps us understand the meanings of the music within the colonial and post-colonial eras.

An important aspect in the study of Nyathi's music will be the focus on the music itself as a language. The importance of the language can not be overlooked as it is through the language that the songs communicate with its audiences. It is therefore imperative that some attention be paid to the language of the songs. In her analysis of Thomas Mapfumo's music, Kwaramba (1997) focused mainly on a critical language analysis of the song texts. This was based on the hypothesis that a critical language analysis can reveal the tensions and power struggles within social relationships (p7). While she does point out that the approach tends to oversimplify the web of forces that shapes music and language, her approach is useful as it offers a way of reading the music through focus on the language of the songs. This approach is particularly relevant for the interpretation of poetry which pays particular attention to language use for meaning creation.

METHODOLOGY

The main aim of the paper is to study Albert Nyathi's music by attempting to interpret the combination of words and music known as song (Bracket, 1995; 29). The initial approach to this is to theorise the songs as a text. Hanks defines a text as a configuration of signs that is coherently interpretable by some community of users (1989; 95). This definition opens up the possibilities in terms of theories and techniques that can be utilised in the analysis of the music. Focus will thus fall on the lyrics and the music itself. The analysis

of the song texts will be carried out to understand what the songs are saying and how they are saying it.

The lyrics are of particular importance in the study as they are the main means through which the meaning of the songs comes through. In Nyathi's songs there are the main lyrics which are in poetry form and are done by him and then there are the accompanying chorus lyrics done by the backing girls. According to Phillips and Jorgensen, a detailed analysis of the linguistic characteristics of a text can shed light on how discourses are activated textually, arrived at and provided backing for a particular interpretation (2002; 83). As such, the text uses various techniques to create meaning, techniques such as the use of metaphors, wording and grammar (ibid). In line with Phillips's argument, attention will focus on what the lyrics say and on the form in which they are, for example, if they are in idiomatic, proverb or metaphorical form. This will be done with the aim of showing how the form contributes to the song as a whole.

The thesis will also examine the use of rhythm in the poem by identifying the poetic devices used to create it, which include repetition and alliteration and try to show how rhythm aids in the creation of meaning. Bearing in mind that Nyathi's poetry is heavily grounded in the traditional African poetry practice, the analysis of the audio-visual aspects will be linked to the traditional poetry artwork in which Nyathi's contemporary work is grounded. In examining the rhythm aspect, focus will fall on how it is created and how it contributes to the musicality and meaning of the music as a whole.

The songs to be analysed are selected on a thematic basis, which is the political theme. Because many songs share this theme, the selection has been careful to select songs that deal with different aspects of the socio political space so that there is a variance in terms of the issues that can be dealt with. The songs selected will deal with a variety of topical issues such as corruption in government, the economic meltdown and the mass migration it has sparked, the food shortages and nepotism and tribalism. Six songs have been selected for the analysis and these are '*Kuze kube nini*?' (Till when?), '*Bana balapile'* (The children are hungry), '*Dear Mzwakhe Mbuli', 'I shall not speak'*, '*Ngiyakhuluma I*

speak', and '*Sekutheni?'*(What has gone wrong?). The six have been selected from Nyathi's albums since 1994 which are the following:

Kuze kube nini?	1994
Ngenkani	1999
Welcome to Zimbabwe	2000
Nozindaba	2004
As we dance along	2006

The analysis of the lyrics of the songs will be done alongside a reading of the music itself. The analysis of the music will be based on a genre approach which will be basically about identifying the various musical genres that influence Nyathi's music (these include jazz and traditional African). The music will be read as made up of musical sounds from various genres that have their own specific social meanings. The paper will attempt to ascertain why these genres are used and what their use entails for the music as a whole. The use of the different music genres will be read as a way of creating an atmosphere within which the poetry is performed. The music has its own meaning for Zimbabwean listeners and by juxtaposing the music genres that have attached to them social meaning and his poetry, he is in a way prompting the listener to compare the meaning of the music and the poetry and to read in these differences in experience.

The analysis of Nyathi's music will be incomplete without giving a bit of the historical political context of the country. This is in line with Fabian's assertion that in order for one to read any popular culture form with thoroughness, one must take cognisance of the key contexts in which the form is produced and re-enacted (1997; 21). Rather than give a broad socio historical overview of the country as a context, the paper will instead give accounts of the events that the music raises. Giving a history of the country will not suffice as it might not be concomitant with the issues that the songs tackle. Some of the issues that are raised in the songs include the food shortages, corruption and tribalism and nepotism and information pertaining to these issues raised will be given as the context. The sources of this information will be texts on Zimbabwe that deal with the particular

challenges that the country has and is still facing, texts that deal with the economic, political and social aspects of the country that are seen as having contributed to creating the situations that the songs raise. The texts are meant to give a factual overview and clearer understanding of the nature and extent of the issues that the songs deal with. Though these texts will be read alongside the songs, this should not be taken to imply a reflectionist approach. The songs will be read as engaging with the issues raised to bring out the artist's own opinions about the issue at hand.

Chapter three examines three songs concerned with issues of silence and speaking. After a brief overview of the contemporary Zimbabwean crisis, the poems are then examined. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the musical textures of the songs. Chapter four follows a similar structure. Three songs all concerned with the disillusionment of independence are analysed. This is followed by a discussion of the music. The final chapter is a conclusion that draws together the argument.

Chapter three

Of speech and silence: claiming the right to speak

Zimbabwe is currently labouring under a growing dictatorship. The country's economic and political troubles have seen an increase in the government's intolerance levels to its critics as well as in the attempts and measure by the government to silence the critiques. The chapter aims to show how political issues are addressed through music and how the space within which the poet works influences and shapes his music. Based on Street's argument that artistic creativity depends upon freedom of expression (in Mutonya; 2006; 68), the chapter will give an overview of the socio political situation in Zimbabwe to give an idea as to how the context influenced the music. The chapter will analyse the texts in terms of how they create their meaning by paying attention to the linguistic characteristics of the songs as well as the metaphors used, for these are the resources the artist uses to capture the challenges facing post colonial Zimbabwe. According to Phillips and Jorgensen, linguistic characteristics are essential to meaning making;

> by detailed analysis of the linguistic characteristics of a text using particular tools, its possible to cast light on how discourses are activated and arrive at and provide backing for particular interpretation (2002; 83).

The chapter aims to highlight how the song texts generate meaning through the deliberate and careful selection and use of language and metaphors. The chapter will analyse three songs, namely 'I will not speak', 'I speak, ngiyakhuluma' and 'Dear Mzwakhe Mbuli'. These songs deal with various issues related to politics and do not necessarily share common themes. They do however share common motifs of silence and speaking. This motif is the underlying idea behind the three songs and as such will serve as the entry point for our analysis of the song texts. The chapter will also analyse the music with the aim of ascertaining how it contributes to the meaning of the whole song. The analysis will be basically about identifying the various musical genres that influence Nyathi's music and ascertaining why they are used, how they are used and how this use

contributes to the meaning of the song. The song lyrics are available at the end of the chapter.

Socio political over view of Zimbabwe

Post- independence Zimbabwe has over the years, experienced economic, social and political upheavals that have thrust into the country in the doldrums of a worsening economic decline. The country's current woes are as a result of numerous factors both man made and natural. The immediate post independence Zimbabwean economy was characterised by economic growth and a generally bright economic future prospect. All this changed abruptly with the introduction of Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1990. The ESAP was an economic model that the IMF and World Bank proposed the country should implement to boost the economic growth pace. According to Sachikonye, ESAP was intended to improve the annual economic growth, to attract foreign investment, expand employment and reduce government expenditure through economic liberalisation measures (1993). Rather than grow the economy and employment opportunities, the results of ESAP were the opposite. Job losses were one of the results and these were estimated to reach 28000 within the public service and 20000 in the private sector by 1995 (ibid). These hardships were compounded by the 1992 drought that cut agricultural production greatly, leading to food shortages. 2002 saw the elections that were hotly contested by the ruling party and the new opposition party the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The election period was characterised by political violence and intimidation and though the government won, they lost a lot of ground to the opposition. In 2000, government initiated a fast track land redistribution programme. Laws were enacted authorising compulsory acquisition of land from white farmers (Chikwanha, Sithole and Bratton, 2004) and war veterans were encouraged to take the law into their own hands by invading commercial farms. The land redistribution was violent, chaotic and corrupt and ended up benefitting ruling party supporters and politicians (ibid). The farm invasions, coupled with the drought, led to widespread food, fuel and money shortages, the collapse of industry, a runaway inflation rate and massive brain drain.

The worsening economic and political situation in the country saw the government intensify its efforts to silence critical and discerning voices. Voices of criticism have almost been completely silenced and replaced by a host of state sponsored persons (Eyre, 2005). According to Thram, there is no official censorship of music so the state has been relying on indirect methods such as sponsoring of music for propaganda purposes as well as harassment of musicians (2006; 72). Through the only piece of legislature was put in place to regulate access to music, the Broadcast Services Act of 2001, the state achieved 'de facto' censorship. The law gave the then Minister of Information Jonathan Moyo power to control music that received airplay. This gave the minister the ability to 'unofficially' censor dissent (ibid). Despite this, popular cultural productions continue to thrive and grow in numbers. Fabian argues that in situations of oppression and contexts were overt criticism and dissenting voices are not accommodated, popular cultural productions become important channels of expression, providing 'sites of freedom' (quoted in Musila,2004; 9). Even though it is not so easy for artists to exercise their artistic freedom in the music industry due to political pressure, artists like Nyathi still manage to put their thoughts across using music which indeed becomes a site of freedom.

'I will not speak': The sound of silence

As has already been mentioned in the introduction to the chapter, the relationship between the government and the artists in Zimbabwe has become strained because of its unbalanced nature. The state has created a difficult environment for the artists to operate in because of its monitoring and harassment of those that are perceived as anti-government or critical of state policies. Critical voices have virtually been silenced. Silence in Zimbabwe has occurred in various forms such as forbearance from speech, absence of mention, obscurity, secrecy and omission (Kress, 1998). Artists and the population at large have found themselves in positions whereby they are not free to speak about an increasing number of topics. The song texts, through the motif of silence appropriate silence as a discursive space to engage with various issues pertaining to state

repression and enforced silence. The motifs are manifest in a variety of ways and through a number of themes. In the poem 'I will not speak' it is brought out through the use of irony.

Silence is usually taken to be the opposite and the absence of speech. The two are taken to be mutual opposites and as Brook points out, silence is generally perceived as an absence rather than as a space for revelation (Brook, 2002; 154). There has been a growing movement within literary circles that argue that silence should not be seen as an absence of speech and therefore communication but as a part of language, if not a language on its own. Trinh Minh-ha argues that within the "contexts of women's speech, silence has many faces, silence as a will not to say or a will not to unsay and as a language of its own" (1988: 73). This implies that silence in itself is speech since it is communication. While the above argument pertains to literary works, I argue that it holds true and also applies to the use of silence in song texts.

The song 'I will not speak' provides an interesting interplay between silence and speaking. It is a song that deals with the issue of nepotism in the allocation of jobs. According to the song, job shortages are caused by nepotistic practices that ensure those who are not related to those in positions of power in companies find themselves struggling to get employed. This is represented as having a negative impact on the business. The poem makes use of repetition, especially the repetition of the phrase 'I will not speak'. The repetition serves to emphasise the idea of silence. It also serves to highlight the ironic nature of the poem in which the poet clearly talks about the very things he says he will not speak of.

The stanzas of the poem are punctuated by a moment of silence in which the music and poetry all go quite. It is no coincidence that the silence occurs at these points. The silence serves to concretise the silence that Nyathi envisages will result from his keeping quiet. According to Brook, silence is a multi-faceted phenomenon with expressive power in its own right (2002; 145). In the poem, it is used as a specific form of expression, symbolically used to express itself. The silence is interesting in that it marks the end of a

stanza, a point that is twice marked by the phrase 'I will not speak'. The moment of silence is more or less a replacement of the phrase and emphasises the angle of the literal silence. Silence in the case of 'I will not speak' also functions as a point of focalisation; it gets one to think about what has been said before.

Through the interplay between silence and speech, the song 'I will not speak' engages with the subject of nepotism and corruption within the leadership of industry. Its contextual setting is the 90s period in Zimbabwe which was marked by the implementation of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) funded Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP). Tribal politics have always been a cause for concern for the government and have been an important determining factor in the relations between the country's different language groups. The song thus focuses on tribal politics within the wider context of economic and social change brought about by ESAP.

Through the song, we get to see how Nyathi not only recounts the happenings of the era but also how he offers his own interpretation as to the causes of unemployment in the country. His representation goes beyond recounting the hardships of life to explaining the cause of these hardships. As numerous scholars have noted, popular culture forms have a way of speaking about issues that are not 'allowed' by authorities and creating counter-official versions of reality. This is what Nyathi does when he locates the practice of nepotism within the bigger problem of job losses due to economic restructuring. While he does not dispute the fact that there is an employment crisis in the country, Nyathi goes on to include the nepotism factor that the official accounts of job losses overlook. The chorus of the song brings this to light through the claim that jobs can not be found because those in positions of power in companies are choosing to employ their relatives and friends;

> ngizulazula, ngidingumsebenzi
> msebenzi kayikho, bayanikana bo
> sekuleminyaka ngiding'umsebenzi

msebenzi kayikho, bayanikana bo

(Walking around looking for a job
there are no jobs, they give each other jobs
for years I have looked for a job
there are no jobs, they give
each other jobs)

Nyathi attributes job shortages to nepotism within companies that ensures that only a few related to the employers are hired. This shows an appropriation of historical material to project the poet's own vision.

While tribal politics are a reality that affects everyone, they tend to affect mostly the two biggest culture groups in the country, the minority Ndebele and the majority Shona. These two groups have a long history of tribal tensions that were made worse by the 1982 '*Gukurahundi*' government operative that led to the death of an estimated 10000 to 30000 civilians. The official reason for the operative was that it was meant to hunt down dissidents who had fled the army after the war with arms but this has always been seen as suspect and an ethnic cleansing processing rather of the majority of the Ndebele people by virtue of it having only occurred in the Matabeleland and Midlands regions and having affected mainly Ndebele speakers.[1]

The lyrics are in three languages, English, Ndebele and Shona which also happen to be the official languages of Zimbabwe. Most of the poetry is in English while the chorus is in Ndebele and Shona. Part of the message is linked directly to the linguistic and language choice of the poet. As Kwaramba points out, meaning in texts is constructed through a deliberate selection of lexical items and can be at word, sentence or larger unit level where the processing of meaning requires grammatical knowledge as well as

[1] See 'Breaking the silence, building true peace: a report on the disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands 1980- 1988' by the Catholic Commission for Peace and Justice and the Legal Resources Foundation, 1997 for the full account of the operative.

knowledge of the language and the social and cultural contexts in which the texts are produced (1997; 19). One could extend the above argument on meaning construction to include not just lexical items but language choice as well. Through a deliberate selection and use of language, which in this case is the use the three languages to signify the three language groups that form the power pillars in the country. Through this technique, Nyathi manages to represent the balances of power within the country and positions them in relation to each other to comment on the uneven distribution of power and wealth.

The chorus is sung in Ndebele and Shona and it is within this chorus that the issue of tribalism is raised. The song does not refer directly to these culture groups but represents them rather using the languages that they speak. The fact that the words of those accused of practicing nepotism are in Shona and those of the affected in Ndebele is indicative of the balance in the relations between the two cultural groups. By positioning the Shona group against the Ndebele group, the song draws us to the fact that the power relations are unequal between these two with the scale tipped in favour of the Shona group. Bayart's position on post- colonial leadership in Africa is that the link between holding positions of power within the state apparatus and the acquisition of wealth is clearly related to the political hierarchy (quoted in Mutonya, 2004; 155). This suggests that the reason the Shona speakers hold positions of power in companies is because they wield political power and this situation has replicated itself at all other levels. The song thus suggests that the problem of unemployment is not national as the government suggests but is tribal so that only some sections of the society suffer from the negative effects of economic adjustment.

As mentioned above, there is an avoidance of direct reference to the Shona group that are identified simply by the pronoun 'ba' (they). One could argue that the pronoun could be referring to any group of persons. However, the pronoun coupled with the fact that the words of the people accused of practicing nepotism are in Shona, these features serve as signs for us to decipher and interpret. Poetry allows an artist to be ambiguous and indirect in reference such that it becomes difficult to pin down its exact reference and this, coupled with the fact that it takes advantage of the numerous meanings of words, makes

it even more elusive. This is the technique that Nyathi uses when he opts for none specific terms of reference such as pronouns.

In the last stanza of the poem, Nyathi makes reference to the notion of poetic licence. Nyathi's tendency to be open about political issues that other artists steer clear of might be linked to this notion of poetic licence and what he perceives to be the historical role of the praise poet and praise poetry as an art. Poetic licence was the mandate that gave the poet the right to delve into any issue with impunity. White points out that while it might seem that the poet, acting as a social commentator, had the freedom of speech to delve into any issue he felt was of significance, it was the poem and not the poet that had the freedom of speech that went beyond conventions (1989; 36). In the poem, Nyathi says he will not speak despite the poetic licence. This is a way of highlighting the fact that he is aware that the government does not recognise the right to speech. Unlike in the past when the praise poet was respected and given the platform to speak, the modern day praise poet, the artist, is a state enemy. Poetic licence thus no longer exists and as such no one is allowed the space to voice their concerns and Nyathi's refusal to speak despite it points to the situation that poetic licence no longer offers the security and safety from reproach that it used to.

In the poem poetic licence occurs in the same sentence as 'tototo licence' and 'red- light district licence in Amsterdam'. *Tototo* is an illicit brew also known as skokiaan. The name comes from the brewing process which involved a mixing of ingredients that were left to ferment then later distilled to tap the potent liquid. Tototo is onomatopoeic and is the sound of the dripping liquid during the distillation process. The red light district in Amsterdam is a section of the city in which prostitution is legal and restricted to. The fact that the term poetic licence appears next to tototo licence and red-light district licence, terms that denote the illegal practices of liquor brewing and prostitution and therefore carry negative connotations, suggests that it has negative connotations as well as far as government is concerned.

Uttering dissent in 'I speak'

In this poem Nyathi addresses the issue of freedom of speech. The poem is a plea by the poet for the right to free speech. He points out that people are afraid because things are not well in the country. He questions why he should be silenced, arguing that he should be given the space to air his views.

He affirms his right to speak and in the process touches on some of the factors that inhibit one from practicing one's right to speak. While Nyathi makes his claim to speaking using irony in 'I will not speak', he does the opposite in 'I speak' by asserting in a direct manner that he speaks. The motif of silence in the song 'I speak' is the idea that underlies the very act of claiming to be speaking. The assertion 'I speak' itself already implies that speaking at some point has been something that was not allowed, that at some point there had been attempts to silence the artist's voice. The song makes use of the technique of starting a line of clauses with the same word repeated within the same first stanza this time with the phrase 'ngiyekeleni ngikhulume' (let me speak). The repetition of the phrase emphasises the call for the right to speak. According to Nyathi, he should be allowed to speak as he is neither a mute nor a prisoner. Here he associates silence with the physical states of dumbness and incarceration, situations that can be taken as unnatural and beyond the individual's control. Humans are speaking beings and even though dumbness does occur, it is the exception rather than the rule. Incarceration is itself an unnatural condition created by man to control and restrain the socially deviant. The whole idea behind arresting someone is to take away the privileges of freedom, and freedom here means the right to choose what one does and when one does it.

Titlestad notes how during the apartheid era, the police would arrest the pennywhistle players who played their flutes in white areas and in the open. The reason for the arrests was that they were disturbing the peace in these areas. He argues that the disturbing of peace was an excuse to hide the fact that they were arresting the musicians in a bid to silence the other and to prohibit contrary spaces of enunciation (2003; 48). Likewise, the

practice of silencing an artist is an attempt to silence the music and other voices within society.

The poem uses rhyme achieved through the use of similar sounding sounds and words. It opens with sentiments of how afraid the nation is and this is captured in the word 'sesaba'(we fear) which is used to begin three consecutive lines. Apart from emphasising the fact that people are afraid, this word creates rhythm. The phrase 'I speak' contrasts with the word 'sesaba' in the sense that while the word captures a sense of widespread fear which the poet also has, his decision to speak acquires even more importance as it is done despite the fear. It clarifies the fact that the decision to speak is not taken in the absence of fear.

One of the issues Nyathi tackles is that of the role of the poet in society. He argues that he should be allowed to question, critique and resolve issues of concern in society. This call, in the second stanza, again makes use of the word 'ngiyekeleni' (let me) to begin the first six phrases. This is a role that poets have traditionally fulfilled. Early Zulu and Ndebele poets, after whom Nyathi models his performance style, were respected people whose criticism of anything and anyone was seen as constructive. In the present political context of the country, such a role is considered anti revolutionary. The state's intolerance to criticism knows no boundaries and applies to all, anyone and anything that shows it in bad light.

Narrating the state of the State in 'Dear Mzwakhe Mbuli'.

The song 'Dear Mzwakhe Mbuli' is in the form of a letter in which Nyathi narrates to the addressee the problems that he sees in Zimbabwe. In the song, Nyathi points out that politics has not changed from its corrupt nature, it is still a system driven by greed and self enrichment. He narrates how the majority of the people starve while a few live in luxury. Criminals are said to be roaming the streets while the innocent languish in jail. In the end, he suggests that hope lies in divine intervention when he foresees the coming of judgement day when the greedy and powerful will be judged by the lord.

Known as the people's poet, Mzwakhe Mbuli is a South African artist who uses his poetry to address issues of social concern. He started his career as a poet during the apartheid era during which his poetry made him unpopular with the apartheid government as he spoke out against the injustices that black people were subjected to.[2] Though he fought to bring about black rule, this has not blinded him to the shortcomings of the African National Congress (ANC) led government. His outspokenness has seen him criticise government for corruption and failure to deliver on independence promises. The song can be read as a response to the Mbuli album titled 'Born free but always in chains'. The album was released soon after he was charged with armed robbery and possession of a firearm[3]. Even though he was eventually charged and served part of his thirteen year sentence, Mbuli has always maintained that he was framed and was the victim of dirty tactics by those bent on silencing him. The album basically addresses issues of corruption by the state and what he perceived as the fighting of crime through arresting innocents. By drawing commonality between the experiences of Mzwakhe and his own, Nyathi is in a way lending authenticity and validity to his interpretation of the situation in the country. The act of narration becomes a technique through which the poet engages with the subject of corruption in leadership.

According to Nyairo, the idea of local popular artists aligning themselves to international stars whose work they try to emulate or whom they find inspiration in is common (2004; 71). Through such a move the artist aims to among other things market themselves as good enough to be associated with the star. Mzwakhe is a poet like Nyathi and also performs his poetry to the accompaniment of music in similar fashion. There are lots of areas of commonality between the two poets that Nyathi underlines in his song;

> "This is the system as I write you
> this letter Mzwakhe I still see
> from a distance, the hyenas that

[2] To read more on Mbuli go to www.mzwakhe.org
[3] To read more about the charges and trial of Mzwakhe Mbuli, go to the Free Mzwakhe website on www.mzwakhe.org

you know, the same jackals
that you know"

Through the underlining of such similar experiences with power, Nyathi is in a way legitimising his interpretation of the government as a system that uses people for its own ends without considering the effects of such actions on the people it uses. As a seasoned artist who has been critical about abuse and misuse of power by both the apartheid and black government in South Africa, the mere mention of Mbuli's name has the effect of validating what Nyathi says and making his concerns seem very much called for.

The Zimbabwean leadership is shown as adopting the same tactics and thereby promoting lawlessness in the country;

"Thugs are allowed to roam the streets
that's the game of politics
and innocent citizens have to languish in jail"

The poet thus interrogates the discursive spaces of criminality and legality to offer insights into how the state manipulates legal instruments to generate lawlessness that consequently enables it to stay in power. According to Bayart, Ellis and Hibon, the definition of what is criminal and what is not is eminently relative and varies over time (1999; 13). While it is true that societies go through natural processes of redefining what is legal and what is not, the Zimbabwean situation is such that the state has turned the legal system on its head and redefined crime in a manner that suits those in power while criminalising innocence. Rather than working to protect the people, the state has turned its own people into its enemies.

The song also engages with the issue of the legitimacy of the state. This is done through representing the state as 'the manufacturer of inequality' (Bayart, 1993; 234). According to Lipset, legitimacy involves the capacity of the state to maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for society (1984; 88). The

legitimacy of the leadership is challenged through the representation of the legal system as based on illogical reasoning. This on its own suggests the government is unfit to rule.

The song closes with a note on the judgement of the lord and how this will put an end to the problems of the country. This emphasis on God's ability should be read against the backdrop of perceived political incompetence by the state (Chitando, 2002; 56). Such use of religious sentiment is usually taken as a sign of resignation and admission of a lack of solution to problems. However, as Chitando suggests, the call to God who is seen as a higher being highlights the failure of the state to provide abundant life (ibid). The sentiment becomes a technique of highlighting the failure of the state and provides the space to articulate one's views about the government without sounding critical.

Use of metaphors and other literary techniques

As songs texts that are built upon the praise poetry tradition, the texts make use of representational features of this tradition to generate their versions of reality. The song makes use of proverbs, allusions and sayings to generate meaning. According to Akpabio, proverbs tend to be offered as an expression of truths about life since they are based on experience and wisdom (in Newell, 2000; 12). The texts use them to not only avoid direct reference but use these features to authenticate and therefore validate the claims and interpretations of the songs.

The song 'I will not speak' opens with the proverb 'mouths are caves in which to hide defying words'. The proverb means that the best way to guard one's words is to not speak at all. The best place to hide words in is the mouth for once words leaves the mouth, they can not be gotten back and one never knows where they will lend. The fact that the proverb is the opening statement suggests Nyathi acknowledges the wisdom of the proverb that owes its validity to the test of time. The location of the proverb itself serves to locate the poet in relation to the fixed message of the proverb; that the rest of the poem is a response to and an engagement with the message of the proverb.

The poem makes use of allusion as shown in the phrase, “Forgive them grandpa, for they know not what they do”. This is an allusion to the biblical crucifixion of Christ. The sentence is the poet’s way of prophesying doom for the nation for if people do not know what they are doing, they can only create trouble for themselves and end up suffering from the consequences of their actions. The use of proverbs and allusions and metaphors therefore requires a common knowledge of a culture for comprehension and as such, the poem has made use of the biblical image which, considering the prevalence of Christianity in Zimbabwe, should be recognisable to a lot of people.

The poem also makes use of the technique of personification. The tongue and the poet’s words are personified and infused with human qualities. The poet’s tongue is said to be a “shy tongue”. Shyness has to do with unease of speaking in front of people, usually because the shy person feels intimidated by attention. While it might seem as if his tongue refuses to speak out of shyness, a reason that seems innocent enough, shyness can be taken to suggest a hesitancy to speak because of intimidation. This suggests that the silence he chooses therefore is not out of a conscious choice to be silent but rather an enforced silence, ‘cut down by the demands of the times’. Through the use of personification, Nyathi manages to communicate the fact that he has been intimidated into keeping silent.

One of the techniques of meaning creation that the poet employs is the deliberate use of words aimed at sending out a particular message. The word ‘diet’ suggests that words are something that can be eaten. Words and the act of speaking are equated with the act of speaking and as part the necessary food requirements for survival. Words, or rather the act of speaking out is an essential requirement for survival and is part of the daily nutritional needs that ensure life. By so doing, the poet is expressing a sense of agency in his poem concerning the right to freedom of speech.

The third stanza is characterised by the following rhetorical questions;

> “Business is crushing, am I right?

Business is crumbling, am I right?
Things fall apart, Achebe, am I right?"

The rhetorical questions here serve to draw attention to the fact that the practice of hiring friends and relatives only is negatively affecting companies. While they might look like questions that are questioning a possible state of affairs, they actually are affirming his suspicion that the nepotism is killing businesses. By opting to use rhetorical questions rather than direct statements, the poet creates room for people to make their own judgements. Reference to Achebe suggests an intertextual relationship between the African writers who through his writing, for example in his text '*A man of the people'* deals with the subject of corruption amongst leaders and the abuse of power. While the phrase 'Things fall apart' literally captures the effects of nepotism on the companies, the mention of Achebe itself draws us to consider the relationship between the concerns of African writers and those of performing artists.

The use of traditional cultural metaphors in the interpretation of contemporary reality is one feature of popular culture that numerous scholars have highlighted as one of the strengths and characteristics of popular arts. Scholars such as Barber have argued that 'oral' societies have a history of using metaphors as discursive and representational resources in their cultures (1987). The praise poetry culture for example made use of metaphors in the description and definition of individuals. In the song 'Dear Mzwakhe Mbuli' the poet uses the images of animals in a metaphorical sense to refer to the oppressive elements in the state;

"You see the lion is the boss because
of its brutality and ruthlessness
But on the judgement day
The lion will be charged and judged
At the same time
All these hyenas and jackals
Will be charged and judged".

The lion refers to the head of state while the hyenas and jackals are the people who have benefitted from the worsening economic crisis in the country. The jackal and hyena are animals that have poor hunting skills and as such survive mainly by scavenging in the wild. The human hyenas and jackals in the song are scavengers who take advantage of the chaotic situation in the country to enrich themselves. Through the act of using metaphors to represent the country's leader as well as those who have made fortunes from taking advantage of the difficult situation to fill their stomachs and pockets, the poem interprets the situation in the country as that which characterises the animal world. The laws of the jungle (survival of the fittest) now inform the running of the state.

The political system in the country is likened to a snake;

> "It's like a snake that bites you
> and leaves you to waste
> and never eats you
> simply for sheer fun of biting you".

Through this comparison, the poet is highlighting the dangerous nature of such a system to those it governs. A snake is regarded as a dangerous creature and culturally, the term is used to describe an untrustworthy, dangerous person. The simile, in the same fashion as the metaphor, functions by drawing links between important characteristics and in the case of the snake and the political system in Zimbabwe, the important characteristic common to both is danger and untrustworthiness. The state leadership is meant to protect those it leads yet in this case, it is proving to be hazardous to its own people.

The technique of using metaphors to represent reality is a process that tends to be steeped in specific cultures and as such requires both the poet and the consumer to be knowledgeable in the culture in question. In the above case, one has to have some knowledge of Zulu or Ndebele cultural norms as the metaphors are part of the praise poetry culture shared by the Zulu and Ndebele. One also needs to have an idea about the

behaviour and nature of the jackals, hyenas and lions and the president and the rest of the greedy bunch for one to understand the metaphor. This knowledge is a prerequisite but not a guarantee to understanding for the metaphor does not operate by wholesale application of characteristics. In the above case, the poet selects those that match between the lion and the president for example which happen to be the use of brawn to maintain leadership position. The consumer therefore has to engage with the metaphor in a process of sifting through all the possible matches and selecting the likely one and finally interpreting it. Commenting on the role of audiences in the creation of texts and meanings, Barber argued that consumers of African popular genres are never passive but actively constitute the performance of the text (1997). By carefully examining the use of metaphors, one can actually come to understand the power of language and how the process of encoding by the poet is as much an activity of generating meaning as the decoding process by the consumer.

Music as memory

The music in the three songs is a fusion of various African sounds with the main influence being jazz in a variety of forms such as kwela, marabi and mbaqanga. These musical genres have their own specific social meanings and it is the aim of the section to analyse the socio cultural function of these music styles (Nyairo, 2004). The section will attempt to ascertain why these genres are used and how their use adds meaning to the song. The use of the different music genres will be read as a way of creating an atmosphere within which the poetry is performed.

The paper argues that Nyathi uses South African sounds because of their appeal to Zimbabwean audiences. South Africa has always commanded respect from surrounding nations because of its massive economic resources and this economic dominance has facilitated the spread of South African cultural products into surrounding nations (Nkabinde, 1992). In Zimbabwe, South African music has always dominated the airwaves and this dominance has lasted to the present day. The South African music industry is seen as better developed hence its products are seen as better in terms of

quality and standard. Though this is the general view of the music, the sentiment is particularly strong in Matabeleland due to the close cultural links and physical proximity with the country. This has led to a situation whereby due to a short supply of recording artists South African music is being played in place of Ndebele music on national radio stations (Scannell, 2001; 6).

In the songs the music serves as a context within which the poetry is recited. What the music does is create an atmosphere dependent on the extra-musical meaning of the music to comment on the issues raised in the poetry. The music thus adds to the meaning of the song by bringing in meaning that has little to do with the sound itself but refers to the social situations with which the sound is associated. In terms of social meaning, I argue that South African music in general is held in high esteem because it connotes characteristics that are associated with the country itself. The general view of the country in Zimbabwe is that it is the land of great wealth, abundance, opportunity and freedom. The music thus represents wealth, opportunity and good living. As a backdrop for the poetry, the music seems to contrast with the message of the poem. The juxtaposing of the music genres that have attached to them connotations of wealth and abundance and his poetry is a way of prompting the listener to compare the meaning of the music and the message of the poetry.

'I will not speak' opens with the music which is an upbeat jazz sound heavy on the drums and the trumpet. The music, a danceable township jive tune, is lively and is a total contrast to the sad message of the whole song. The trumpet quietens at the point when the chorus by the backing group of women starts in which they lament the death of the country being brought about by the practice of nepotism in companies. The drums however maintain their tempo and serve as the sound over which the poem is recited. The song 'I speak' opens with the chorus sung by the backing vocals. The words of the chorus are sung before the instrumentals. The music starts with a melodious strumming of the bass guitar over which the chorus is introduced. The sound is a laid back afro- jazz tune. 'Dear Mzwakhe Mbuli' opens with the sound of the bass guitar which is soon joined by the rest of the instruments, the drums and the key board. The music is a laid back marabi

tune. The poem is recited in a voice that seems to be reading rather than reciting the poetry. This is a way of making it clear that the poem is not addressed to the consumer but to the addressee Mzwakhe. Through out the songs, the music's heavy beats and lively, vibrant rhythms seems to contrast with the message of the lyrics.

The songs are all about suffering and despair while the music against which the poetry is recited suggests the opposite. This serves to magnify the suffering represented in the poem. In 'Dear Mzwakhe Mbuli' we are drawn to compare the suffering and hunger of the masses in Zimbabwe represented in the poem against the abundance and joy suggested by the music. In 'I will not speak' and 'I speak' the problems of unemployment and corruption and suppression of freedom of speech are contrasted against the abundance and freedom suggested by the music. The comparison clarifies and heightens the extent to which people are affected. Through the comparison we are drawn to engaging with the causes of the problems in Zimbabwe and question why the country is in the state it is in. This technique provides the listener with the opportunity to come up with their own answers without relying on the poet to raise the issues and provide solutions as well.

Conclusion

The chapter has attempted an analysis of the song texts in a bid to understand what they deal with, how they construct meaning and the ends to which this is done. Through the motifs of silence and speaking, the song texts engage with various issues related to the government's attempts to silence dissenting voices. The chapter has attempted to show how through the use of various techniques the song texts engage with the issue of state repression of dissenting voices. In the process, the texts also speak to wider issues of governance within the continent and raise interesting questions concerning the notion of independence. What is clear from the song texts is that the leadership in Zimbabwe as well as in other African countries has failed its people through poor governance and as such is responsible for the chaotic situation arising as a result.

Song lyrics

I will not speak

Uyu mwana waningi,	(This one is so and so's child
uyu ndiye watete x2	this one is auntie's child
lafelihle	the beautiful country is dying
lafelakithi	our beautiful country is dying
imisebenzi bayaphana	they give each other jobs
lafelihle	the beautiful country is dying
imisebenzi bayaphana	they give each other jobs
lafelakithi	our beautiful country is dying
lafelihle x2	the beautiful country is dying)

I will not speak
as they say, mouths are caves
in which to hide defying words,
as of now I will not speak,
I will not speak when I see these things,
When I hear these things, I will not speak.

When you sleep in parliament,
when your office becomes your bedroom,
I will not speak.
I will not speak when words
pierce the sky like bullets
and voices glitter with hatred.
I will not speak, I will be silent,
I will be dumb, I will be dead man,
my words have died a painful death,
murdered on the pavement,
slaughtered on the streets,
crushed along the path to the empty tank,
silenced by the roar of the factory
machine, machine, machine,
I will not speak.

Ngizulazula, ngidingumsebenzi	(walking around looking for a job
ngizulazula, ngidingumsebenzi	walking around looking for a job
msebenzi kayikho, bayanikana bo	there are no jobs, they give each other jobs
msebenzi kayikho, hayi bayanikana bo	there are no jobs, they give each other jobs
bayanikana, bayanikana bo	they give each other jobs
bayanikana, bayanikana bo	they give each other jobs
msebenzi kayikho, hayi bayanikana bo	there are no jobs, they give each other jobs

sekuleminyaka ngiding'umsebenzi — for years I have been looking for a job
sekuleminyaka ngiding'umsebenzi — for years I have been looking for a job
msebenzi kayikho, bayanikana bo — there are no jobs, they give each other jobs
msebenzi kayikho, hayi bayanikana bo — there are no jobs, they give each other jobs)

I will not speak when leaves fall on
children's' rumbling tummies,
I will not speak these words and I will
not utter this poetry and
I will not sing this song,
I will not speak.
I will not speak as they say
destinies are measured in paces,
I wield nothing in my hand
but there is hunger
on the jacketed face
there is a wound
on the academic face
there is a contour
on the child's face
faces denied even a diet of words
I will be silent,
I will not speak even when flames
engulf the clouds of conscience.
I will be dead, silent,
I own a shy tongue,
cut down by the demands
of the times,
I walk down the street silent,
listening to hard words from dry lips,
with shouts of depths
sprouting anew, anew, khonale, towards
another death, another funeral.

Uyu mwana waningi — (this one is so and so's child
Uyu ndiye watete x4 — this one is auntie's child)

I will not speak even if relatives
of the managing director
destroy business;
business is crushing, am I right?
business is rumbling, am I right?
Things fall apart, Achebe, am I right?
despite poetic licence

or *tototo* licence or the red-light
district licence in Amsterdam,
I will not speak mani,
all I will say is forgive them grandpa,
for they know
Not what they do.
I will not speak.

I speak ngiyakhuluma

Nguban' esimoneleyo
simonela kanjani chorus
simonela kutheni x2
simonela ngaliphi

(who have we wronged
How have we wronged them)

Wayekhona mhlana
sithwal'ubunzima
wayekhona
yen'ubaba
yen'umama
(father was there
Mother was there
When we carried
Heavy burdens)

Zimb' izindaba
sesaba wonamaphephandaba
sesaba izigigaba
sesaba zona izindaba
I speak ,ngiyakhuluma.
(things are bad
We are afraid of newspapers
We are afraid of the news)

Ngiyekeleni ngikhulume
ulimi lwami lungegoqiwe
ngiyekeleni ngikhulume
ngingasisona isimungulu
ngiyekeleni ngikhulume
I speak,ngiyakhuluma.

(let me speak
For my tongue is not folded
Let me speak
For I am not dumb
Let me speak for I am not
A prisoner
I speak, ngiyakhuluma)

Kanti lithi ngithule ngani
yebo ngingekhulume
yebo ngingephumelele
ngitsheleni ngilalele
ngilaleleni ngilitshele
Yes, I speak ngiyakhuluma.
(why do you say I should keep quite
Yes I might keep quite
Yes I might not succeed
Tell me and I will listen
Listen and I tell you
Yes, I speak ngiyakhuluma.)

Wayekhona mhlana
sithwal'ubunzima x2

Ngiyekeleni ngibuze
ngiyekeleni ngibuzisise
ngiyekeleni ngichaze
ngiyekeleni ngichazulule
ngiyekeleni ngixwayise
ngiyekeleni ngixwayisise
I speak, ngiyakhuluma.

(let me ask
Let me explain
Let me get down to the issue
Let me advise
I speak ngiyakhuluma)

Mhlaba kawuboni
mhlaba kawuboni
mhlaba kawuboni
mhlaba kawulamahloni
I speak, ngiyakhuluma
uzithethe izingane zikababa
I speak, ngiyakhuluma

(earth you have no eyes
Earth you have no shame
I pseak, ngiyakhuluma
You took my father's children
I speak, ngiyakhuluma)

Nguban' esimoneleyo?
simonela kanjani chorus
simonela kutheni x2
simonela ngaliphi

Lina ozibanibani lozibanibani
ozalwa nguzibanibani kazibanibani
Lalingasibantwabakababa na?
(you so and so
Child of so and so who is so and so
Were you not my father's children?)

Dear Mzwakhe Mbuli

Dear Mzwakhe Mbuli
You know politics is the most amusing
And amazing of all forms of art
Politics is art yes
Almost dirty art
This system uses you and leaves you hapless
And helpless
It's like a snake
That bites you and leaves you
To waste
And never eats you
Simply for sheer fun of biting you
This is the system
As I write you this letter, Mzwahke
I still see from a distance
The hyenas that you know
The same jackals that you know

Dear Mzwakhe
This is were the cruellest survive
Those who can afford
Are swivelling, swaying in their posh
Limousines
While citizens starve to death

You see there is no room for serious thinkers
In politics
Thugs are allowed to roam the street
That's the game of politics
And innocent citizens have to languish in jail
That's the game of politics
You see the lion is the boss because of its brutality
And ruthlessness
But on the judgement day
The lion will be charged and judged at the same time
All these hyenas and jackals will be charged
And judged

There are so many questions left unanswered
Yes the questions are quite appetising
But I am afraid I do not have as much
Appetite to answer them
This is were the cruellest crooks survive

There are so many patches left unmended
So many wounds to be healed
So much spiritual cleansing to be done
Deception has been the main character in this
Political satire

Mfowethu uthixo usomandla uyakubona
Konke lokhu
(My brother the Lord is watching and sees all this)
But one day all of us will stand before the lord
And be judged
Even the lion will be charged and judged
Phela isilwane sithembe amazinyo sikhohlwe
Ukuthi azakhumuka
Sithembe inzipho sikhohlwe ukuthi
Zizathundubala
(The lion trusts in the power of its teeth
Forgetting that one day they will fall out
The lion trusts in its talons
Forgetting that one day they will become blunt)

Yours faithfully

Imbongi

Albert Nyathi

Note: translations in brackets.

Chapter 4

Disillusionment with independence

Most of Nyathi's songs are about the post independence era and the challenges that Zimbabwe has faced during this period. The main theme with these songs is disillusionment and the failure of the post colonial leadership to deliver on the promises made at independence. It is through this theme that the paper will engage with the song texts to examine the nature of the problems that people face in the post independence era. Through the songs, the poet engages with issues of governance and of the government and the failure by the post colonial government to provide for its people. The chapter will attempt to show how these issues are engaged with, the techniques used and the end to which they are used. The chapter will also analyse the music to ascertain how it functions to enhance the meaning of the songs.

The child as a mirror of the State in Bana Balapile

'Bana balapile' is a song about hungry children across the continent. The children are said to be facing the problems of hunger and cold and this is a phenomenon that is occurring across the continent. The poem does not say much about the children except that they are hungry and cold yet this should not be taken to mean a lack of depth in his message. I argue that the song makes use of the image of the child in discourses of suffering and hunger as a technique through which the poet engages with issues of governance. The figure is used as a gauge of the condition of the state so that through the image of the child the song gets to ask questions about the cause of the hunger.

The section will therefore examine why the poet uses the image of a child in his engagement with the issue of social problems and how he represents the children to construct discourses of suffering. The section will show how through the child figure the poet also engages with the issue of the failure of the post colonial state to provide for its people.

In ‘Bana Balapile’ children are represented as the victims of social problems of hunger and lack of adequate clothing. This suffering faced by the children is a transnational phenomenon experienced by many post colonial cities;

> “The children are starving all over
> Harare, Maputo, Lusaka, Pretoria,
> Nairobi, Windhoek, Lagos”

By listing post colonial cities as those faced with the problem of suffering children, the poet suggests that they also share a common cause. This cause I argue is the post colonial leadership of these places that has failed to provide food and shelter for its citizens. According to Mhanda, the problem facing post colonial states is the calibre of the leaders who are bent on self enrichment rather than acting in the service of the people (2005; 4). The leaders abuse power without recourse because post colonial Africa has not yet developed the requisite checks and balances to ensure accountability and responsible exercise of power (ibid). It is this lack of concern with the citizenry by the post colonial leadership that has led to the problem of hungry children across the continent.

The use of the child figure for purposes of commenting about the state has been a feature of literary writing. According to Pattison, writers have been in the practice of consciously using the child as an evocative literary device for purposes of exposing the essential imperfections of the world around him (1978). While the above statement was meant to explain the use of the child’s narrative perspective and view, I argue that it expresses the very essence behind the use of the child figure as well. In the poem it is not what the child does or sees but the condition of the child that becomes the commentary on the state. The condition of the child says a lot about the capacity of the parents to care for it, likewise the state’s capacity to provide an environment that enables the parents to meet their parental obligations. Children are one of the marginal groups in society that are dependent on adults for protection as well as general welfare. In the poem the state is

positioned as a ‘parent’ that should provide for its children. In the poem, the condition of the child suggests that the leadership has failed and as such should be changed.

Still waiting for uhuru in ‘For how long’

The song ‘For how long’ focuses on the actual problems that the country faces as a result of poor governance and bad policy making. It talks about the failure by the government to live up to the promises of independence and recounts how people are still waiting for the promises made at independence to materialise. The theme of disillusionment is brought out through an engagement with the problems of the post independence era.

During the colonial period, blacks were marginalised, excluded from the mainstream economy and denied access to basic services such as health and education. The liberation war was seen as the only means through which blacks could get rid of white rule and make those services previously reserved for whites available to the masses. During the war of independence, the masses were promised a better life once the colonialists were defeated. Independence was therefore seen by people as an attainment of political power which was to serve as the tool for political, economic, social and cultural empowerment for blacks (Mhanda, 2005; 4). The new government made it clear at independence that it would be guided by a socialist ideology whose basic tenets were the empowerment of the masses and the equal distribution of wealth. The poem shows how the empowerment they were expecting has not come and this has become a problem for those who are still suffering

The main problem is the land issue that was the cause of the liberation war in the first place. The poem opens with the question “for how long must we pretend the problem has since been resolved”. The question suggests that there is a problem that needs resolution and through engaging with the question, we can deduce that the problem in question is that of the redistribution of land. As such the questions serve to stimulate the consumers of the art into reflecting on the issues raised. This use of the question exemplifies how

popular music relies on the active engagement with the text by the consumer to generate meaning.

The disillusionment with the failure by government to deliver the land to the people as was promised is capture in the following paragraph;

> "Look you are always saying
> Tomorrow will be better
> But I can not get used to fire anymore"

The above paragraph highlights the promises that the leaders have made but have failed to fulfil concerning the welfare of the majority. The above phrase suggests that the notion of independence is relative, depending on who is talking and the point from which they speak. By representing the idea of independence as relative, Nyathi creates a discursive space within which to air his sentiments about the unequal distribution of wealth in the country.

The above statement can also be read as a critique of the government's failure to implement its socialist policies. The socialist ideologies of the state were meant to enable the implementation of economic policies that would lead to the realisation of an egalitarian society (Mumvuma, 2006). This has failed to translate into concrete action on the ground and has instead been overshadowed by a minority opposed to the development of an egalitarian Zimbabwean society.

The poem also raises questions about the role of the leadership in creating the problem of inequality. During the eighties, the Zimbabwean government set up what was called the Leadership Code. The code sought to impose a minimum standard of behaviour on the ruling elite, requiring them to disclose their assets periodically (Nyarota, 2006). Apart from the ruling elite, the code also applied to civil servants as well as other persons of influence. It conceded that by virtue of their privileged position, politicians had access to public funds which they could be tempted to misuse (ibid). This attempt to prevent

corruption and self enrichment on the part of the ruling elite has failed seeing as only few individuals are enjoying the benefits of independence.

The poem suggests that there are two types of independence, one for the suffering masses and the other for the few who are enjoying life. This serves to highlight the inequality in wealth that is characteristic of the post colonial state and to explain the 'wait and see' attitude of the poet.

To express his uncertainty over the whole situation, the poet makes use of the phrase 'We shall see the colour of the sky when the clouds have cleared' which is repeated several times in the poem. It is an idiomatic saying that suggests that the unresolved land issue is an obstacle in the process of attaining true independence. Land equals wealth and until it is distributed equally as was promised at independence, the current problems of poverty are not likely to end.

Survival of the fittest in the city in 'Kutheni'

The poem talks about the economic and social problems of poverty and corruption that have thrown the country into chaos. According to the poem, people used to live well but are currently suffering. The poem makes use of a series of questions to focus on the problems of food shortages, money shortages in banks, failing businesses and conmen taking advantage of the situation. The country is shown as chaotic with everyone trying to benefit from the confusion at any cost. The poem concludes by questioning why the country faces such problems seeing as the country is now independent. Through focusing on these problems, the poet gets to engage with the causes of these problems and to bring out the idea that the state has failed to rule effectively.

The dominant theme of disillusionment is expressed in the opening chorus;

> Kutheni
> Izolo besihleli kahle kamnandi

Namhlanj' ikati lilaleziko
Kutheni
Namhl' abantwana balele ngendlala
Ngizokubika kubani na?

(what has gone wrong
Yesterday we were living well
Today the cat sleeps on the heath
What has gone wrong
Today the children go to bed hungry
Who am I going to tell)

The people find themselves faced with problems that are a threat to their survival such as securing food. By comparing the past with the present, the poem suggests that the independence era has not turned out to be as rosy as people had thought it would be. People expected life to be better than it was during the colonial era but the standards of living have gone down since independence. While the above chorus foregrounds the theme of disillusionment of the song, the rest of the poem focuses on the particular problems that the country is facing.

The poem 'Kutheni' makes use of questions to engage with the relevant problems in the country. The word *kutheni* is itself a question and through its repeated use, the poet raises or lists a number of problems that the country is facing. The question thus becomes an important technique of initiating and developing discourse. It becomes the entry point to stating the problems of the country. According to Kwaramba, questions highlight the issues of contention without necessarily having to provide assertive answers (1997; 47). The use of questions thus provides some semblance of protection for it avoids merely stating a problem. The questions, by suggesting that the poet himself is no wiser, gets us to think about the question he raises so the consumers of his art can answer them themselves.

One of the issues that the song 'Kutheni' touches on is that of the cash shortages that dogged the banking sector between 2003 and 2004. Banks ran out of money so that people could not get their salaries. This situation was compounded by people who rather than deposit their money in banks, chose to keep cash at home. The reserve bank in the end was forced to inject about twenty four billion dollars into the market to ease cash shortages (Muchinguri, 2003). The then governor Dr Tsumba blamed the sudden escalation in inflation as the main cause of the shortages which were later compounded by the externalisation of local currency to neighbouring countries, the emergence of a shadow economy, goods shortages, illegal trade in money as well as the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) organised stay aways (ibid). The failing businesses mentioned in the poem could refer to the closure of some indigenous owned banks that had flourished a few years before. The banking sector had become a lucrative area of investment for the many millionaires and billionaires who had made their fortune within the poor economic environment. In a bid to halt the run-away inflation, the reserve bank governor had introduced new rules for banks. Many banks were found wanting and failed to meet the required conditions and thus led to the closure of banks such as the Universal Merchant Bank and Century Discount House. [4]

The subject is introduced as a matter of hearsay, 'we are told'. This suggests that it is an issue the poet has not had the privileged of experiencing first hand. In this case the poet makes use of the technique of hearsay and gossip to recount the problems in the country. The technique provides one with the space to articulate something while avoiding the responsibility of having come up with it. According to Scott, rumour and gossip are forms of protest that represent a safe social sanction as they have no identifiable author and therefore no way of apportioning accountability (in Ogola, 2006; 54). Through the technique, Nyathi lists some of the problems of the country;

> "We are told of banks being bankrupt
> Told of bouncing cheques and failing businesses

[4] See the Sokwanele civil action support group report of 1994 for a full discussion on the condition of the banking sector in 2004.

Conmen conning people at every corner
Sokuyisikapukapu, asikapule ndoda
Kutheni, what's going on?"

In an environment were talking about a problem obvious to all is risking arrest, the use of hearsay provides the cover of appearing to be simply passing on what one has heard. This use of hearsay in the poem serves as an example of how popular music appropriates and makes use of other genres within the popular such as gossip and hearsay. By reporting the matter as something he has only heard of, the poet suggests it might be gossip since he can not verify the information himself. Gossip has an element of embellishment of truth and these hints at the possibility of the news being untrue and absurd. This technique captures the absurdity of the problem of banks having no money.

The situation in the country is represented as one of total confusion as captured by the terms in the following paragraph;

"Kwabayisixhobexhobe, isiphithiphithi
Kwaxokozela, kwabayingxabangxoza
Isiphithiphithi, isisanasana umtshado wezinja
Kutheni what's going on?"

(What has gone wrong, so much
Disorder and confusion
What has gone wrong
What's going on?)

These terms all refer and denote confusion. 'Isixhobexhobe' is normally used to describe a situation of great disorder; 'isiphithiphithi' tends to denote a busy place while 'ukuxokozela' and 'ingxabangxoza' carry more or less the same meaning. The phrase 'isisanasana umtshado wezinja' makes metaphorical use of the behaviour of dogs during the mating season. Dogs are well known for being rowdy and disorderly when in pursuit

of a female on heat, with all the males jostling in the hope of getting their turn to mate with the female. The poem aims to capture disorder and confusion of all sorts and degrees by using several terms that denote the same thing.

The term '*isikapukapu'* refers to the greedy means with which people sought to get rich. *'Kapula'* means to eat fast and in this case refers to the 'get- rich- quick' attitude that was common. The statement is an allusion to a local drama starring Felix Moyo in which he plays a corrupt middle level manager at his work. When one of the cleaners at the company discovered that he was involved in illegal deals, the manager tried to bribe him by encouraging him to '*kapula*', meaning he should accept his bribe. The paragraph thus captures the spirit of greed that had gripped the country and turned many into heartless fortune seekers who would stop at nothing to get rich. The country is represented as rampant with corruption with people resorting to corruption to make ends meet. According to Bayart, corruption is as a result of social inequality but also becomes in some cases what he terms 'a method of social struggle for the nation' (1993; 236). This is when people are forced to resort to corrupt means to make a living. By representing the country as caught up in a mad rush to get rich through corrupt means and where everyone has joined "in the great procession of corruption" (Fanon, 1965; 138), Nyathi is drawing us into engaging with the cause of this situation.

The unstable environment bred a new wave of crime, with cases reported daily of people who had defrauded companies of gigantic sums of money. Conmen also took advantage of the situation to con people desperate for money. The conmen referred to here are the illegal black-market foreign currency dealers known as '*osiphatheleni*'[5]. They operate from street corners with the majority of them being members of the '*Vapostori*' religious sect that wear white head wrappers. These traders, the majority of them women were notorious for conning foreign currency changers. Because they offered higher exchange rates than banks, people flocked to them to change their foreign currency for Zimbabwean dollars. Their most common method of conning people was one in which

[5] The term means "what have you brought for us" and was the word they used to approach and identify themselves to potential clients.

they would cut papers to the size of money then tie them in a bundle that they dress with real note on either side to make it look like a bundle of notes. Because the transaction is illegal, it is done at lightning speed and unfortunate customers would discover later that they had been given papers. The term 'isikapukapu', coupled with the phrase 'isixhobexhobe isiphithiphithi' which is repeatedly used in the poem serve to capture the rampant corruption and emphasise the disorder that the poem is concerned about.

The extent of the food shortages that were widespread and far reaching is captured in the following statement;

"Kwaqala ngetshukela sathi
Sikubonile ngoba limnandi
Habe phosekuswelakala
Lalelosawudo elibabayo"

(At first it was the sugar and
We thought it was because of its sweet
Now it's actually the salt,
what has gone wrong)

According to Nyathi, sugar shortages are probable since it is a sweet substance that is likely to be consumed widely and frequently. Salt shortages on the other hand are not so probable since it is bitter and not likely to be consumed as much. This statement captures the absurdity of the problem but at the same time, it draws attention to the shortages and drive listeners to engage with the causes of these shortages. Several reports suggested that the shortages in Bulawayo were politically motivated. The ruling party and government were accused of withholding food aid to the city because the province voted for the opposition party in the 2000 and 2004 elections (Mukumbira, 2004). In a way the suggestion that the food shortages are related to the taste of the foods, absurd as it is, draws us to engage with the idea and try to come up with the possible plausible reasons instead.

"Hiding behind language: the language of metaphors and proverbs

As in the previous chapter, the songs in this chapter also makes use of cultural figures of speech, namely proverbs and idiomatic sayings. The poem 'Kutheni' concludes on following note;

Kutheni sesihlatshwa ngameva lapho
Okucentwe khona, kutheni?
Sesidonse ugagu saluletha egumeni
Abadala bathi olungaziwayo kaluthezwa
Njalo ichithamuzi alibaswa lapha ekhaya
Babuye bathi okungapheliyo kuyahlola.

(why are we being pricked by thorns
On cleared land, what has gone wrong
We have dragged the thorn bush
Into the yard
The elders say do not collect wood
From a tree you do not know
They say do not burn the wood
Of the *chithamuzi* tree in the yard
They also say nothing lasts forever).

The stanza is made up of sayings and proverbs that are used often in everyday conversation and are part of the pool of traditional cultural modes of expressing what can be seen as valid truths. As Chimhundu points out, proverbs, like metaphors, are not for artists to generate or create *ex vacuo* but are derived from and express communal views of the world based on first hand experience (in Kwaramba, 1997; 54). Through the use of these proverbs and sayings, Nyathi is expressing his feelings about the situation in the

country and offering his interpretation of it as well without being direct and sounding anti government.

The above paragraph basically questions the idea of independence against the backdrop of the previously mentioned problems bedevilling the country. Clearing land is an act of getting rid of impediments and in the poem the cleared land is said to now have thorns. The statement makes metaphorical use of the land to represent the country and thorns to represent the challenges that a country may face. Before independence, colonial rule was seen as the thorn that had to be removed. Thorns are a source of great discomfort and pain to anyone and when they infest a field, they make movement within it virtually impossible. The clearing part refers to the fight for independence and it suggests that the fight was successful. The re-emergence of the thorns suggests a return to the pre-independence situation.

'Ugagu' is a thorn bush with thick white thorns, known for causing great pain. The saying 'sesidonse ugagu saluletha ekhaya' (we have dragged the thorn bush into the yard) conjures an image of one who deliberately brings troubles upon oneself. This is followed by the proverb 'abadala bathi olungaziwayo kaluthezwa', meaning one should stick to what one knows works. 'Ichithamuzi' is a type of tree whose wood is believed to bring divisive forces into the home if used for firewood. As such the tree is reserved for funeral rites. The use of 'abadala (the elders) gives the poet some authority. Traditionally, the elders are seen as the custodians of wisdom and by referring to the idiom as the words of the elders, he is by association, giving his views that he expresses through the idiom some validity.

The saying 'abadala bathi okungapheliyo kuyahlola', meaning that everything has an end, suggests several things about the chaotic condition of the country. The statement is made after a slight hesitation, as if it is an afterthought. This could be a prophesying of the end of the current economic problems of Zimbabwe. The statement could also be read as prophesying doom for the current leadership that their reign, like everyone else's will eventually come to an end. In light of the above argument, one could argue that the

answer to the question ‘Kutheni?’ is that people are suffering from the consequences of their actions, or their failure, through the ballot box, to ensure a better country.

The saying ‘ichithamuzi alibaswa lapha ekhaya’ (do not burn the wood of the *chithamuz*i tree in the yard) means that one should not engage in things that they know will bring them trouble later. The full meaning of these sayings can be realised when read in relation to each other and in reference to a specific situation. Barber expresses the same sentiment when she argues that proverb meaning is never complete until they are applied to a concrete situation (quoted in Mutonya, 2006; 124). In such a case, they suggest that troubles are the result of a conscious non observance of taboos and traditional rules of conduct.

Rather than stop at simply engaging with the idea of an independence that has failed to deliver on its promises, Nyathi goes further to tackle the issue of accountability. Unlike the government that has blamed the problems of the country on the high inflation rate thereby absolving themselves of all accountability, Nyathi puts the blame for the trouble on the nation, the masses. This he does through the use of the pronoun ‘se’ (we) at the beginning of the phrase ‘sesidonse ugagu saluletha egumeni’. ‘We’ refers to all Zimbabweans and thus holds everyone responsible for the state of the country. By so doing he draws attention to the fact the people, who are the ones who put the leaders in power, are responsible for what they do and for whatever they produce. This representation subverts common representations of power as the preserve of the leaders to represent power as the preserve of the masses. In other words, civilians are not powerless as common representations like to make them out to be. This representation draws us to engage with the issue of voting which is the main avenue through which leaders are put in power. The suggestion here is that if the people have the power to vote leaders in, and leaders end up ruining the country, the people themselves as voters are responsible for they have the power to vote into office whoever they want. This can be read as a critique of the 2000 presidential elections in which president Mugabe won a third term in office. In light of the above argument, one could argue that the answer to the question

'Kutheni?' is that that people are suffering from the consequences of their actions, or the their failure, through the ballot box to ensure a better country.

In the poem 'For how long' the poet uses allegory to communicate his interpretations of the restlessness within the state that he sees. The image of cows and goats which are farm animals are used to represent the people and through the allegory, the poet also offers what he sees as the solution;

> "The cows have mooed enough
> The goats can take it no longer"

Allegory in this case provides safety by virtue of being indirect in terms of reference. According to Leyburn, allegory is one of the most forcible methods of expressing truth that uses a mode of indirect speaking (1948; 1). It works by seeking out a vehicle which has just enough incongruity with what is represented to accentuate the likeness with which the allegorist is concerned (ibid). The animals in this case represent the people and their agitation that borders on the rebellious can be read as a potentially explosive situation. The allegory provides the poet the space to articulate his view about a situation he views as tense and offer a warning to the state without sounding as if he is inciting or calling for violence. The use of metaphors, proverbs and allegory in the song texts is thus meant to provide protection while at the same time provide the necessary linguistic resources to engage with political topics that the state does not feel comfortable about.

Music as memory

The section will examine how Nyathi uses music used to compound the meaning of his music and help in the interpretation of contemporary issues. I argue that Nyathi uses the music as a backdrop for his poetry and that he uses it for its social meaning within Zimbabwean audiences. As mentioned in the previous chapter, South African music generally connotes those qualities associated with the country which are wealth, abundance, riches opportunity and good living. South African music has a wide audience in Zimbabwe and is often preferred over that of local artists. It is seen to be of higher

quality and better standard and as such has more appeal. In relation to the contemporary problems that Nyathi touches on in the poem, the pairing of the music with the poetry draws us to compare and contrast the meaning of the music with that of the lyrics.

A defining feature of Nyathi's music is the celebratory mood it suggests. For example, the music in all the three songs is quite celebratory, the tunes suggest a carnivalistic atmosphere of dance and enjoyment. 'Kutheni' comprises a medium paced marabi tune with the compilation of instruments including drums, guitars and the keyboard. Like the music in the previous songs, the happy mood of the music seems to be contradicting the message of the lyrics. The music in 'Bana Balapile' is also a medium paced marabi tune. The music opens with the trumpet, followed by the drums the lastly the key board. The refrain 'khangela balambile' (look they are hungry) is sung against the background of the blowing trumpet and their loudness suggests that the refrains as well as the trumpet are meant to work in unison to draw attention to the hungry children. The music in 'For how long' is a mbaqanga sound. The tune is a soft mellow, laid- back danceable tune which is heavy on the guitar and the bass guitar. The softness of the music allows the dominance of the lyrics which dominate to symbolise the urgency of the message.

The messages of the songs are meant to be contrasted with the music against which the poetry is recited. The poem in the song 'Kutheni' is about the food shortages and rampant corruption and prostitution in the country while the music suggests happiness, abundance and good life. The hungry children in 'Bana balapile' are the opposite of the good life suggested by the music while the music in 'For how long' suggests wealth and abundance, the very things that the suffering masses in the song are still waiting for years after independence. This serves to magnify the suffering represented in the poem and by comparison we are drawn to question why one independent nation is struggling while another is not. Through the comparison, listeners get to engage with the issues at hand and make their own conclusions.

Conclusion

The chapter has attempted an analysis of the three song texts as part of the process of understanding how popular music creates meaning and makes use of various literary techniques to engage with as well as generate interpretations about political issues. through focusing on specific problems within the country, the songs draw attention to the extent of the social and economic problems as well as generate an engagement with the text aimed at coming up with the causes of these problems and their possible solutions. The use of metaphors and proverbs and the image of hungry children are shown as literary techniques meant to enable the discussion of political issues while at the same time providing safety from the state due to their obscure nature. The chapter has also attempted to highlight how popular music makes use of lyrics as well as song texts to generate meaning and enhance the message of the songs.

Song lyrics

Bana balapile

Bana balapile
Bana banalitlala
Bana barobala ntle
Mme, ntate
(the children are hungry
They did not sleep well
Mother, father)

Khangela balambile (chorus)

Bana bahajesu
Bana bakarona
Bana banalimatata
Bakgatetsi
(look, they are hungry
Our children have problems
Our children are tired)

Abantwana balambile
Abantwana bafa yindlala
Abantwana bayaqhaqhazela ngumqando
Abantwana bayaqhuqha ngumqando
(the children are hungry
They are dying of hunger
They are shaking with cold)

Yebo lingiyekele ngihlabele
Ngabantwana abahluphekayo
(allow me to sing about the
Suffering children)
The children are starving
Abantwana balambile
Abantwana bayaqhaqhazela
Abantwana bayaqhuqha ngumqando
Yes the children are starving all over
Harare,Maputo,Lusaka
Pretoria,Nairobi,Windhoek,Lagos
Yes allow me to sing about the children
Yes allow me to sing about the blind all over
Yes allow me to sing about them

Yelele (chorus)

For how long?

For how long must we pretend the problem
Has since been resolved, I ask you
Land of my father?
For how long, land of my birth?
For how long shall the dogs watch
The juicy bones pulled from their very jaws?
For how long shall the cats mew unanswered?

Kuze kube nini?
For how long
The clock's hand is tired
Time has since become impatient
Land of my birth, for how long?

The cows have mooed enough
The goats can take it no longer
The calves are becoming silent
The bellies of our own children
Have something to say
Feed us soon, or spirit will repel flesh.

For how long land of my birth?
For how long land of spirits?
Kuze kube nini, lina oMatojeni
ONjelele, Chimanimani, Nyanga
Great Zimbabwe, for how long?

Kuze kube nini sihlupheka
Lina abalele phansi
OLobhengula kaMzilikazi
UMzilikazi kaMatshobana
UMatshobana kaMangethe
UMangethe kaNdaba
UNdaba yiso isizwe
Isizwe nguweZulu
Bayethe ngqungqulu emadolw'abomvu
Ngokuguqa engazini zabafo
Bayethe thole lesilo
For how long, professor of economy?
For how long, professor of human relations?
For how long, professor of predictions?
Look, you are always saying:
Tomorrow will be better

Tomorrow will be better
But I cannot get used to fire anymore
I have taken kicks, lies, been conned
Been robbed, cheated, been hungry
Therefore professor of astrology, how long?

Do not speculate about tomorrow
We shall know tomorrow when we get there
Yes, we shall see the colour of the sky
When the clouds have cleared.

Kutheni

Kutheni x4
Izolo besihleli kahle kamnandi
Namhlanj' ikati lilaleziko x4 (chorus)
Kutheni x4
Namhl' abantwana balele ngendlala
Ngizokubika kubani na? x4

(what has gone wrong
Yesterday we were living well
Today the cat sleeps on the heath
What has gone wrong
Today the children go to bed hungry
Who am I going to tell)

Hawu kutheni bo
What's going on?
Kutheni abantwana bedunusile izindlela
zonke lezi
kwabayisidunudunu kanti umqando
Kaliwuzwa?
Kutheni?
Kwabayisixhobexhobe, isiphithiphithi
Kwaxokozela, kwabayingxabangxoza
Isiphithiphithi, isisanasana umtshado wezinja
Kutheni what's going on?

(hey, what has gone wrong
Why are the children walking about with backs out
Do they not feel the cold?
What has gone wrong, so much
Disorder and confusion
What has gone wrong

What's going on?)

We are told of banks being bankrupt
Told of bouncing cheques and
failing businesses
Conmen conning people at every corner
Sokuyisikapukapu, asikapule ndoda
(its now a 'get-rich-quick situation)
Kutheni, what's going on?

Isiphithiphithi, isixhobexhobe
Kwaqala ngetshukela sathi sikubonile
Ngoba limnandi
Habe phosekuswelakala
Lalelosawudo elibabayo
Kutheni, what's going on?

(so much confusion
At first it was the sugar and
We thought it was because of its sweet
Now it's actually the salt,
what has gone wrong)

Kutheni sesihlatshwa ngameva lapho
Okucentwe khona, kutheni?
Sesidonse ugagu saluletha egumeni
Abadala bathi olungaziwayo kaluthezwa
Njalo ichithamuzi alibaswa lapha ekhaya
Babuye bathi okungapheliyo kuyahlola.

(Why are we being pricked by thorns
On cleared land, what has gone wrong
We have dragged the thorn bush
Into the yard
The elders say do not collect wood
From a tree you do not know
They say do not make fire out of
The *chithamuzi* tree in the yard
They also say nothing lasts forever).

Chorus

Note : translations of lyrics in Ndebele and Tswana in brackets.

CONCLUSION

The report set out to analyse the music of Albert Nyathi to establish how he uses music to address social issues. The songs selected were of a political theme and the report attempted to understand why and how he engages with political issues. Some of the issues addressed in the songs are problems of food shortages, lack of freedom of expression in the country, the failure by the state to deliver on the promises of independence and corruption. The lyrics of the songs are in Ndebele, English and Shona which are the official languages of Zimbabwe. This makes his music accessible to a wider audience.

Grounded in theories of popular culture and popular music, the report has attempted to demonstrate how Nyathi's music functions as a communicative channel for social issues. The report attempted to show that Nyathi's music engages with the issues he raises in his music. His music goes beyond simply reflecting and describing situations but also becomes an avenue through which he opens spaces for discussions of other subjects not openly discussed in the country. An example is the song 'I will not speak' in which he looks at the role that tribal politics play in exacerbating the negative effects of the ESAP on the country. Tribal politics are a sensitive issue not normally talked about which the poet brings into his discourse on unemployment. Nyathi's music becomes an example of how popular music provides spaces of expression in repressive situations.

The report has also attempted to show how within the political processes of Zimbabwe, music plays an essential role of facilitation. The report ascertained that music played a crucial role as a mobilising tool during the liberation war and that both the white government and the guerrillas who fought to end its rule made use of music to mobilise people to their side. After independence the new black government made use of music for nation building purposes, encouraging music that praised the government and its policies whilst removing from the airwaves music that represented the whites as enemies as it was no longer desirable as it went against the policies of reconciliation.

The report also ascertained that Nyathi's songs are grounded in the traditional Ndebele praise poetry culture. As such the songs are a fusion between cultural and contemporary forms. The use of poetry, coupled with the name Imbongi that Nyathi uses is symbolic of his role as a poet who addresses issues of social concern on behalf of the people. Traditionally an imbongi or praise poet served as a link between royalty and the masses. Through the poetry the imbongi would express the sentiments of the people for the king to hear and also those of the king for the people to hear.

The use of poetry in the songs is because of the protection it offers in the repressive Zimbabwean environment. The state has over the years intensified efforts to silence dissenting voices and any criticism of its policies. Poetry is a cultural form that utilises few words, what is known as economy of expression. Because of this it makes use of imagery created through figures of speech such as metaphors to clarify messages. This imagery provides protection for Nyathi as it is an indirect way of expressing one's sentiments and thus provides the space for one to be vocal and critical without being direct. These figures of speech are drawn from a culture specific pool of expressions and language resources. Because most of them are in Ndebele they would require someone who has knowledge of the language to interpret and apply accordingly to the context.

Through his poetry, Nyathi expresses his sentiments about the issues he raises and also guides listeners into engaging with his songs. The songs therefore rely on the listeners' active participation to realise their full meaning. Questions are used as literary techniques that are employed in the music to draw listener participation. The technique raises issues without providing a resolution, leaving the listener to provide one for them. Through careful language selection and use and employing various techniques to engage the listener as well as to maintain his indirectness, Nyathi exemplifies how popular music in society to communicate.

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